PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 372

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FIFTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 2001–02

COMPRISING PERIOD
16 July—8 October 2001

CAMBRIDGESHIRE
LIBRARIES

Cam Ref 328 (03/02)

ISBN 0 215 65001 8

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(Formed by the Rt. Hon. Tony Blair, MP, June 2001

Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service—The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair, MP
Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State—The Rt. Hon. John Prescott, MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer—The Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown, MP
President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons—The Rt. Hon. Robin Cook, MP
Lord Chancellor—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Irvine of Lairg
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—The Rt. Hon. Jack Straw, MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department—The Rt. Hon. David Blunkett, MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett, MP
Secretary of State for International Development—The Rt. Hon. Clare Short
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions—The Rt. Hon. Alistair Darling, MP
Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and The Regions—The Rt. Hon. Stephen Byers, MP
Secretary of State for Health—The Rt. Hon. Alan Milburn, MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—The Rt. Hon. Dr. John Reid, MP
Secretary of State for Wales—The Rt. Hon. Paul Murphy, MP
Secretary of State for Defence—The Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Hoon, MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Andrew Smith, MP
Secretary of State for Scotland—The Rt. Hon. Helen Liddell, MP
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Williams of Mostyn, QC
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—The Rt. Hon. Patricia Hewitt, MP
Secretary of State for Education and Skills—The Rt. Hon. Estelle Morris, MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport—The Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell, MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Hilary Armstrong, MP
Minister without Portfolio— Charles Clarke, Esq., MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Cabinet Office—

Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Macdonald of Tradeston

Ministers of State—

Mrs. Barbara Roche, MP

The Baroness Morgan

Parliamentary Secretary—Christopher Leslie, Esq, MP

Culture, Media and Sport—

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport—The Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell, MP

Ministers of State—

The Rt. Hon. Richard Caborn, MP (Minister for Sport)

The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blackstone (Minister for the Arts)

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—

Dr. Kim Howells, MP

Defence—

Secretary of State—The Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Hoon, MP

Minister of State—

The Rt. Hon. Adam Ingram

Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State—The Lord Bach, Dr. Lewis Moonie, MP

Education and Skills—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Estelle Morris, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for School Standards—Stephen Timms, Esq, MP
Minister for Lifelong Learning—Margaret Hodge, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Baroness Ashton of Upholland
Ivan Lewis, Esq, MP
John Healey, Esq, MP

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for the Environment—The Rt. Hon. Michael Meacher, MP
Minister for Rural Affairs—The Rt. Hon. Alun Michael, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Elliot Morley, Esq, MP
The Lord Whitty

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE— The Rt. Hon. Jack Straw, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean
Minister for Europe—Peter Hain Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Ben Bradshaw Esq, MP
The Baroness Amos
Denis MacShane Esq, MP

Health—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Alan Milburn, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
John Hutton, Esq, MP
Jacqui Smith, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Hunt of Kings Heath
Ms Hazel Blears, MP
Yvette Cooper, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE— The Rt. Hon. David Blunkett, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs—The Rt. Hon. John Denham, MP
Minister for Criminal Justice, Sentencing and Law Reform—The Rt. Hon. Keith Bradley, MP
Minister for Asylum and Immigration—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rooker
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Ms Beverley Hughes, MP
Robert Ainsworth, Esq, MP
Angela Eagle, MP

International Development—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Clare Short, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Hilary Benn, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Lord Goldsmith, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman, QC, MP
ADVOCATE-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Dr. Lynda Clark, QC, MP

Lord Chancellor's Department—
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Irvine of Lairg, QC
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
The Baroness Scotland of Asthal, QC
Michael Wills, Esq, MP
Ms Rosie Winterton, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Dr. John Reid, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Jane Kennedy, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—
Desmond Browne, Esq, MP

Paymaster General's Office—
PAYMASTER GENERAL—Dawn Primarolo, MP

Privy Council Office—
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Robin Cook, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Stephen Twigg, Esq, MP

Scotland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Helen Liddell, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—George Foulkes, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Patricia Hewitt, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for E-Commerce and Competitiveness—Douglas Alexander, Esq, MP
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean
Minister for Industry and Energy—Brian Wilson, Esq, MP
Minister for Employment and the Regions —Alan Johnson, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Sainsbury of Turville
Miss Melanie Johnson, MP
Nigel Griffiths, Esq, MP

Transport, Local Government and the Regions—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Stephen Byers, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Transport—John Spellar, Esq, MP
Minister for Local Government—The Rt. Hon. Nick Raynsford, MP
Minister for Housing and Planning—The Lord Falconer of Thoroton, QC
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Jamieson. Esq, MP
Ms Sally Keeble, MP
Dr. Alan Whitehead, MP

Treasury—
PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Andrew Smith, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—Dawn Primarolo, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Paul Boateng, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Ms Ruth Kelly, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Hilary Armstrong, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Mrs. Anne McGuire, MP
John Heppell, Esq, MP
Tony McNulty, Esq, MP
Nick Ainger, Esq, MP
Graham Stringer, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Ian Pearson, Esq, MP
Fraser Kemp, Esq, MP
Angela Smith, MP
Ivor Caplin, Esq, MP
Jim Fitzpatrick, Esq, MP
Phil Woolas, Esq, MP
Dan Norris, MP

Wales Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Paul Murphy, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Don Touhig, Esq, MP

Work and Pensions—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Alistair Darling, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Minister for Work—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Brown, MP

Minister for Pensions—The Rt. Hon. Ian McCartney, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Hollis of Heigham

Malcolm Wicks, Esq, MP

Maria Eagle, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Luce, GCVO

LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, KG, GCVO, TD

MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Lord Vestey

TREASURER—Keith Hill, Esq, MP

COMPTROLLER—Thomas McAvoy, Esq, MP

VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Gerry Sutcliffe, Esq, MP

CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Carter

CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMAN OF THE GUARD—The Lord McIntosh of Haringey

LORDS IN WAITING— The Lord Davies of Oldham, The Lord Grocott, The Lord Filkin, The Lord Bassam of Brighton

BARONESS IN WAITING—The Baroness Farrington of Ribbleton

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Stuart Bell, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICERS AND STAFF

THE SPEAKER—The Rt. Hon. Michael J. Martin, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt. Hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Mrs. Sylvia Heal, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Michael Lord MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—
Mrs. Irene Adams, MP, David Amess, Esq, MP, Nigel Beard, Esq, MP, Joe Benton, Esq, MP, John Butterfill, Esq, MP, David Chidgey, Esq, MP, Frank Cook, Esq, MP, Derek Conway, Esq, MP, John Cummings, Esq, MP, Roger Gale, Esq, MP, Win Griffiths, Esq, MP, Mike Hancock, Esq, MP, Jimmy Hood, Esq, MP, Alan Hurst, Esq, MP, Eric Illsley, Esq, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Humfrey Malins, Esq, MP, Bill O'Brien, Esq, MP, Edward O'Hara, Esq, MP, Bill Olner, Esq, MP, Peter L. Pike, Esq, MP, Mrs. Marion Roe, MP, Jonathan Sayeed, Esq, MP, George Stevenson, Esq, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—
The Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), The Rt. Hon. Robin Cook, MP, Mrs. Angela Browning, MP, Archy Kirkwood, Esq, MP, Stuart Bell, Esq, MP, The Rt. Hon. Eric Forth, MP,

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION —M. R. Jack, PhD

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Mrs. Angela Browning, MP, (Chairman), Archy Kirkwood, Esq, MP, Sir William McKay, KCB (Chief Executive), A. J. Walker (Director of Finance and Administration), Sir Thomas S. Legg, KCB, QC

SECRETARY OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE Mrs. S. A. R. Davies

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—
Sir WilliamMcKay, KCB, (Chief Executive), G. Cubie (Clerk of Committees, Department of the Clerk of the House), M. J. A. Cummins (Serjeant at Arms), Miss P. J. Baines (Librarian), A. J. Walker (Director of Finance and Administration), I. D. Church (Editor of the Official Report), Mrs. S. J. Harrison (Director of Catering Services)

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT— R. J. Ware, DPhil

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—Sir Nicolas Bevan, CB

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—J. E. G. Vaux

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon A. R. Wright

MEDICAL ADVISER TO THE SPEAKER—Dr. R. Zeegen, OBE, FRCP, MRCS, DObst, RCOG

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS—Elizabeth Filkin

16 July 2001

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 13 JUNE 2001]

FIFTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 372**

THIRD VOLUME OF SESSION 2001–2002

House of Commons

Monday 16 July 2001

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Creative and Arts Education

1. **Dr. Doug Naysmith** (Bristol, North-West): If she will make a statement on her plans for improving creative education and arts education in schools. [2420]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Dr. Kim Howells): We are trying to ensure that all young people, whatever their means and background, have access to high-quality arts and creative education. We are working closely with various partners, including the Department for Education and Skills, the Arts Council of England and the National Foundation for Youth Music, on a range of policies to deliver that.

Dr. Naysmith: I thank the Minister for his reply. I am familiar with the work of Multi A in Bristol, which comes into the category catered for by a couple of the bodies that he mentioned. It certainly does good work in Bristol; I know that it would appreciate more funding, and I understand that the Minister is aware of that. Will he visit Bristol soon so that I can show him work in progress and further plans, especially in the context of Bristol's bid to become European city of culture in 2008?

Dr. Howells: I will certainly visit Bristol, which has always been one of my favourite cities. Multi A is making a tremendous contribution to encouraging Bristol schoolchildren, often from difficult backgrounds, to experience the arts, including dance, choral singing and the visual arts. I was glad that its director, Vic Ecclestone, received an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours list. My Department is encouraging the funding agencies to ensure that Multi A has sufficient funds to allow it to continue to operate over the next three years.

National Football Stadium

2. **Mr. Peter Pike** (Burnley): What discussions she has had with those involved in the building of a new national football stadium for England. [2421]

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tessa Jowell): In the light of the Football Association's announcement on 1 May, the Government have asked Patrick Carter to conduct a review of the English national stadium project to examine whether it can be funded and managed at Wembley or, if that proves impractical, at another location in England. We expect to receive his report in late August, and I shall meet the key stakeholders shortly after.

Mr. Pike: My right hon. Friend will know that for many years I have pressed for a new national stadium for both football and rugby league. Whatever facilities there are in other parts of the United Kingdom, there should be a national stadium in London, preferably at Wembley. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Football

Association and others have messed about with this and that it is becoming something of a fiasco? People in the football world want a solution as soon as possible.

Tessa Jowell: My hon. Friend has long advocated the case for Wembley, but the fact is that the projected costs of the project more than doubled during the planning stage. The FA has so far not been able to develop an effective business plan, nor has it secured any substantial financial backing. The Government support the FA's desire for a modern national stadium. However, the prime mover is the FA; the Government, in this context, are not a walking cheque book or a stadium developer. We must remember that any cost overruns that require public funding, often running into millions, represent money not spent on refurbishing inner-city sports facilities for our children who want the chance to be the champions of the future.

Nick Harvey (North Devon): In view of the continuing questions about Wembley or any other national football stadium and the linked problems with Pickett's Lock, does the Secretary of State not think it time that the Government took responsibility for taking the key decisions about whether we will bid for prestigious games? Do not the legacy of the Sheffield student games and the possible deficit of the Manchester Commonwealth games, and now the embarrassment of finding a stadium for the 2005 world athletics championships, mean that the Government should take decisions about whether we are going to bid for prestigious games? They should decide whether or not we have the resources to hold them; they should take responsibility and drive them through from start to finish.

Tessa Jowell: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that any sports project on the scale of Wembley or Pickett's Lock can proceed only with Government support, but not, in every case, with Government as the principal or even substantial funder. There will always be infrastructure and other planning issues that require Government support to resolve them.

Mr. Tony Banks (West Ham): If we are just talking about a national football stadium, it could be anywhere in the country; it does not have to be at Wembley. But if we are talking about a national stadium for athletics, and given that, as Beijing has now been nominated to hold the 2008 Olympic games, London could possibly be a candidate city for a later Olympic games, we have to look again at the deck solution for providing athletics facilities there. Will my right hon. Friend tell us whether or not she has ruled out, or whether she has an open mind about, the original design, which involved a deck proposal for athletics at Wembley?

Tessa Jowell: Patrick Carter's review is considering all options, but I am advised that any proposal to link a possible development at Wembley with the world athletics championships would be impractical, because a stadium would not be ready on time.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (East Surrey): I warmly welcome the right hon. Lady to her new responsibilities, and I wish her well and certainly better luck than, her immediate predecessor, whom I am delighted to see in his place this afternoon.

Does the right hon. Lady agree that of all the problems that have landed on her desk since taking up her appointment—the dome, falling lottery sales, regional arts funding and the Minister for Sport's views on tennis—the most pressing by far is the crisis over Wembley? I am in danger of agreeing with the hon. Member for West Ham (Mr. Banks), but was it not wrong to kick athletics out of the Wembley plans, putting at risk £120 million of lottery funding and Britain's ability to host the 2005 world athletics championships? Does she agree that, if we wave goodbye to those championships, we can wave goodbye to hosting the Olympics for at least a generation?

Tessa Jowell: I do not accept that Wembley is the biggest issue facing me or my ministerial team. The biggest issue facing us is implementing the promises that we made to the people of this country on being re-elected on 7 June, key among which is getting sport back as part of the life of every child in the country and encouraging a generation of young sportsmen and women on to the ladder of success and opportunity; and the big sporting projects—whether Wembley, Pickett's Lock or any other—must be part of that strategy, not a distraction from it.

Sports Coaching Facilities

3. **Dr. Ian Gibson** (Norwich, North): What plans she has to improve coaching facilities throughout the United Kingdom in all sports. [2422]

The Minister for Sport (Mr. Richard Caborn): The development of coaching and coaching facilities is mainly the responsibility of a number of organisations, which receive Government funding, including the national governing bodies of sport, the Sports Council, UK Sport, Sport England and Sportscoach UK. The Government's plan for sport also includes a range of initiatives to provide significant new investment in coaching and coaching education, which will assist the grass roots and clubs. The coaching taskforce, which aims to initiate action to improve coaching at all levels, had its first meeting on 28 June.

Dr. Gibson: I start by assuring my right hon. Friend that his success in his new position will not depend on being able to answer pub-style questions. All he need know are the names of the manager and the coach of the all-conquering parliamentary football team—that is good enough. Will he seriously support a programme of major investment in coaching for all our schools and communities, based not just on producing superstars, but on developing the performance, skills, prowess and, indeed, enjoyment of everyone in our schools and communities?

Mr. Caborn: As my hon. Friend suggests, it is very important that we get the coaching right. That is why we look to the taskforce to produce recommendations. We are already committed to a programme of investment to create 3,000 full-time paid coaching posts by 2005, but I

hope that when the report is produced in, I think, March next year, we will be able to have a debate in this place, or at least in the Select Committee or a Standing Committee.

I do know who the coach of the all-party football club is—it is none other than my hon. Friend himself, so there was a little self-promotion in the question. May I give my hon. Friends some advice? Do not take part in pub quizzes on the radio; it is very dangerous. Still, I am more likely to get the answers to pub quizzes right than the Conservative party is to pick a leader who will win it the next general election.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Surrey Heath): Despite the new Minister's protestations, does he not recognise that what he most needs are coaching and knowledge in relation to his responsibilities? Does he not recognise that, in the eyes of the entire sporting media and the entire population, he shot himself in both hands and feet before even reaching his first Question Time? Will he not further recognise that his attempt to rehabilitate himself in this weekend's *Daily Telegraph* was a case of not getting the name of one of England's recent rugby heroes right and of pretending that he organised a Lords and Commons cricket tour in 1995? That showed great disrespect to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), who actually knows something about sport—*[Interruption.]*—and as Max Boyce, another rugby legend of whom the Minister has probably never heard, would say, "I know because I was there"—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Caborn: I take no lectures from Conservative Members about sport and participating in sport. Yes, I played cricket with the hon. Gentleman in South Africa and, if he examines the record to which he has just referred, he will find out who exactly organised the tour.

Lottery Funding (Good Causes)

4. **Phil Hope** (Corby): If she will make a statement on her assessment of Camelot's ability to deliver its projected funding for good causes. [2423]

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tessa Jowell): The National Lottery Commission made it clear, when it awarded the licence to Camelot in December, that it thought both bidders—Camelot and The People's Lottery—were over-optimistic in their sales projections. The commission's best estimate is that sales will be maintained at their current levels of around £5 billion a year, which would mean more than £10 billion for good causes over the duration of the next licence. Of course, everyone will be delighted if Camelot achieves more than that, but that is partly in its gift and partly depends on the confidence that the British public have in the lottery.

Phil Hope: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply and welcome her to the Dispatch Box. There is a concern that there might be a shortfall in the amount of money available from Camelot going into good causes. The Furniture Turnaround project in my constituency applied to the community fund; as it is a marvellous project, everyone agreed that it should receive the money. However, not enough money was available and that was because not enough money was coming from Camelot. Will my right hon. Friend press Camelot to make sure that, in years to come, a good proportion of the moneys that it raises goes into local good causes, because those good causes raise people's confidence in the lottery itself?

Tessa Jowell: I entirely accept my hon. Friend's point. Every single constituency has benefited from lottery funding, and it requires the powerful advocacy of individual Members of Parliament to secure the maximum available for their constituents.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): May I give my warm congratulations to my right hon. Friend on taking up what is undoubtedly the best job in government? She will find that it has its ups and downs but that she has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of millions of people in this country. In that context, whatever the sum of money raised for good causes by the national lottery, will she give a firm commitment that the percentages within that sum for the arts, sport, heritage and charities will be maintained throughout the period of the current franchise?

Tessa Jowell: I can certainly give that undertaking to my right hon. Friend, whom I thank. I know that the House will want to pay tribute to his outstanding period as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. As he will know, because he was responsible for renegotiating it, there will be a realignment of the amount allocated to each of the beneficiaries when the millennium fund ceases and the funds currently allocated to the millennium fund are allocated to the new opportunities fund, whose share will rise to 33 per cent. of the total.

Tourism Industry (Foot and Mouth)

5. **Tony Baldry** (Banbury): What assessment she has made of the impact of foot and mouth disease on the number of overseas visitors to Britain. [2424]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Dr. Kim Howells): The number of overseas visits to the United Kingdom was estimated to have fallen by 6 per cent. in the three months from March to May 2001 compared with the same period last year. My predecessor as Minister had planned to address a loss of this nature when awarding the British Tourist Authority an extra £14.2 million this year. Its strategy is to stimulate the recovery of inbound tourism, and I am confident the benefits of this initiative are now emerging.

Tony Baldry: I thank the Minister for that answer, but I am not sure that he appreciates that another Department is seeking to claim back 17.5 per cent. in supposed VAT payments out of the £14.2 million that his Department has made available to the British Tourist Authority. That seems somewhat bizarre.

Will the Minister take this opportunity to make two announcements? First, will he confirm that the British Tourist Authority will receive the full £14.2 million? That is what it believed it would receive and it seems only fair that it should receive it. Secondly, for those of us who represent English constituencies, there is some concern that the English Tourism Council does not have a

marketing function. Will the Minister give an undertaking that it can have such a function and will receive a fair share of the benefit of that £14.2 million?

Dr. Howells: First, I was surprised to hear that VAT payments had not been factored in. It was certainly a miscalculation on the part of the British Tourist Authority, and we are looking closely at that. Secondly, there is no question but that foot and mouth disease has severely tested present marketing arrangements. Marketing is the responsibility of regional tourist boards and, latterly, regional development agencies. We will be working very hard with them and the English Tourism Council to ensure that there are no inadequacies or slippages in the marketing of English regions in this country.

Mr. Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley): Would my hon. Friend consider the introduction of grants to local authorities where tourism has been affected by foot and mouth? In that way, we would know that the money was going to constituencies that have been directly affected.

Dr. Howells: We are working closely with local authorities to ensure that deferments of rates, for example, do not become a burden that they cannot stand. I very much hope that the considerable packages that we have made available will see local authorities and indirectly, businesses through what promises for some to be a very hard winter.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (East Surrey): I welcome the new Minister for tourism to the Front Bench. He has got off to a slightly ropy start. It was not the British Tourist Authority that put out press releases about £14.2 million, but his Department—without any reference to VAT.

Does the Minister understand why the insensitive and ill-timed insults—talk of slave wage rates and rip-offs—that he levelled at the tourism industry recently have caused such outrage? With tourism facing a £5 billion shortfall in revenue this year, investment falling and thousands of jobs at risk, do not people in the tourism industry have a right to expect some support from the Minister responsible? Will he therefore take this opportunity to redeem something of his reputation and apologise to the industry for his remarks?

Dr. Howells: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging that I have some reputation left. The article to which he referred—he clearly has not read it; he has never heard of the thing—appeared in *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*. His comments are clearly driven by the same geniuses who proposed the last Conservative manifesto.

The editor of the publication, David Harris, said that the

"article makes clear his"—

that is, my—

"commitment to the tourist industry, expressing views held by many when he says the tourist industry must raise its game. FMD has been a body blow, but we will regain our markets by competitive pricing and with a well motivated and trained workforce which delivers further improvements in quality."

That is precisely what I believe. I do not think that the British tourist industry will survive on the basis of slave wages. I note that Conservatives always oppose minimum wages, and will always do so because they think that they can run the economy on the cheap. That is why people do not trust them, why they are down to the rump facing us, and why they will remain that rump until they change their views.

Lottery Funding (Thurrock)

6. **Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): What proportion of lottery money has been *(a)* raised and *(b)* spent in Thurrock. [2425]

The Minister for Sport (Mr. Richard Caborn): Up-to-date information on the proportion of lottery money raised is not available. As of 5 July 2001, the total number of grants awarded to Thurrock is 79, and they are worth just over £2.5 million.

Andrew Mackinlay: The last figures that I had showed that the number of lottery tickets purchased in my constituency was twice the national average. When I listen to such replies, I am reminded of the song:

"It's the same the whole world over,

It's the rich wot gets the pleasure,

It's the poor wot gets the blame"—

and the Minister knows what follows—

"Ain't it all a ruddy shame?"

There needs to be discrimination in terms of geography and class in the distribution of resources. The marketing policy is aimed at some of the poorest and most disadvantaged people in the country, which is wrong. However, if it is going to happen, there has to be funding discrimination in favour of the poorest places in our constituencies, too. What is the Minister going to do about it?

Mr. Caborn: I thank my hon. Friend for that kind question. Camelot has carried out only one survey of ticket sales in each constituency, which it conducted on the fifth anniversary of the lottery. My hon. Friend is right: sales in his constituency were £60 million compared with the mean of about £30 million, and those figures are in the Library. The lottery distributors must develop a strategy to assess the needs of different areas. However, we must be careful if we are going to dispute the money based on the sales of lottery tickets. It is not entirely true that the better-off do not participate, because they do, and we would have to consider those figures as well.

On 27 June, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced £150 million for initiatives to secure a fairer share of lottery money for the 50 most deprived areas. We are trying to address the questions that my hon. Friend raises.

Sports Coaching Facilities

7. **John Mann** (Bassetlaw): What plans she has to increase the number of sports coaches in schools throughout the country. [2426]

The Minister for Sport (Mr. Richard Caborn): We are currently carrying out a review of coaching in England, to which I referred earlier, with a view to professionalising it and to encouraging more people to consider coaching as a career option. In addition, the

1,000 school sport co-ordinators who will be in place by 2004 will have funding for, among other things, bringing sport-specific coaches into schools to coach pupils.

John Mann: Would the Minister consider extending the sports coaching provision to those disaffected 14 and 15-year-olds who often do not attend schools in my constituency? Should he need a town that is rich in sports heritage to pilot such a scheme, may I modestly offer Worksop in my constituency as exactly the kind of town that would benefit from such expansion?

Mr. Caborn: My hon. Friend is right. Sport is clearly a major help in addressing many problems such as truancy. Worksop is obviously doing a tremendous amount in the sporting world. I understand that Worksop football club is thinking about relocating, and the Lawn Tennis Association is also considering a development in Worksop. If he writes to me, my officials and I will consider whether a pilot scheme could be established in Worksop.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Woking): Does the Minister agree that sport, especially team sport, for boys and young men in schools is important? I commend encouraging team sport among them to the Minister. With my judicial hat on, may I point out that young men who play a great deal of team sport are much less likely to turn to crime?

Mr. Caborn: That is true. We need to determine how we can develop high-quality facilities with high-quality coaching, because the two go together. Coaching is essential if we are to attract more people to sport. Figures that I saw the other day show that 150,000 young people in France are being coached for tennis. Here in the UK, the number is 18,000. I think that things are the same right across the sporting spectrum, which is why, when we receive the report of the taskforce on coaching, we will give it serious consideration. I hope that there will also be a constructive debate in the House.

Caroline Flint (Don Valley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Lawn Tennis Association has had many years to get its game together and improve young people's access to tennis? It is important that we provide coaching in schools, but there should be access to good tennis courts both inside schools and outside in local parks, so that children can take what they learn in school out into their community rather than have to go through private tennis clubs.

Mr. Caborn: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This morning, I discussed with the Sports Council how to develop a strategy nationally and firm up delivery regionally and locally. That is what we shall be working on in the coming months and years. The statistics on tennis are startling: the Lawn Tennis Association says that a third fewer people now play tennis than played six years ago. I think that that is largely down to facilities not being in the right areas. We are considering those issues and we hope to have some answers soon.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment and wish him well.

With the school holidays about to begin, will the right hon. Gentleman join me in urging parents, teachers and coaches to take every possible care and precaution to ensure the safety of children who take part in outdoor activities this summer? Does he agree that, for reasons of personal safety and physical fitness, every child should have swimming lessons and be able to swim by the age of 11? Sadly, as he knows, one in five children cannot swim by that age. We share a collective responsibility to put that right. Will he tell us when the national swimming facilities strategy will be published and what financial support the Government will give for a network of teaching pools throughout the country?

Mr. Caborn: I cannot give a precise date for the report, but I take the issue extremely seriously—especially as a parent. Both my children could swim before they could walk; I took them swimming when they were babies, which was absolutely the right thing to do. We will strive to create facilities and provide coaching to the standard necessary to ensure that every child can swim.

The little girl who drowned recently was a constituent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Her funeral, which was held at the weekend, serves as a reminder of our responsibility to ensure that every child in this country can swim.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston): May I recommend that my right hon. Friend visit Birmingham where, through the organisation Local Leagues, Birmingham university student coaches work with local primary and secondary schools to provide sports facilities outside school hours? In addition, I urge him to work more closely with local authorities to ensure that the sports facilities and fields that were sold under the Tory Government are restored to an appropriate state so that children, especially those in inner cities, can have access to sports fields and use the support available.

Mr. Caborn: As my hon. Friend says, it is important to have such facilities. Playing fields were being sold off at a rate of 40 a month when we came to power in 1997 and I became Minister for the Regions, Regeneration and Planning. With others, including my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Mr. Banks), then Minister for Sport, I put into operation an effective veto by the sports councils on any application to sell off a playing field. I shall take a look at Birmingham; and I hope that, in future, we shall be able to restore some of the facilities that were taken away by the Conservative Administration.

Lottery Grants

8. **Mr. Kevin Hughes** (Doncaster, North): What plans she has to ensure an even geographical distribution of lottery grants. [2428]

12. **Glenda Jackson** (Hampstead and Highgate): What measures she intends to promote the equitable geographical distribution of lottery funding. [2432]

13. **Paul Goggins** (Wythenshawe and Sale, East): What action she is taking to ensure an increase in the distribution of lottery funding to disadvantaged areas. [2433]

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tessa Jowell): I understand that you have linked questions 8, 12 and 13, Mr. Speaker. With permission, I shall answer all three together.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Lady linked the questions, not me.

Tessa Jowell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Government are determined to ensure that there is a fair distribution of funding throughout the country. We have directed distributors to ensure that all parts of the United Kingdom have access to lottery funds. In addition, I have asked the community fund to target £100 million, and the new opportunities fund to target an additional £50 million of its funds, to 50 areas that are both deprived and have received less lottery funding than other parts of the country. The scheme will be UK wide and will begin in April 2002.

Mr. Hughes: I welcome my right hon. Friend to her new post, as, indeed, I welcome her answer. However, I have heard fine words before, from her predecessor. My right hon. Friend will be aware that the average for constituencies around the country is £14 million or thereabouts. We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Andrew Mackinlay) that his constituency received as little as £2.5 million. However, I have to tell the Secretary of State that my constituency had less than £1 million: the amount is £900,000 for Doncaster, North. That was despite the meetings and correspondence with my right hon. Friend's predecessors, which were all to no avail. Will my right hon. Friend now address the issue properly so that my constituents have a fair share of the money that they pay into lottery funding? In all fairness to her predecessors—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the Minister has enough to go on.

Tessa Jowell: I entirely accept my hon. Friend's analysis. He is right about the figures for his own constituency. Nationally, the average per capita award is just over £76 but my hon. Friend's constituency received less than £11 per head of population. That is why I made my recent announcement about the investment of £150 million in precisely such areas, not only so that the lottery is fair in its distribution but so that it produces benefits for some of our most deprived communities, many of which lack the high levels of organisation and so forth that are needed to develop lottery bids. I intend to put that help in place to ensure that my hon. Friend's constituents benefit from the lottery as they should.

Glenda Jackson: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. She is entirely right: it is not only the amounts that go to the most deprived areas—certainly in London we have the largest number of such wards in the UK—but the difficulty experienced by many community groups in actually putting together a bid. Will she ensure that it is not as difficult to tap into her proposals to assist such communities as it is at present?

Tessa Jowell: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. Yes, we are determined—as was my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)—to ensure that the bureaucracy and administration of the lottery are as simple and as cheap as possible, consistent with efficiency. However, it is also worth comparing the per capita lottery spend of £286 per head in my hon. Friend's constituency of Hampstead and Highgate with the sum of just under £11 in Doncaster, North to which I referred earlier. That makes the case for the Government's announcement.

Paul Goggins: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's remarks, but in my constituency, which has two of the 100 poorest wards anywhere in the country, projects have received a little more than £4 million over the past seven years—well below the average. In future, can my constituents who spend money on the lottery look forward to more of their cash coming back to fund activities in their own community?

Tessa Jowell: Yes.

Mr. Roy Beggs (East Antrim): I, too, welcome the right hon. Lady and her team to the Front Bench. Does she agree that a number of excellent projects that had attracted millennium lottery funding, such as the Gobbins Path project in my constituency, could not proceed because of the burden that was going to be placed on the sponsor—in this case, Larne borough council—and hence on its ratepayers? Will she examine those previously approved projects that did not proceed, and give consideration to alternative matching funding to enable those worthwhile projects to proceed at some time in the future?

Tessa Jowell: With respect, it would be a matter for the individual lottery distributors to reconsider any previously considered projects. I am sure that, as a strong advocate of his constituents and projects in his constituency, the hon. Gentleman will make sure that that step is taken if necessary.

Dr. Julian Lewis (New Forest, East): Does the Secretary of State think that she might have fewer complaints from her own Back Benches about the distribution of lottery funds if the Government had stuck to the pledge that they gave in their July 1997 White Paper, in which they stated that they

"don't believe that it would be right to use Lottery money to pay for things which are the Government's responsibilities"?

Perhaps if the Government were raiding the lottery funds less for health, education and environment matters, which are Government responsibilities, the right hon. Lady would not be facing criticisms of the kind that she is justifiably facing now.

Tessa Jowell: The most important thing about the lottery is that it has the confidence of the British people, 70 per cent. of whom play the lottery. The priorities of the new opportunities fund—health, education and environment—are precisely the priorities to which people wanted their lottery spending to be devoted. We are doing

what people asked us to do. That is why my right hon. and hon. Friends support the Government's position. They know that in every one of their constituencies, there are about 21 lottery-funded projects improving the quality of life of their constituents.

Adam Price (East Carmarthen and Dinefwr): I am sure that the Minister is aware of the recent University of Newcastle study which showed that in rural and disadvantaged areas, the community fund was responsible for providing up to 50 per cent. of the funding for voluntary and community groups. In the light of that, will the Minister explain why the Wales committee of the community fund is projecting a cut in expenditure of 43 per cent. over a three-year period, compared to a reduction in the UK of 17 per cent? Why is there such a discrepancy? The cut will be devastating to the voluntary sector in Wales. Will the Minister today agree to reverse that decision? Otherwise her protestations about a fair distribution across the UK will seem hollow.

Tessa Jowell: I will not announce a reversal of that decision today, but I will study with care the research that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, and I will write to him once I have had time to consider both its conclusions and the figures that he gave the House this afternoon.

Mr. Derek Wyatt (Sittingbourne and Sheppey): My right hon. Friend will know that the longer a lottery exists, the less people play it. Hon. Members say that they would like much more local distribution of the spend on the lottery. Will my right hon. Friend consider the idea that 10 per cent. of the spend on a lottery ticket should stay in the local community in the first place without having to go to the centre and come back, a process the cost of which is substantial and unnecessary?

Tessa Jowell: I have made clear in my replies the Government's intention to make sure that every part of the country benefits as it should from lottery funds and lottery investment. There will be a review of the lottery in the next two years or so. I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members will submit their specific proposals for further improvement of the lottery in the next licence period, although that is some years hence.

Ofcom

9. **Chris Grayling** (Epsom and Ewell): When she plans to bring forward legislation to establish the proposed media regulator Ofcom. [2429]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Dr. Kim Howells): The Government introduced a paving Bill on 12 July which will establish Ofcom and enable it and the existing regulators to begin the preparations for the proposed new regulatory regime. Ofcom will receive no regulatory functions until the main communications Bill is enacted.

Chris Grayling: I have been approached in recent weeks by a number of my constituents expressing great concern about what they see as the deterioration in the standard of television material seen in prime time. Will the Minister give the House an undertaking that he will ensure that both Ofcom and the current regulators take strong action to reverse that trend and to ensure that the material that we see on our prime time television is acceptable?

Dr. Howells: I would like very much to be able to do that. I cannot abide "Big Brother" and I would love it to be taken off our screens. However, I think the day when politicians and Whitehall officials decided what should be on television would be a very sad one.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I welcome my hon. Friend's statement, especially as one of the people who wrote "Communicating Britain's Future", in which we argued the case for an umbrella organisation such as that which he announced. Has he closed his mind to broadening that umbrella or are the current suggestions about what should be included in Ofcom cut and dried?

Dr. Howells: No, those suggestions are not cut and dried, and the umbrella is of an indeterminate size at the moment. I have not shut my mind to anything. If I knew what my hon. Friend was on about, I might be able to answer him more specifically.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (East Surrey): We Opposition Members welcome honesty whenever we hear it from the Labour Benches, although some in the industry think that Ofcom might turn into Big Brother. Does the Under-Secretary accept that the paving Bill that appeared last week offers no practical benefit to the media and communications industry, whose ability to meet the rapidly changing world in which it operates is being impaired by regulations that have not changed for five years and will not do so for at least another two years? I gently remind him that the Labour party first promised to reform regulation back in 1997. Is it not odd that, now that the Bill has eventually appeared, it not only promises the establishment of Ofcom but suggests a means for its premature demise? Why is that, and what is the sense in considering proposals for the reform of media regulation without any reference to the BBC, which still has almost 40 per cent. of audience share?

Dr. Howells: I believe in sunset clauses, because I think that when regulation is irrelevant or useless, we should get rid of it. Indeed, I should like that principle to be applied to most new regulation that comes before the House. We are sticking to our manifesto commitment to deliver Ofcom by 2003: that is what we are going to try to do. We never promised to include the regulation of the BBC—or, at least, the core of BBC regulation—as part of that new legislation.

Mr. Chris Bryant (Rhondda): I thank my hon. Friend for his answer to the initial question, especially as it was exactly the same as an answer given in Trade and Industry questions last Thursday. I presume that that means that we will see joined-up handwriting between the two Departments on this matter in the next two years. Does he believe that universal access is one of the most urgent issues on which Ofcom must deliver? The matter is especially important at a time when many parts of the country do not have digital terrestrial television coverage, cable coverage or ADSL—asymmetric digital subscriber

line—coverage. This is a major issue for those who want the whole country and not just some parts of it to share in new technology.

Dr. Howells: The question of coverage must be one of the major tests before there is any idea of the analogue signal being switched off. My hon. Friend, who has the great privilege of representing the Rhondda valley, will know that we have a greater concentration of relay stations in that area than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. We must ensure that the question of coverage is solved, otherwise we will disfranchise many people from their main source of information and entertainment.

Athletics Stadium, Pickett's Lock

10. **Sir Sydney Chapman** (Chipping Barnet): If she will make a statement on the construction of the new athletics stadium at Pickett's Lock, with particular reference to the commencement of site works and the completion of the project. [2430]

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tessa Jowell): I am tempted to refer the House to the answer that I gave to question 2, which concerned Wembley, as Sport England has concluded that it is not yet able to commit lottery funding to the Lee valley national athletics centre project. On 2 July, Sport England asked Patrick Carter, who is conducting the review of the English national stadium, to carry out a separate review to assess whether the project can be funded and managed in its present form. The Government welcome that review and look forward to receiving its conclusions.

Sir Sydney Chapman: The right hon. Lady knows that, at the end of the last Parliament, her predecessor categorically stated in answer to a question from me that the Pickett's Lock project would go ahead. Will she confirm that, if it is going ahead, it must be built by 2004 to house the world athletics championships? If it is not going to go ahead, will she give an assurance that the Wembley stadium project will include an athletics track, which will be ready by 2004?

Tessa Jowell: We have made a clear commitment to host the 2005 world athletics championships in a world-class stadium. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that Pickett's Lock had been identified as the location for the stadium. However, there is a clear funding gap, and Sport England was not prepared to commit more money to the project until it was sure of its financial viability. I support that judgment and the review that Patrick Carter is carrying out.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners, was asked—

Clergy (Conditions of Service)

33. **Mr. Ben Chapman** (Wirral, South): If he will make a statement on conditions of service for the clergy. [2455]

Mr. Stuart Bell (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): Conditions vary slightly from diocese to diocese. However, in addition to their stipend, based on a national stipends benchmark of £16,910 from April 2001, clergy receive free accommodation or a housing allowance, and membership of a non-contributory pension scheme. In addition, their working expenses should be fully reimbursed.

Mr. Chapman: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is anxiety about the form of the proposed clergy disciplinary tribunal and worries about the stipends review body, which, it is believed, will simply maintain the status quo? When is it intended to give the clergy conditions of service similar to those that others enjoy, appropriate contracts, and appropriate redress in cases of dismissal?

Mr. Bell: My hon. Friend may be anticipating the Clergy Discipline Measure which will shortly be before the Ecclesiastical Committee. He knows that the Government have powers under the Employment Rights Act 1996 to give ministers of religion some employees' rights. The Government have undertaken to issue a consultation document before exercising their powers under the Act. The Archbishops Council has set up a group to co-ordinate the Church's response. I am sure that the clergy will welcome that and I hope that my hon. Friend accepts the assurance that, ultimately, they will be properly looked after.

Miss Anne McIntosh (Vale of York): I am sure that the clergy will welcome that response. May I take the opportunity to pay tribute to them, especially the vicars of the hillside parishes, which have been caught up in the dreadful foot and mouth crisis? I pay tribute to their tremendous efforts, which have been beyond the call of duty, to deal with the human stress and suffering at this time.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for drawing attention to the work of the clergy in rural areas. I also pay tribute to the Bishop of Bradford, who has worked hard in the aftermath of the riots there.

Prelates

34. **Mr. Desmond Swayne** (New Forest, West): If he will make a statement about annual expenditure on prelates. [2456]

Mr. Stuart Bell (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): The Church Commissioners spent £15.8 million in 2000 on bishops' stipends and working costs and looking after diocesan bishops' houses, which the Commissioners own. Housing and working costs budgets are agreed annually.

Mr. Swayne: Does the hon. Member agree that, notwithstanding the recent increases, the expenses continue to represent a bargain for the Church, especially when compared with our own expenses? What will the

commissioners do to relieve prelates of administrative burdens so that they can concentrate on the teaching ministry of which the nation is in such great need?

Mr. Bell: Fortunately for me, I am not responsible for MPs' pay structures or costs. As Sue MacGregor said on Radio 4's "Today" programme when interviewing Professor Anthony Mellows, bishops are struggling to carry out their daily tasks because of mounting financial and other burdens. Professor Mellows, who is conducting the review of bishops' needs and resources, responded by saying that there was a great difference between the public perception, which was of rather grand life styles, and the reality of the position. The hon. Gentleman's point on the way in which the Church Commissioners can help to relieve bishops of their administrative burden is well taken and will be looked at.

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): Will the hon. Gentleman assure the House that he has absolutely no sympathy with the nitpicking Scrooges who would deprive bishops of the opportunity to obtain modest driving assistance? It is surely not right that bishops should have to drive themselves round their dioceses to all their engagements.

Mr. Bell: All that I can say to the hon. Gentleman is, "Amen to that."

Church Buildings (Maintenance)

35. **Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): How much public funding has been invested in the maintenance of church buildings in each of the past five years. [2457]

Mr. Stuart Bell (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): Broadly, grants offered—as opposed to expended—over the past five years for all places of worship, including those of other denominations and faiths, and for works to contents as well as fabric, were in the order of £20 million a year.

Paul Flynn: That is a considerable sum of money. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have noted that many churches are now using some of their surplus space resulting from dwindling congregations for community purposes, such as nursery schools, youth clubs, meetings and facilities for pensioners. Will he ensure that, when these grants are given in future, the possibility of dual use for community purposes is taken into account as well as architectural and historic considerations?

Mr. Bell: My hon. Friend says that £20 million a year is a lot of money, but the churches require something like £120 million a year. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that churches, particularly those in rural areas, are playing a greater part in the community. We welcome and encourage that, and my hon. Friend's comments will help us to do so.

Mr. John Bercow (Buckingham): To what extent has public funding of the maintenance of church buildings been counteracted and offset by the revenues from VAT? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is an inherent absurdity in giving with one hand and taking away with the other?

Mr. Bell: That inherent absurdity was taken into account by the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he agreed to give grants to bring down the value of VAT from 17.5 per cent. to 5 per cent. The VAT costs on repairs and maintenance to listed Church of England buildings is estimated to be £10 million. We are now discussing with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how we can establish procedures whereby the grants announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer can be brought into effect. It is worthy and important that the hon. Gentleman has referred to this matter today.

Investment Portfolio

36. **Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (Cotswold): If he will make a statement on the performance of the Commissioners' investment; and how it affects their ability to support the dioceses. [2458]

Mr. Stuart Bell (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): In 2000, the total return earned by the commissioners on their investments was 3.1 per cent. This compared favourably with the Wood Mackenzie all-funds universe average of minus 1.3 per cent. The commissioners were in the top 10 per cent. of funds measured by WM.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: With great respect to the Second Church Estates Commissioner, I thought that his answer was slightly complacent. He will be aware that, on investment assets of £3.1 billion, the Church's expenditure over income last year was £34 million—a loss of £34 million. That was the third year in a row in which the Church made a loss. Will the hon. Gentleman undertake carefully to look at the Church's expenditure, including the immovable costs such as pensions, to ensure that the income can better be directed to the Church's ministry as a whole, rather than being used to meet unnecessary costs?

Mr. Bell: In relation to support for the dioceses, our good investment performance means that more money is available to support the parish ministry in areas of need and opportunity. The asset base of the commissioners is £4.5 billion, not £3.1 billion. On the hon. Gentleman's question about pensions, the commissioners have agreed to make a further £10 million available for transitional relief for pension contributions in the period 2002-04.

Mr. Tony Banks (West Ham): May I say to my hon. Friend that one would have thought that, with God on their side, the commissioners could get a rather better return on their investments? Does he accept that it would be advisable for the commissioners to consider ethical investment because it not only makes a good return but would be good for the morality of the Church and its position?

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question and welcome him back to Church Commissioners Question Time. He makes a perfectly valid point. We have an ethical investment unit that

considers and makes a proper statement regarding the commissioners' investments, although we take my hon. Friend's point very much on board.

Hagg Wood, Dunnington

38. **Mr. John Grogan** (Selby): What progress has been made in negotiations with Forest Enterprise regarding Hagg wood, near Dunnington. [2460]

Mr. Stuart Bell (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): I can only refer my hon. Friend to a previous answer.

Mr. Grogan: Will my hon. Friend do everything possible to achieve a tripartite agreement between Forest Enterprise, the Church Commissioners and Friends of Hagg Wood so that the people of Yorkshire can enjoy the wood to the full and so that his name will be remembered down the centuries by the villagers?

Mr. Bell: I am grateful for the opportunity to have my name remembered down the centuries. My hon. Friend has previously asked me a question as to the future of the matters to which he refers. We hope that such a tripartite agreement will be achieved.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mrs. Jackie Lawrence (Preseli Pembrokeshire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) tabled an amendment that names me. He did not seek my consent before tabling it. I understand that he has withdrawn it, but can you advise whether it is in order for a Member to table an amendment without seeking the named Member's consent and whether that conforms with the normal courtesies of the House?

Mr. Speaker: Members seeking to amend these motions should ensure that their amendments conform with the provision of Standing Order No. 121(1). That requires the proposer of the amendment to endeavour to find out previously whether each Member he is proposing to add to the Committee is willing to serve. From what the hon. Lady says, it appears that the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not seek to secure her agreement. I deprecate his actions, which I regard as a discourtesy to her and to the House.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham has done this about 20 times, surely he has multiplied his discourtesies to such an extent that some form of friendly but disciplinary action ought to be taken?

Mr. Speaker: I need to inform the right hon. and learned Gentleman only once and I hope that that will be the last occasion that it ever happens.

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A week ago in the Chamber, we had a Second Reading debate on the Export Control Bill. Several hon. Members protested because certain documents were not made available until the last minute. There was great concern that, although one of the most important aspects of the Quadripartite Committee recommendations was prior scrutiny, no Government response was made in the debate. The response came late on Thursday and rejected prior scrutiny.

The debate on Monday would have been very different had we known that that was to be the Government response and it is difficult for us to agree to proceed on Second Reading unless we possess all the facts. I ask you to protect the rights of Back Benchers.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that Front Benchers will have heard what the hon. Lady has had to say.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On motions, what recourse is open to Members who table an amendment that appears to be in order and that has the support of many hon. Members on both sides of the House but is not selected for debate? We have before us motions that are invidious in that they propose that individuals be taken off Committees only to allow others to go on to them. Is not there a case for you to reconsider your ruling, given the number of Members who supported my amendment?

Mr. Speaker: There is no case. I have the final decision in these matters, and that is the end of it.

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It might be helpful if you were to tell the House whether you would consider requests for separate and individual votes on the motions on different Committees. If the House were able to do that, as I suspect that it is entitled to, and express a view on the membership of individual Committees, that would go some way towards helping the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice).

Mr. Speaker: If hon. Members will be patient, I shall make a statement along those lines.

Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With reference to your comments a few moments ago, may I inform the House that the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham did not seek my permission or communicate with me before tabling his amendment, which appears on today's Order Paper? Is that amendment in order?

Mr. Speaker: I have a statement to make, which may clarify matters for the hon. Lady.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. One of the amendments that you have selected is the very amendment that refers to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs. Ellman). Does that create a problem? You have said that tabling amendments without contacting the Member concerned is not a smart thing to do—it is unpleasant. However, that amendment has been selected, whereas other amendments that would have captured our attention and taken personality out of the issue have not been selected. Dare I say that that is not very clever?

Mr. Speaker: Difficult decisions had to be made on whether to accept amendments. I shall be making a statement that may clarify matters.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I make it absolutely clear that I would never support an amendment to remove my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside from the Committee? She is a most useful, brilliant and hard-working member of the Committee, and contributes enormously to its work.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It was because of these problems that I tabled amendments regarding two of the Committees that did not name particular Members to be taken off, but instead asked the Committee of Selection to reconsider

[Mr. Frank Field]

the whole of the membership of Select Committees and to report back quickly to the House with a new list of names after it had listened to our debate.

Mr. Speaker: It is a difficult issue. All the motions before us refer to Members by name, so it is inevitable that some amendments remove Members from Committees and replace them with others.

Mr. Field: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman is in danger of arguing the case for his amendment.

Mr. Field: I was not trying to single out any name or group of names. I was merely proposing that the Committee of Selection be asked to consider the whole membership and to report back. It may decide to propose the same group of names after listening to our debate. I was not trying to put the House in the position of having to pick off individuals Members to bring greater justice to other Members.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, the right hon. Gentleman can vote against the motion and allow the Committee of Selection to do exactly that.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the enormous interest in the House and among the public about the arrangements for appointments to Select Committees, and given the undue haste with which they have been made, can you advise what procedures are available to delay the whole issue? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said, the Committee of Selection could come up with some new, more representative names that, I hope, would be more democratically chosen than those currently proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The procedure would be to vote against the motions before us.

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATED FUND (APPROPRIATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 56 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith, and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Business of the House

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Minister to move motion 2, I want to make a brief statement about proceedings on the motions concerning nominations to Select Committees.

If the Business of the House motion is agreed to, I propose that motions 3 to 29 should be debated together. When the debate concludes, presumably at 7 pm, the Question will be put on each motion in turn. Where an amendment has been selected, the Chair will invite the hon. Member proposing it to move it formally, and the House will vote first on the amendment and then on the main motion. A list of the amendments that I have selected is available in the No Lobby.

May I make it clear that today's proceedings are about nominations to Select Committees? That includes the process by which nominations are made, but it does not include the wider issues about the powers, functions and resources of Select Committees, which were raised during debate on Thursday 5 July.

I have not selected either of the amendments to the Business of the House motion, and I should make it clear that the scope of debate on that motion is limited to the arrangements for today's proceedings.

3.41 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office (Mr. Stephen Twigg): I beg to move,

That, at this day's sitting, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on any Motion relating to the membership of Select Committees and the appointment of a Select Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons not later than Seven o'clock; such Questions shall include the Questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; such Questions may be decided, though opposed, after the expiration of the time for opposed business; and Standing Order No. 38 (Procedure on divisions) shall apply and the Order [28th June] relating to Deferred Divisions shall not apply if, after the time for the interruption of business, the opinion of the Speaker as to the decision on a Question is challenged in respect of any of the said Questions.

I shall be brief in outlining the purpose of the business motion. In effect, the House is being asked to approve the timing of today's debates on Select Committees, including that on the establishment of the Modernisation Committee. The matter is important to the House, and I am therefore pleased that a half-day of prime parliamentary time has been provided for it.

No previous Government have set aside time for debates on the nominations for Select Committees before 10 pm. In past Parliaments, similar debates were timetabled for just one and a half hours. For example, in 1983 the issue was debated after 10 pm, for one and a half hours. That was six months after the state opening of Parliament. In 1987 the issue was again debated after 10 pm, with a limit of 90 minutes, and six months after the state opening of Parliament. In 1992 the debate was taken three months after the state opening, and again it was held after 10 pm. This year, the proposals are before the House just one month after the state opening, with more than double the time allocated for debate and the debate held in prime time.

The motion ensures that the Questions necessary to decide these matters, including the Questions on any amendments, can be put today at 7 pm. An early decision means that the Select Committees will be able to begin their work before the summer recess—indeed, as soon as the senior member calls a meeting.

The purpose of today's debate is to carry through the wish of the House. I urge Members on both sides to approve the motion, so that we can move on to the important debate and enable the Select Committees to be established today.

3.43 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton): So that we all understand what half a day in prime time means, let me point out that we have barely three and a quarter hours in which to deal with some 27 motions and five important amendments tabled by Members across the House and selected by you, Mr. Speaker.

What distinguishes this debate from those in earlier years is the discontent among Back Benchers, again across the House.

Hugh Bayley (City of York): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Browning: No, I will not. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

I was referring to the discontent across the House—

Hugh Bayley: Nicholas Winterton.

Mrs. Browning: The hon. Gentleman shouts from a sedentary position. If he had done his homework, he would know that I abstained in the vote in 1992. I am not the person at whom to direct gibes about that vote.

This is an important matter. Clearly, we would all like the rules under which nominations are made to have been changed by now; but thanks to an intransigent Government and an earlier Leader of the House who cared little for the wishes of Back Benchers on either side, we must now conduct a very controversial debate in just three and a quarter hours.

3.44 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I am disappointed that right hon. and hon. Members will not be able to look behind the strict confines of the individual amendments that are before us. My disquiet, which is widely shared, has been aroused because we are being asked to agree memberships of Select Committees for a full Parliament—four or five years—when many people are concerned that the names have been plucked out of the air. Would not it be better to restrict the membership of the Committees to 12 calendar months, until 16 July next year, when we could debate and vote on the recommendations of the Liaison Committee report, which are germane—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already made a statement regarding the Business of the House motion, which is very narrow. The hon. Gentleman should perhaps put that argument when we reach the next set of motions. I think that that would be the best thing for him to do.

3.45 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): The question is why the Government seek arbitrarily to limit the time that the House has to debate what is supposed to be a House of Commons matter. As usual, the Government have thought that we should not have a prolonged debate, because that might be awkward or embarrassing. The Government also do not want Members of Parliament delayed too long in the House because they must all be home and tucked up in their beds early. The Government have put on Government business after this business, although limited in time, so it is obvious that the blame for the arbitrary truncation of the debate rests squarely with the Government.

What could possibly be the Government's motivation for the arbitrary time limit on the debate on the next set of motions? As you have kindly indicated, Mr. Speaker, it will be proper during that debate for the House to consider the method of selection of Select Committee memberships. That may be the only opportunity in this Parliament to deal properly with that question, which is now much on people's minds.

Hugh Bayley: If the right hon. Gentleman is arguing that three and a half hours is too short a time to debate the issues before the House this afternoon, why did he think that one and a half hours was sufficient time in 1992, when the Conservative Government, of which he was a member, excluded the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) from the chairmanship of the Health Committee?

Mr. Forth: I do not recall any argument at the time from Labour Members. They were, as usual, silent on the matter. In fact, they probably were not here.

This matter is rightly attracting more attention from the House, which is a welcome development. However, it will be for hon. Members to decide whether we can do justice to all the implications of the many motions in the brief time that the Government are allowing for debate. After all, we will be considering the membership of 27 Committees of the House and we are entitled to take a view on each of the proposed memberships, and on the method for determining them. That will require us to gaze into some murky depths, because we all think that we know how the determination is made.

Many hon. Members will be happy with the proposals, because they will benefit from being members of the Committee of their choice. However, an equal number will be unhappy and some may even be suspicious of the

[Mr. Forth]

way in which the matter has been handled. We also have six amendments to consider. If the Government wish to suggest that the membership of 27 Committees, six amendments and a debate on the procedure for determining the membership can be concluded properly in the time allowed—this will be our only opportunity in this Session and, perhaps, this Parliament—I think that few hon. Members would favour that suggestion.

Mr. John Bercow (Buckingham): My right hon. Friend is addressing the House with his usual restraint and understatement. Does he agree that the allocation of time is inadequate not only because it allows fewer than four minutes for debate on each of the motions on the Order Paper but because, for the debate to be adequate, we need a reiteration by the Leader of the House of what he is reported in the news media to have declared—namely, that he personally opposes the dismissal of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)?

Mr. Forth: I agree with my hon. Friend. It would be of considerable interest if the Leader of the House were to honour us with an idea of what he had in mind.

The Government might want to give further consideration to withdrawing the motion if only in the light of the number of Members who are present which, I regret to say, is unusually large. I would rather that a normal number of Members were present for such a debate—that would bring great joy to my heart. If the Leader of the House were to glance around the Chamber, particularly behind him, and look at the number of his colleagues who are here for these debates, to say nothing of Members on this side of the House, he might conclude that if even a fraction of those present wanted to participate, the time allowed would be lamentably inadequate. On that basis alone, I hope that he will seek leave to withdraw the motion so that the debate can continue at the pleasure of the House and Members can allocate their own time to the matter to decide it properly.

Surely we all agree that the creation and membership of our Select Committees is one of the most important acts that we will perform in this Parliament. For it to be performed within this ridiculously short time scale and against this guillotine, which is what the motion amounts to, is unacceptable. My plea is that, before we are forced to vote against the motion, the Government should withdraw it.

3.52 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I support the motion. Because of the advance publicity, a large number of our constituents will probably be watching the debate live, and I believe that many of them will be bemused by what they have heard so far and will fail to understand the points that have been made. As someone who has been in the House since 1979 and has always had to participate in these debates after 10 o'clock at night, I thank the Government for giving us prime time. We still have more than three hours, and my guess is that the House will be able to make its views effectively known to the Government before the 7 o'clock motion falls.

3.53 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Sleaford and North Hykeham): The right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said that his constituents would be bemused. They should not be, because as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) rightly said, the appointment of Select Committees is one of the most important acts carried out by this Chamber. We are appointing the method by which it is generally agreed that the Government of the day are most effectively scrutinised and called to account. As he and my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) said, that is essentially a House of Commons matter. We are seeing an attempt by the Government to control the ability of the House to select the Select Committees. In other words, the ability of the House properly to perform its functions on a House of Commons matter is being curtailed.

David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am one of those who is concerned with regard to the two Members in question. The right hon. and learned Gentleman says that the Government should not interfere. However, on 13 July 1992, in a debate about the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) being refused reappointment to a Select Committee by the Government of the day because he was considered too much of a hindrance, the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not take the same view. In the Division Lobby, he voted against the hon. Member for Macclesfield being reappointed to the chairmanship of the Select Committee on Health. Will he explain why he did not resign his post if he considered it such a crucial matter?

Mr. Hogg: Of course I shall. There are many things that one does in government with which one does not necessarily agree; that is the nature of collective responsibility. Indeed, having heard the Leader of the House make observations both in private and public, I suspect that he does not agree with the decision not to appoint the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire) *rose—*

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way in a moment.

Because of collective responsibility, the Leader of the House is in the Chamber and will move the motion that excludes the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a narrow business of the House motion and we are going wide of it.

Sir Patrick Cormack: I am grateful, Mr. Speaker. I was merely going to ask my right hon. and learned Friend to admit that he was wrong on that previous occasion.

Mr. Hogg: I doubt that I was wrong, because I would have been expressing in private the view that I am now expressing in public. The real question is whether one should always resign when one does not wish to oppose a particular measure. That is nonsense; we would never have government. I do not suppose that I was wrong; I imagine that I expressed in private what I am saying today. I just did not do it in public; I was discreet.

The substantive issue is whether the House should appoint Select Committees. Nominations for 27 or so Committees are to be decided, six amendments have been tabled and there are six substantive debates. We have four hours in which to complete that.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Three hours.

Mr. Hogg: The idea that we can do so in three hours is absurd. The House ought to say that there should be Divisions on the motions at 10 o'clock at the earliest. The idea that we should have them at 7 o'clock is a travesty of democracy but only too typical of the Government.

3.57 pm

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): I congratulate the Government on making the Select Committee appointments rapidly; that is unprecedented and has never been achieved before in my 22 years in the House. I am deeply disappointed by the outcome, but I congratulate them on the speed of the appointments and on having this debate in prime time, which is also unprecedented in my time. We have had enough procedural nonsense. Please can we get on with the substantive debate?

3.58 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): My experience of guillotine debates and subjects that the Executive propose to guillotine is that they have a natural time span. Frankly, I do not know whether debate on the nominations would reasonably run to 7 o'clock or later. However, in total, there are more than 30 amendments and motions. Some are highly contentious. The House has rarely been as full as it is today for a debate on procedural matters. We therefore know that the issues are highly contentious. The Executive, who are controlling Committee membership through the nominations on the Order Paper, now control the time during which the House can reasonably debate them.

I do not know whether the substantive debate will run until 7 o'clock; but, following this debate and a subsequent Division, there will be less than three hours for it. We should allow it to run its natural course. My guess is that it would probably run until just after 7 o'clock, so why waste time, as the Government increasingly do? The fact is that time to debate the present motion takes time out of the following debates, which are to run until 7 o'clock. That happens with every guillotine and it squeezes the time for debate, which means that many of us who feel strongly about such issues may not have an opportunity to speak on them.

We are trying to reinforce the message to the Executive, who are controlling not only the timetable, but the overall debate and Committee membership, that we should be allowed to speak on those matters as we wish. A number of Members have assembled here because they know in their heart of hearts that, however strongly they wish to speak, they will not be able to under the guillotine.

3.59 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I, too, hope that we take a decision on this procedural motion very quickly, but I suggest that the whole business of appointing Select Committees, rushed timetables, timetable motions and guillotine motions does not bring Parliament into good repute anywhere outside this building. The public want Parliament to hold the Executive to account; they want Members to be able freely to question what the Executive, Ministers and agencies do; and, above all, they want Select Committees to be appointed not by the Executive or, under powers of patronage, by the Leader of the Opposition, but by non-office-holding Back Benchers.

A debate on such an important issue should not be limited to three hours. If necessary, the debate should go on longer, and I will invite the House to vote against this timetable motion, so that we can have more time seriously to discuss all the issues. It seems that too often, too quickly and too readily the House gives up its powers or allows restrictions to be placed on them and on debate, which debases the House in the public eye. We should consider the turnout in the recent general election and think about what the turnout will be in future elections.

If the House wants to be taken seriously, it must take itself and its role as a body of scrutiny, questioning, debate and proposal much more seriously than it does at present. We have already had a debate on "Shifting the Balance". Surely the message is that all is not well in the way that the House is run, and perhaps now is the time, during a debate on Select Committee appointments, to think about how to make the House more representative, more democratic and, above all, more effective in its work.

4.1 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I want to make a brief point that follows from what has just been said. This debate is limited to three hours, but following your strictures on the motions and amendments, Mr. Speaker, there could be eight or nine hours of votes. Three hours of debate and perhaps 10 hours voting is a strange ratio; perhaps those on the Government Front Bench will address that point.

Mr. Stephen Twigg: I am rapidly becoming used to being the Minister with responsibility for business of the House motions, and as such I am used to the synthetic anger conjured up by some Opposition Members, but the humbug that we have heard today takes the biscuit. We propose, if I am brief, to have three hours of debate, when on every previous similar occasion there has been only an hour and a half. We are debating the motion in prime time, when every similar debate under Conservative Governments was taken after 10 o'clock and often in the early hours of the morning. There are serious issues to contend with. We would have had three and a half hours of debate. We have lost time only because of the contributions made by Opposition Members. I suggest that we accept the motion immediately, so that we can have three hours of proper debate on the matter in hand.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 290, Noes 160.

Division No. 25] **[4.3 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Alexander, Douglas
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atkins, Charlotte
Bailey, Adrian
Baird, Vera
Banks, Tony
Barrett, John
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret

Begg, Miss Anne
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Blackman, Liz
Blizzard, Bob
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brake, Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brown, Rt Hon Nicholas *(Newcastle E & Wallsend)*
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burnham, Andy
Burstow, Paul
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Cable, Dr Vincent
Cairns, David
Calton, Patsy
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Cann, Jamie
Caplin, Ivor
Casale, Roger
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chaytor, David
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clelland, David
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Iain
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Cooper, Yvette
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr Jack *(Copeland)*
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis–Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Follett, Barbara
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Goggins, Paul
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Grogan, John
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hope, Phil
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Joyce, Eric
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Kelly, Ruth
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laws, David
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Linton, Martin
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDougall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Malleber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Milburn, Rt Hon Alan
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moore, Michael
Moran, Margaret
Morley, Elliot
Mullin, Chris
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oliner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Öpik, Lembit
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Pugh, Dr John
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Rendel, David
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Salter, Martin
Sanders, Adrian
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Shaw, Jonathan
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Singh, Marsha
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Southworth, Helen
Squire, Rachel
Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Stunell, Andrew
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Rt Hon Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Thurso, John
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tyler, Paul
Tynan, Bill
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
Weir, Michael
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Willis, Phil
Wills, Michael
Wishart, Pete
Woodward, Shaun
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek
Younger–Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Ayes:
Dan Norris and
Mr. John Heppell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainsworth, Peter *(E Surrey)*
Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin, John
Bacon, Richard
Baldry, Tony
Barker, Greg
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Andrew
Bercow, John
Boswell, Tim
Brazier, Julian

Browning, Mrs Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cash, William
Caton, Martin
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Clwyd, Ann
Collins, Tim
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Cotter, Brian
Cran, James
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Curry, Rt Hon David
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Davis, Rt Hon Terry *(B'ham Hodge H)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Duncan, Alan
Etherington, Bill
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flight, Howard
Flynn, Paul
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Francois, Mark
Garnier, Edward
Gibb, Nick
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hancock, Mike
Havard, Dai
Hawkins, Nick
Heath, David
Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Hendry, Charles
Hinchliffe, David
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Holmes, Paul
Hopkins, Kelvin
Horam, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurst, Alan
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Keetch, Paul
Kennedy, Rt Hon Charles *(Ross Skye & Inverness W)*
Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(E Yorkshire)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lansley, Andrew
Letwin, Oliver
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Liddell-Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
McDonnell, John
McIntosh, Miss Anne
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWalter, Tony
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Malins, Humfrey
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall-Andrews, Robert
Martlew, Eric
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morrison, Dr Andrew
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Price, Adam
Prisk, Mark
Prosser, Gwyn
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Sayeed, Jonathan
Sedgemore, Brian
Selous, Andrew
Shepherd, Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Keith *(Mid-Norfolk)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Streeter, Gary
Swayne, Desmond
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher & Walton)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Trend, Michael
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Vis, Dr Rudi
Wareing, Robert N
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Wood, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Gray and
Mr. John Randall.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on any Motion relating to the membership of Select Committees and the appointment of a Select Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons not later than Seven o'clock; such Questions shall include the Questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; such Questions may be decided, though opposed, after the expiration of the time for opposed business; and Standing Order No. 38 (Procedure on divisions) shall apply and the Order [28th June] relating to Deferred Divisions shall not apply if, after the time for the interruption of business, the opinion of the Speaker as to the decision on a Question is challenged in respect of any of the said Questions.

Select Committees

Accommodation and Works

4.16 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I beg to move,

That Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Harold Best, Tom Brake, Derek Conway, Keith Hill, Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, Albert Owen, Anne Picking and Syd Rapson be members of the Accommodation and Works Committee.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss motions 4 to 29.

Mr. McWilliam: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the thoughtful way in which you have organised the debate, which might otherwise have become messy. Your wise decision will enable us to reach a conclusion in an orderly, considered and sensible fashion.

I also thank hon. Members of all parties for their co-operation on the Committee of Selection. We were under enormous pressure to recommend the names for membership of the Select Committees before the summer recess so that they can meet to set their programmes, and hon. Members have enabled us to do that. We faced a great challenge simply because this time we had a month less in which to do that. The fact that we are discussing the motions in prime time is a testament to everyone's hard work.

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): How many changes did the Committee of Selection make to the recommendations made by the representatives of different political parties?

Mr. McWilliam: None. I reasonably thought that the representatives of the various political parties had sorted the recommendations out with their members before they put them to the Committee. The parties have different systems for doing that.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Chairman of the Committee of Selection says that he assumed that the various political parties had sorted out the recommendations before they were given to the Committee, but how does that apply to the minority parties which are not represented on the Committee of Selection?

Mr. McWilliam: The hon. Gentleman asks a reasonable question. Traditionally, the minority parties are represented by the spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats who takes soundings to produce an agreement. That arrangement has always worked effectively. The Government, the official Opposition and the minority parties have their respective systems and they are intended to work.

Tony Wright (Cannock Chase): I am getting a little confused. If the Committee of Selection does not select, what does it do?

Mr. McWilliam: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. The Committee of Selection recommends to the House who the Committee members should be. He might be slightly confused because the Committee of Selection comes under the Standing Order for private business, not public business, and was established with a completely different function.

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): Is there really any point in having the Committee?

Mr. McWilliam: There is a huge point. If the Committee did not exist, another Committee of a similar nature would have to be found to do the job.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. McWilliam: No. I should make some progress—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] Let me make a couple of points first, then my hon. Friend can decide whether to intervene.

I served with the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) on Select Committees for several years after the new system of Select Committees was first implemented. I was a member of one Select Committee or another from 1979, when I entered the House, until it became apparent that my duties as Deputy Speaker in Westminster Hall meant that I was unable to fulfil my duties on the Select Committee on Defence. In short, I have served on Select Committees of the House for more than 20 years and it has been an honour and a privilege to do so.

Select Committees acquit themselves extremely well. I have found all the Members of Parliament with whom I have served, whatever party they represent, to be unfailingly courteous and helpful. The Committees tend to develop an independent existence. They are a huge advantage and are of great benefit to the House in its considerations. I am not saying that they are perfect—they are not; nor do I think that they have all the powers that they should have, but I am not allowed to go further in that vein.

Mr. Fisher: Does my hon. Friend not understand from the tone of the House that our complaint is not about the existence of the Committees, but about the fact that they are dominated by the Government? Select Committees are parliamentary Committees, not Government Committees. He says that it is a difficult task to make all the selections, but how many minutes did the Committee of Selection sit when carrying out its considerations?

Mr. McWilliam: My hon. Friend is missing the point. I sat on Select Committees from the 1979–80 Session onward and I have to tell him that, regardless of the complexion of the Executive, Government Members have been quite happy to go along with Select Committee reports that challenge the Government of the day. That will continue and it is an entirely good thing.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Does my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) believe that failing to challenge the Government includes the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport asking the Government to prevent the scrapping of HMS Cavalier—the Minister for the Arts at the time neither agreeing not to scrap it nor even going to

see it; the Committee recommending the saving of HMS Cavalier against the policy of the Government, and the Committee succeeding?

Mr. McWilliam: My right hon. Friend is right. I remember when the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, on which the hon. Member for South Staffordshire and I had the privilege to serve, said that student fees should not be introduced. Select Committees have a long and honourable history of challenging the Executive. It is the job of Members of Parliament to scrutinise the Executive; Select Committees are merely a system for doing that.

We have 26 Select Committees to appoint this evening. There are six amendments, which fall into two groups.

Sir Brian Mawhinney (North-West Cambridgeshire): The hon. Gentleman says that there are 26 Select Committees to appoint. I might have misread the Order Paper, but there does not appear to be a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. Will he explain why not?

Hon. Members: It is there.

Mr. McWilliam: The right hon. Gentleman has missed it—it should be on the Order Paper.

Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): It is not there.

Mr. McWilliam: The right hon. Member for North-West Cambridgeshire (Sir B. Mawhinney) is quite right—it is not there. He has asked a very sensible question and I shall find out the answer. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is motion 30."] I am sorry—it is motion 30, which is not in the group that we are considering.

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend. It is my understanding that it has not so far been possible to draw up a list of nominations to go before the Committee of Selection. I hope that we shall be successful in time for this Wednesday.

Sir Brian Mawhinney *rose—*

Mr. McWilliam: May I say a few words before I give way to the right hon. Gentleman? My understanding of Standing Orders is that it is not in order to intervene on an intervention—such as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was making. I give way to the right hon. Member for North-West Cambridgeshire.

Sir Brian Mawhinney: Having established that we shall not be appointing a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs tonight, may we have an assurance at some point from those on the Front Bench that such a Committee will be appointed?

Mr. McWilliam: I can deal only with the items that have been before the Committee of Selection. That is what I am attempting to do.

As I was saying, the six amendments fall into two groups. Amendment (c) to motion 9, amendment (c) to motion 16 and amendment (b) to motion 17 were tabled by members of the official Opposition in an attempt to make changes in the Labour membership of Select Committees. Amendment (b) to motion 15, amendment (b) to motion 19 and the manuscript amendment to motion No. 17 seem to relate to disagreements between the Scottish National party and the Liberal Democrat party as to how many SNP or Liberal Members should appear on Select Committees.

My granny told me that it was a bad idea to intrude on private grief. That seems to be what is being attempted this evening in respect of various parties. I return to my original point: the question of how individual parties make their selections and whom they select is surely a matter for them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Sleaford and North Hykeham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McWilliam: May I finish my point? Selection is a matter for the individual parties. When I was Chairman of the Selection Committee during the last Parliament, I was perfectly happy to acquiesce with all parties—perhaps when a mistake was made in a change or something similar. I have not moved motions—sometimes late at night—in order that such things can be sorted out. Those selection processes are a matter for the individual parties.

The duty of the Committee of Selection is to ensure that the balance of the House is kept in terms of membership of Committees, that the motions for nomination are properly made and that the procedures are properly adhered to.

Lynne Jones: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. McWilliam: Before I give way to my hon. Friend, I shall give way to the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg).

Mr. Hogg: Does the hon. Gentleman understand the dismay with which his remarks are being greeted? In fact, he is saying that the sole function of the Committee of Selection is to rubber-stamp the nominations made by those on the Front Benches of the respective parties. Surely, that is not the function of the Committee. The function of the Committee of Selection is genuinely to select names.

Mr. McWilliam: The right hon. and learned Gentleman misunderstands. I do not know what the Conservative party does, but I know that in the Labour party all the names are put before the parliamentary Labour party and are subject to its approval. I deliberately did not attend the PLP meeting last week because, when I came to chair the Select Committee, I did not want to have in my mind any debate that might have occurred. I had to be objective. Presumably, the Conservative party does it differently.

Mr. Salmond *rose—*

Mr. McWilliam: The minority parties clearly do it differently, because the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene.

Mr. Salmond: Earlier, the Chairman of the Committee of Selection said that he assumed that there had been

[Mr. Salmond]

agreement between the Liberals, the SNP and Plaid Cymru. There was no such agreement. Given that fact, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Chairman of the Committee of Selection has a special responsibility to protect the rights of parties that are not represented on his Committee and thus have no ability to represent themselves?

Mr. McWilliam: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. However, it is not a matter for me to interfere in the business of political parties, except in so far as to ensure that, if there is a debate or a problem about the nominations that are made, I speak to the people concerned. Unfortunately, until I saw today's amendments, nobody told me that there had been a problem.

Mr. Andrew Stunell (Hazel Grove): Will the hon. Gentleman take note of the fact that later in the debate I hope to address the points that have been raised? It is perhaps not appropriate to do so at the moment.

Mr. McWilliam: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I hope that hon. Members will realise that all I can do is represent the Committee of Selection and the fact that the Committee of Selection took nominations clearly and cleanly. Those nominations are being put to the House today.

Lynne Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. Can he confirm that in the last Parliament he was a member of the Liaison Committee? If so, did he support the report produced by that Committee, entitled "Shifting the Balance", which recommended changes to the way in which members of Select Committees are appointed? Will he place on record whether he agrees with that report, whether he would recommend those changes and whether they should be put to the House?

Mr. McWilliam: I acquiesced with that report, certainly. The Liaison Committee is a Select Committee and, as a good Select Committee member, I would wish, where there was not some outstanding matter of fundamental principle, to go along with a Select Committee report. I happily did so.

I do not wish to eat up any more of the time of the House, although most of the time has been taken up by interventions. I reiterate that amendment (c) to motion 9, amendment (c) to motion 16 and amendment (b) to motion 17 were tabled by members of the official Opposition and relate to members of the Government. That is interfering with private grief. It is up to the Government party to sort the matter out. Amendment (b) to motion 15, amendment (c) to motion 17 and the manuscript amendment have been tabled by the Scottish National party. It is up to the minority parties to sort themselves out, although I suspect that it is too late.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McWilliam: No, I will not give way again. I am certain that hon. Members want to get on with the debate, and I do not wish to prevent them from so doing.

I am deeply thankful to all sides of the House for the speed with which they have been able to operate. I realise that there is controversy; there always is. In the 20-odd years that I have been in the House, there has always been controversy about the matter. At least we can deal with it at a reasonable time of the evening. I commend my nominations to the House.

4.32 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton): I shall not detain the House for long. This is a Commons matter, but I wish to associate my party with my opening general comments. At a time when matters that go on in Parliament are not held in great respect outside, we can all take pride in the respect in which Select Committees are held outside the House. The same applies to hon. Members who wish to serve on Select Committees and who have served on Select Committees not just to fulfil their duty, but to play a role in the scrutiny of legislation and of Government business.

It is important for the Leader of the House to recognise that, as will be evident from the debate, we need a change in the way that hon. Members are selected—or appointed, as they are now—to Select Committees. In particular, the chairmanship of those Committees is not just a prestigious appointment; it is extremely important to the way that Select Committees are run and the Executive are held to account. The Leader of the House has hinted in the House and outside that he recognises that the time has come to address the important report from the Liaison Committee. In the last Session we, the official Opposition, gave up our debating time on the Floor of the House so that the House could consider that report.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. I find her views interesting. When her Government were in power, did she make any suggestions to them about changing the way in which Select Committees were appointed?

Mrs. Browning: As I pointed out earlier from a sedentary position, since the day on which I entered the House in 1992, I have continually questioned the way in which Select Committee appointments are made. The record will show that within a few weeks of my election as a Member of Parliament, I was unhappy about what happened in 1992 with regard to the chairmanship of the Select Committee on Health.

I say to the hon. Lady and to new Members on both sides of the House that the power of the Whips Office, whether its influence is exerted by cajolement or other mechanisms, to offer Select Committee appointments and chairmanships to Members of Parliament is past its sell-by date. Such appointments should not be a matter of patronage for the Whips Office, which is part of the Executive. If we are to regain—it is now a matter of regaining—the right of democratically elected Back Benchers to hold the Executive to account, Select Committee procedures must be a fundamental consideration.

I welcome the watershed that has been reached—we have reached it because of genuine feeling on both sides of the House. Any change in the procedures of the House, including those that affect the appointment of Select Committees, needs consensus. That is why I repeat the

remarks that I made when the official Opposition gave up half a day of our allotted time to debate the Liaison Committee report. As I said when I led that debate, it was sad that the report was presented to the House as the subject of an Adjournment motion. If it had been debated as part of a substantive motion, and if the Government could have trusted the House—this was not a matter of trusting only the Opposition or Labour Back Benchers—the tone of this debate would have been very different.

As we have a new Leader of the House, I say to him that now is his opportunity. I hope that, apart from the long list of motions dealing with individual names and Committees, he will see the big picture that is evident in this debate, which is that we want change.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Rochford and Southend, East): My hon. Friend makes a splendid point. Could not the Conservative party give the lead, as it has done on so many occasions, by introducing a system to take away the Whips' power to appoint people and to give it to hon. Members? If the Conservative party were to do that, might not the Labour party follow?

Mrs. Browning: Yes. Not only did I make that commitment when we debated the Liaison Committee report, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) has said at the Dispatch Box that he supports in principle the recommendations of the Committee. There is consensus across the House. If the Leader of the House were minded to make the changes, there would not be such an acrimonious feeling about the way in which this particular tranche of Select Committee appointments is being made.

Mr. William Cash (Stone): Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a logical conclusion to these proposals? I do not want to press her too hard about it, because she sits on the Front Bench and it requires careful consideration. In the past three or four debates on these matters, I have pointed out that, if we want to achieve the objectives that we have set with regard to restrictions on the Executive, new Standing Orders will be required to ensure that any hon. Member or Minister of the Crown who attempts to interfere with a free vote will be in contempt of the House. Such a change would put teeth into the restrictions. I do not want to push her hard on that proposal, as it needs much consideration, but I fear that, without it, the whole thing will become an illusion.

Mrs. Browning: I share my hon. Friend's concern. He will know that I pressed the Leader of the House during last Thursday's business questions to confirm that there would be a free vote in this debate on the Front and Back Benches. He gave his confirmation and I am sure that a free vote will occur.

I should like to make one or two points about the motions. Perhaps it is unusual for a Conservative Member to pick up on the matter, but it is noticeable that, of the names recommended for Select Committees, no women are proposed for the Standards and Privileges Committee, the Public Accounts Committee or the Deregulation and Regulatory Reform Committee. However, seven are proposed for the Modernisation Committee. I flag that up because it would be a great shame if some Committees were deemed to be boys' matters and others girls' matters. My name is down for the Modernisation Committee, but, in a spirit of co-operation, I would willingly give up my place to a man if one would like to sit on that Committee.

We heard from the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam), who chairs the Committee of Selection, that it clearly does not have an overview. It does what it is told and simply acts as a rubber-stamp. That is a weakness in the conduct of our proceedings. If the Committee genuinely considered balance, the imbalance in the proposed membership of the Select Committees would not exist. It is appalling that no women have been proposed for the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. McWilliam: Would the hon. Lady like it if the Committee of Selection decided that it did not like the names that the Opposition had proposed for a specific Committee, and switched them around?

Mrs. Browning: I am trying not to move power from the Whips to the Committee of Selection, but to give it to hon. Members, to those who are democratically elected, not appointees who rubber-stamp what the Whips Office of any party deems to be the right way forward. That is not democratic; it does not help Back-Bench Members, and it keeps power and patronage in the hands of the Executive. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does an honourable and difficult job but he described a rubber-stamping exercise when he outlined the conduct of the Committee of Selection.

Mr. McWilliam: It may help the hon. Lady if I stress that it is not the first time that I have questioned nominations from not only the Government party but the Conservative party and the minority parties because I do not want willing horses flogged to death. I take that duty seriously.

Mrs. Browning: We are hearing confirmation from all parties of unhappiness with the current system, which needs to be changed.

I want to consider the amendments that we shall debate and especially the chairmanship of the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee. Like many other hon. Members, I received an e-mail from the right hon. Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson). It states:

> "It is essential for our democracy that watchdogs are allowed to bark and occasionally to bite."

I agree. Any Government must accept that Select Committees will scrutinise and sometimes criticise. As the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) pointed out on "Woman's Hour" today, that helps to create the checks and balances in our democratic procedures.

It does not matter from which party a Chairman comes, we all respect the neutrality of Select Committee Chairmen. There is a feeling of great sympathy on both sides of the House for the right hon. Member for Swansea, East and for the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich.

The hon. Lady does not need me as an advocate. She is a doughty fighter. I know that because I fought her in Crewe and Nantwich in the 1987 election. Having come into the House in 1992, like many other Members on both sides of the House, I have great respect for her as a parliamentarian. There are too few people in this place

[Mrs. Browning]

whom we can call great parliamentarians, but the hon. Lady is one. I pay tribute to her as a parliamentarian. It would be to the detriment not only of the Transport Sub-Committee but of the reputation of the House if her expertise and dedication to this place as a parliamentarian were denied us in her capacity as Chairman of that Committee.

I urge all Members, old and new—if I may put it that way—to ignore the ways in which the Whips and others go about their business trying to influence them. It is not true that if one does not do as one is told one never gets ministerial office or the job of Parliamentary Private Secretary.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Yes, it is.

Mrs. Browning: No, it is not at all. I shall conduct counselling sessions for hon. Members later if it would be helpful.

Like many other Members, as a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I voted in a certain way when it was not the wish of my party that I should do so. Ultimately, over the period of years that we all hope to spend as parliamentarians, we cannot afford as individuals simply to buckle down because of one single personal issue, when there are greater issues at stake. I want to say to all Members that this is a free vote and, in deciding how they are going to vote, they should vote for what is right for this place, and not for its history but for its future.

The House needs its reputation to be restored. The only people who can do that are the people who sit here on these green Benches: Back Benchers and Front Benchers. That is why I say to the Leader of the House, for whom I have great respect, that this is his opportunity to hear what is being said by Members behind him and across the Dispatch Box. The way in which we deal with Select Committees now—never mind what went on in the past—could be a watershed in terms of how the House is perceived in future.

4.47 pm

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) for the tone of her speech. She asked whether I would be reviewing the system by which nominations come forward, and perhaps it would be helpful if I were to say at the outset that I will address that matter in my speech. Indeed, it will make up the bulk of my speech.

I am also grateful to the hon. Lady for pointing out that there were seven women on the Modernisation Committee, which confirms how forward-thinking the women in the House are. As a member of that Committee, I will endeavour to make it clear that modernisation is a matter for men, too. However, I hope that the hon. Lady will reconsider her offer to give up her seat on that Committee to a man on her side of the House, because were she to do so, it would leave the Committee without a single Tory woman.

The debate today will ensure that the Select Committees are up and running before the summer recess, which will fulfil the commitment that I gave the House on that issue. Assuming that the motions before the House are approved tonight, Select Committees will be able to meet from tomorrow. That will set a new record for the speed with which Select Committees have been created. We will have set up the Select Committees in this Parliament within four weeks of the Queen's Speech. That compares with the five months that it took in 1987, and almost three months in 1992, under the Conservative party.

I was sorry to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Jeremy Corbyn) complain earlier of unreasonable haste in bringing forward the nominations. When we returned after the election, at the time of the Queen's Speech, there was broad agreement—indeed, I think I can say that there was enthusiasm—that we should get the Select Committees set up before the recess, so as not to delay the important work of scrutiny. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who came to discuss this with me, agrees that that was the priority attached to the matter in all quarters of the House at the time.

Andrew Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On that point, may I firmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on getting a move on with this issue? However, will he confirm that if the House were to decide tonight that one or two of the motions should not go through, the Committee of Selection could meet again on Wednesday, and it would be possible to put different names before the House later in the week to ensure that the Select Committees could still be set up before the recess—or at least, that they could meet in the first week of the recess?

Mr. Cook: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that it is our intention to hold a meeting of the Committee of Selection this Wednesday. Indeed, that will be necessary, partly because of the point that has already been raised: we have still to complete the selection for the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, the Catering Committee and the Science and Technology Committee. That meeting could, of course, consider other matters that were appropriate.

I would need the co-operation of the House if we had to resolve matters on Thursday, which would be the one remaining full day before the recess, but technically, what my hon. Friend says is correct. He is also correct to say that the Select Committees have the power to meet in the recess. The House does not have to be sitting for them to meet.

I am accused of having acted in haste, but despite that haste, we have provided for additional flexibility and freedom for Select Committees. For the first time, every Select Committee has the right to decide for itself whether it wants to appoint a Sub-Committee. Every departmental Select Committee will also have the right to set up a Joint Committee with any other Select Committee. That freedom represents a response to the principle expressed by the Liaison Committee report in the last Parliament, that joined-up government requires joined-up scrutiny. We have provided for Select Committees to decide for themselves how to go about that.

I will not disguise from the House the fact that this debate has turned out to be more controversial than I would have wished. Some comments that I have read about the nominations before the House have been a

bit overdone. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Andrew Mackinlay) is living proof of the willingness on this side to reappoint even the most—how shall I say it?—irrepressible Members of the previous Parliament. Nevertheless, I recognise that concern has been expressed on both sides about the lists before the House. A number of amendments address those concerns.

I confirm to the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton that on this side of the House the votes on all the amendments will be free votes. I hope that they will be free votes on her side as well. As I said to the House on Thursday, this is a matter on which all Members, whether they are in government or not, must exercise their discretion. This matter is for the House, not for a collective decision by the Government.

Mr. Cash: Will the Leader of the House give way?

Mr. Cook: On this occasion, but then I must make progress.

Mr. Cash: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, who will have heard my earlier intervention. In view of the reforming zeal with which he is applying himself to his job, will he consider—I put it no higher than that at the moment—changing Standing Orders to make it a contempt of the House for any Member to try either to prevent another Member from exercising a free vote or to interfere with another Member in the exercise of his conscience or the fulfilment of his duty? After all, any such change would depend on the Government and their vote.

Mr. Cook: I listened with the greatest interest when the hon. Gentleman made his earlier intervention. I suggest to him that it might be wise on my part to try to achieve reform of the House by flanking manoeuvres rather than by hanging myself out on the barbed wire in a full frontal assault on one of the strongest strongholds in the House. I heard what he said and I hope that the Opposition Whips listened to him carefully.

Jeremy Corbyn: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cook: On this occasion, but then I must deal with how we are to address the question of changing the system.

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank the Leader of the House for giving way. Before he completes his contribution, will he say what thought he has given to the Liaison Committee report "Shifting the Balance", which is about the future appointment of Select Committees and appointments to vacancies that might occur in this Parliament? Does he accept its recommendation that those should be taken out of the power of the Whips Offices of all parties?

Mr. Cook: If my hon. Friend lets me proceed, he will find that the rest of my speech addresses precisely those questions.

Regardless of the outcome of tonight's votes, a wider issue must be addressed and I shall address it now. To get the Select Committees up and running before the summer recess, it was necessary to adopt this procedure. If we had embarked first on making major changes to the procedure and amended Standing Orders, there would have been no prospect of the Select Committees being established until October or November. Even with no such changes, only in the last week before the recess have we been able to put nominations to the House.

I have repeatedly said that it was my intention to review in the autumn the system by which nominations to Select Committees are made. I would be the first to agree that the events of the past few days have given greater urgency to the search for a more transparent system. I intend to invite the Modernisation Committee, when it meets for the first time on Wednesday, to make the system of nominations to Select Committees the first priority for its programme.

The Modernisation Committee can address the procedures of the House, but it cannot make any recommendations about the internal process by which political parties decide which of their members to put forward.

Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that within the Labour party this matter should be referred in the first instance to the parliamentary committee, so that we can come up with a process that is transparent and has the confidence of all Members?

Mr. Cook: I welcome what my hon. Friend has said, and I welcome the commitment to a review of procedures in the parliamentary Labour party by the parliamentary committee. I particularly welcome the fact that the parliamentary committee will carry out that review, because half its members are elected by Back Benchers. One of the options that it will wish to consider is whether it should make the initial choice of which members of the Labour party should serve on which Select Committees.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Hull, North): Am I right in saying that members of the Government serve on the parliamentary committee?

Mr. Cook: I said that half the members of the parliamentary committee were elected by Back Benchers—and members of the Government have no vote in that election.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: I welcome my right hon. Friend's support for the review that will be conducted by the parliamentary committee. In view of the concern about a number of people who are on several Committees, how quickly will the review be set up, and how soon will the new selection procedure be able to review the membership being proposed today?

Mr. Cook: I hope that two separate reviews will commence this week: one by the Modernisation Committee on the procedures of the House, and the other by the Labour party's parliamentary committee on procedures in the Labour party. I give my hon. Friend an undertaking that that will be the timetable for the start of the reviews. The timetable for the conclusion of those reviews will depend in part on how quickly it is possible to build consensus on change. I hope that we will be able to return to this issue early in the autumn.

Mr. Hogg: Will the right hon. Gentleman help the House? If the Modernisation Committee comes up with a

[Mr. Hogg]

new system for appointing Select Committees, will he come to the House with a new set of proposals for membership of those Committees—one that reflects the mechanism agreed by the Modernisation Committee?

Mr. Cook: I do not honestly think that I would have any alternative. There is no way in which changes to the system can be put in place without the agreement of the House. This is a matter for the House. Although I undertake to ensure that any agreed system is put to hon. Members, it must be the House that decides, not me.

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman has misunderstood me; I am sure the fault was mine. Once we have a mechanism for choosing the membership of Select Committees, as agreed by the Modernisation Committee, can we consider the whole question again, so that we can choose new members in accordance with the procedure recommended by the Modernisation Committee?

Mr. Cook: No, I cannot give the right hon. and learned Gentleman that assurance. The large number of hon. Members who may be appointed to Select Committees tonight would not want to begin their work on those Committees with the clear and explicit expectation that membership would be reviewed and we would start again in November. There may be opportunities to review and to change membership of Committees in the future, but it would be unwise of us to say that in three months' time we will sack those whom we appoint today.

Mr. Salmond: Notwithstanding what the right hon. Gentleman has said, does he accept that there is a problem with the numbers in the lists before us, and with the principle of how minority parties are represented on the Committee of Selection?

Mr. Cook: I agree that there is an issue to be addressed. I accept that in terms of the strict arithmetical division of Committee members, the minority parties have not been represented to reflect their full strength in the House. It is a difficult balancing act, but I recognise that there is a problem.

When we debated the changes to Standing Orders 10 days ago, I said that one of the issues that I would like to re-examine in the autumn was the size of Select Committees. There have been proposals for them to be larger, and given the number of Labour Back Benchers who have sought membership, there is an added case for considering that matter. It is for the House to make the decision, and there are also arguments on the other side of the balance sheet, but if we decided to make the Committees larger that would, I think, help to address the problem identified by the hon. Gentleman, and possibly some of the other problems identified on the Order Paper.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): May I ask my right hon. Friend to give one simple undertaking—that whatever machinery is proposed to the House, the method by which all Select Committee members are chosen will not only be spelt out in considerable detail, but be absolutely transparent?

Mr. Cook: I assure my hon. Friend that I see no point in our making a change unless it introduces greater transparency. I entirely agree that that should be our priority. Fortunately, we are not short of advice on how to make the process more transparent.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield) *rose—*

Mr. Stunell *rose—*

Mr. Cook: I will give way later, but I hope that hon. Gentlemen will forgive me if I do not do so now. I really must make some progress.

A number of texts are available to give us guidance. A good starting point for the Modernisation Committee's review would be the Liaison Committee's report "Unfinished Business", produced during the last Parliament. I am pleased to note that I seem to have anticipated what the hon. Member for Macclesfield was going to say.

Mr. Winterton *indicated assent.*

Mr. Cook: In that report, the Liaison Committee recognised that at the start of a Parliament it was not possible for it to clear nominations. As it consists of the Chairs of other Select Committees, by definition it cannot exist in advance of those Committees. "Unfinished Business" proposed that, after the new Parliament had sat for eight weeks, the task of nominating replacements should pass to the Liaison Committee. Because the report was published in the spring shortly before Parliament was dissolved for the general election, there was no time for the Government to produce a response. I therefore think it appropriate for the Modernisation Committee to begin its review of the system with that report.

In the last Parliament, there was a turnover of more than 50 per cent. in the membership of some Select Committees. I hope that in this Parliament there will be more stability.

Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Don't promote members to be Ministers, then!

Mr. Cook: I will faithfully note my hon. Friend's observation, and ensure that that does not happen to him in the current Parliament.

I agree with the Liaison Committee that the success of Select Committees depends on members giving commitment and priority to the work of those Committees. Notwithstanding my hon. Friend's objection, however, there will inevitably be a number of changes to Committee membership during this Parliament, and it is therefore important for us to identify an alternative system of nomination as soon as possible. We should consider whether that new system could provide a specific role for the Liaison Committee to clear nominations for future vacancies, and to be responsible for putting those nominations to the House.

That was, of course, only one of the Liaison Committee's recommendations for reform; there were many others. The Committee mentioned, for instance, the importance of discussing Select Committee reports in the Chamber while their subject matter was still topical—possibly in a weekly half-hour slot after Question Time.

It also suggested that the House should recognise an alternative career structure through the Committees, by reflecting the work of Chairs in MPs' salary structure.

I am conscious that no proposal for change is without problems or will be short of opponents, but I am willing to look afresh at any proposal for reform of the Select Committees that will support their vital role of scrutiny. "Unfinished Business" calls for constructive co-operation between Government and Select Committees. It is in that spirit that I am willing to work with the Liaison Committee on the shared principle that good scrutiny makes for good government.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: In my experience, the way forward for new Labour is to consult endlessly. I welcome the assurances that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has given today, but how long will his consultation with the Modernisation Committee and others take? Does he have an end date in mind for bringing forward proposals—on a Government motion, not on a motion for the Adjournment—that would enable us to take a collective decision?

Mr. Cook: The proposals would have to be brought forward on a substantive motion, otherwise we would not be able to give effect to the decision of the House. My hon. Friend asks a question that in essence I have already addressed: I would like to make progress as quickly as possible. I certainly intend that the Modernisation Committee, having met on Wednesday, will meet again during the recess, in September, to discuss this and other matters.

I hope that it will be possible for us to make proposals in the autumn, but that depends in part on the extent to which I am able to command consensus for change in the House. I tend to agree with the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton that, in the light of the events of the past few days, it seems that if there has ever been a moment when we are likely to achieve consensus it is now. If the House reaches agreement, it can help me to make proposals more quickly than would otherwise be possible.

The decision on who goes on to a popular Select Committee can never be made easy. Last week, with some Committees, my hon. Friends faced the challenge of choosing a dozen or fewer members from 50 or 60 applications. Whoever makes the choice in those circumstances, and however it is done, there will always be more Members who are disappointed than those who are satisfied. But the difficulty in making the choice increases the importance of ensuring that the process is seen to be transparent, fair and under the control of the House.

The Select Committees carry out a valuable service to this House by conducting effective scrutiny. The priority for the House now is to put above scrutiny the process by which those Select Committees are chosen. We want both press and public to have confidence in those who are nominated to exercise Parliament's role of scrutiny. We will best safeguard that confidence if we ensure that future nominations to Select Committees are seen to be fully in the hands of Members of this House.

5.8 pm

Mr. Andrew Stunell (Hazel Grove): This is an important and significant debate that will have far-reaching implications if we get the answers right. The votes at the end of the debate will not be the measure of how successful it has been, and it is of the utmost importance that the Leader of the House presses ahead with the changes and reforms that he has mentioned, instead of letting them get bogged down in the morass of parliamentary delays that can so quickly accumulate.

Select Committees are a fundamental method of holding the Executive to account, and if they do not work effectively they cannot exercise scrutiny. They can collect and chew over evidence at leisure. They can question Ministers and, importantly, civil servants and outside experts in a way that the House cannot. They can develop an esprit de corps or, put another way, they can hunt like a pack. If they get a scent, they can follow it in a way that parliamentary debate and question times do not allow.

The hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) and the Leader of the House mentioned the Liaison Committee and the importance of its report. Much thinking is being done and we need to see some action following from it. The hon. Lady also spoke about the allocation of chairmanships, about which we have strong feelings. Many issues need to be addressed, and I hope that the Modernisation Committee and the House will have an opportunity to deal with them properly.

Whatever criticisms may be made, and there are some sharp ones, I welcome the fact that we are having this debate now and that the proposals are before the House for consideration. That promptness is largely a result of the Leader of the House pressurising his colleagues, as well as the rest of the House, to deliver a package to us. However, we deprecate the purge—the cull—of senior critics of the Government through the Committee of Selection's work.

We also regret the fact that the Leader of the House was unable to accept some of the proposals that we made a week ago to relieve the difficulties that the House faces. In particular, our proposal that the minimum size of Select Committees be increased would measurably improve the situation for Liberal Democrat and minority party candidates. It would also allow the Leader of the House to seek relief for those of his Back Benchers who are excluded under the present system.

Although the speed with which these proposals have come before us is welcome, errors may be an inevitable consequence. Some things, however, are not errors. It can hardly have been an accident that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) was excluded from membership of the Transport Sub-Committee. That was not a clerical oversight; it was not a case of rushing into things. It was, surely, deliberate exclusion, just as the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) was deliberately excluded by his party in 1992—it was not an accident or a product of haste but a conscious decision.

In both cases, a stern and effective critic of the Government has been dealt a blow by respective Governments. Not only were they stern and effective critics in their own right but they spoke for the Committee. The Select Committee is a representative body of this Parliament. We require it to hold the Government to account; the Chairman is its representative and spokesman. An attack on the Chairman, in this way, is an attack on the House.

What could justify this cull? It is interesting that the Leader of the House did not talk about it—nor, for that matter, did the Parliamentary Secretary. The right hon.

[Mr. Andrew Stunell]

Gentleman was silent about the process that led to the outrage that led to today's debate. He made some strong points and he made some fair ones, but he forgot to mention the one thing that is exercising the House—the reason for this decision.

I set out the case for enlarged Committees last week. There is no doubt that enlarged departmental Committees would mean that many of the concerns that my colleagues in the minority parties are expressing today, by way of amendment and, later, by way of vote, would have been overcome. I made that point strongly last week. A Select Committee of 11 members has one place for the Liberal Democrats and the minority parties combined. A Select Committee of 13 or more members has two places for those third and minority parties. In making my best assessment of how minority places and Liberal Democrat places might properly be allocated, I have on many occasions been beset by the difficulties of the system. One of the quirks of the House is that, when it sees a pressing need it can often find a solution. Hence, on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, which has 11 members, two places are allocated to the third party and minority parties. The same applies to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs.

I do not particularly seek to justify that relationship to the House but, just as a pressing need for special dispensation revealed itself for Scottish and Welsh affairs, so there is a case for larger departmental Select Committees. Two departmental Committees have 17 members each; we shall debate those places today. Two places on each of those Committees are within the gift of the Liberal Democrat party and minority parties. In each case, of course, one place has been given to a member of a minority party. There are serious difficulties with other departmental Committees; Plaid Cymru was offered places on the Select Committees on Welsh Affairs, on Environmental Audit and on Catering. To the best of my knowledge, having submitted names, Plaid Cymru recognised that that was an appropriate allocation.

Mr. Salmond: Does the hon. Gentleman think it unreasonable in the wholeness of things that, having examined the relative advantages of serving on a departmental Select Committee on the one hand and the Catering Committee on the other, Plaid Cymru decided that perhaps that offer did not give it or the Scottish National party full representation in the House?

Mr. Stunell: The Clerks advised me that, proportionally, two places were to be allocated to the SNP and two to Plaid Cymru. If one aggregates those places, which, I know, the hon. Gentleman is keen to do, the total number is four. It makes no difference at all to the final toll.

In introducing the debate, the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) said that perhaps it was not an occasion to parade private grief. I simply say to my colleagues in the minority parties that, for some Members, places on the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges, a Select Committee for departmental affairs in which they are interested and the Select Committees on Environmental Audit and on European Scrutiny are not to be sneezed at. In fact, they exceed the quota that I was quoted as appropriate for minority parties.

Pete Wishart (North Tayside): On how many departmental Select Committees were places secured on behalf of Plaid Cymru and the SNP outwith the Select Committees on Welsh Affairs and on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. Stunell: None; let us be clear about that. The Committees I mentioned—the Select Committees on Standards and Privileges, on Environmental Audit and on European Scrutiny—are not departmental Committees. I would not try to persuade the House otherwise. However, a party that says that it is for Scotland in Europe but refuses to serve on the European Scrutiny Committee has, perhaps, got some questions to answer.

I regret the amendment tabled by the minority parties, as it rather misses the point of the offers made to them. It is also misses the point of the arithmetic. I do not wish to dwell on the matter, but SNP representation on Select Committees went from six members to five, and Plaid Cymru stayed at four. My own party increased its representation by five members—or six, if one goes back to the establishment of Select Committees in 1997. In plain language, the situation and the terms of trade have changed. I know that that is a difficult point for my minority party colleagues to accept.

I could also raise the issue of experience. We have tried to ensure that that experience is reflected in the allocations made in our quota, which covers the Liberal Democrats and the minority parties. I remind hon. Members that I am required to take into account not only Members who are expressing their discontent now but minority party Members from Northern Ireland, and we have done so.

Last week I deployed my case for increasing the size of Select Committees, especially of departmental Select Committees, but, sadly, no Member from any of the minority parties chose to speak in support of that proposition.

Mr. Mike Hancock (Portsmouth, South): They were not here.

Mr. Stunell: My colleague is being a little unfair; they were here, but they chose to remain silent.

The speed of events is welcome, but it does not justify the cull of senior, experienced critics of the Government. Speed does not lead to quicker and better scrutiny if the critics are cut down. Perhaps we can accept that they are not being explicitly cut down for their own contribution; perhaps they were cut down, as used to be said, pour encourager les autres—in other words, as a warning to others. Will Labour Committee Chairmen be willing to keep their heads as high above the parapet as they should if they know that their reward at the end of their term of office is to be the same as Crewe's or Macclesfield's—victims of yet another purge?

Speed is getting in the way of reform. Whatever the outcome of today's events, it is absolutely essential to ensure that the process of reform gains pace, not loses it, as a result of such debates. We must not just let this become an opportunity to vent steam and reduce the pressure; we must use it as an occasion to stoke the fires and ensure that we get the reform that we need. I want to

make it clear that my colleagues have a free vote tonight and that they and other hon. Members feel a real sense of unfairness. There is deep concern about the control freakery that the Government are now exercising. The worry is that this is yet another setback for Parliament in its long-standing struggle to hold the Executive to account, and our votes will be cast accordingly.

5.22 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I shall be very brief, but in the unfortunate absence of the Father of the House—I know that all hon. Members wish him a very speedy recovery—I shall make a contribution that I think he would agree with, speaking as the most senior Privy Councillor in the House. I want to reflect on the current situation, based on 37 years' experience in the House, where I have been poacher and gamekeeper—depending on the role in which I was cast—with 22 years on the Front Bench and 15 years on the Back Benches. I know the pleasures of being a Minister, the miseries of being sacked and the pleasures of serving on Committees.

I want to start with a different point, which colleagues will have heard me make on several occasions in the previous Parliament, when I was fighting for more power for the Public Accounts Committee. None the less, it has to be re-emphasised. Under our system, democracy does not exist if accountability does not exist. Accountability cannot exist with the current scale of business, the scale of Departments and the volume of money unless we have a working, informed and effective Committee system. That is what this debate is all about—scrutiny.

Committees inevitably develop expertise that can match that of the Departments, so one can understand why Ministers regard them as a threat. I can remember the views that we expressed from the Opposition Benches and can compare them with what we hear from those who sit on them now. Opposition Members now understand the anguish of what seems to be the arrogance of Government, irrespective of whoever happens to be in government or in opposition at the time.

The most important role of Select Committees is to be a bulwark against ministerial diktat. I pay tribute to the Conservative party for introducing the departmental Select Committees, which I regard as the best innovation in my years in this place. They have enabled Back Benchers, in a way that the generalist Committees, such as those on the nationalised industries, did not. The old Committees were so general that they were ineffective. The precise remit of departmental Select Committees and their direct target of Ministers and the departmental civil service has made them much more effective. They are not only well directed but are expert in their subject.

The departmental Select Committee system is 20 years old and we have not made many changes to it. Resources are another matter, although perhaps not for today, but I say in passing—it will not endear me to any of the Committee Chairmen—that if money is available for Select Committees, I hope that it goes on advisers and back-up staff and not on salaries for individuals.

Members on both sides of the House must ensure that Select Committees are independent from the patronage of the Whips. It is glaringly inconsistent that the Government can appoint on any Committee the majority of their scrutineers, which can produce all sorts of nonsense. As a result of something that my assistant said, I discovered only this morning that the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) did not appear on any of the lists. I hope that he will forgive me for mentioning this point, but I phoned him and asked, "What's happened? Didn't you apply?" He told me that he had applied to become a member of several Committees and had entered the open caveat that he was willing to serve on any Committee on which the Government wished to put him.

We are all aware of the experience that my right hon. Friend can bring to the House, but he does not have a place on any Select Committee. One of the Committees on which I sit—the Public Accounts Committee—is short of four members and it might have been one of the Committees in which he expressed an interest. I therefore hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who is very fair minded and shares my regard for the work that right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead has done for Labour Members and for Parliament generally, will take the opportunity to reconsider that oversight.

The method of appointment is not just inconsistent: it will be an insult to those who dedicate much of their time and effort to the Committee structure and to Committee work if Committee chairmanships are seen as compensation for ex-Ministers. It is not very nice to lose a job as a Minister and it is not pleasant to walk into the Tea Room no longer carrying red boxes and with a car no longer waiting outside, but Ministers have had the privilege of being Ministers, and most Members go through the House without ever having that privilege. Ministers should therefore not need compensation for the fact that they have ceased to be Ministers. It is not a job for life. We are not children. We all know that an MP's life is transient enough and that a Minister's life is even more transient. It is nonsense and outrageous that Committee chairmanships should be regarded as palliatives for injured pride.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Would my right hon. Friend not regard it as even more invidious if former Ministers were offered posts on Select Committees so as to ensure that they did not reveal what may have happened when they were Ministers? That would result in the direct opposite of what scrutiny Committees are for.

Mr. Williams: I am not sure that any ex-Minister could avoid the temptation of such an opportunity.

I want to make a point with which my right hon. and hon. Friends but not Conservative Members will be familiar. In a parliamentary Labour party meeting just before the election, the then Leader of the House said that entering Parliament must be seen as a twin-track career—that there are those who go along the ministerial path and those who take the Committee route. That is rather simplistic, as I pointed out at the time, but if it is the Government's view, it must be pointed out—it was not at the time—that that twin track is for some but not others. There was no mention of the fact that there would be a first-class coach attached for ex-Ministers.

It seems abundantly clear that, after 20 years, we need a new system to choose members of Select Committees. I welcome the suggestion made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House of a review, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) implied,

[Mr. Williams]

without a time limit such a review could be seen as just a delaying tactic. I know that my right hon. Friend would not want to link his name to such a device, so I hope that he will confirm the time limit that he will set.

Mr. Hogg: I support what the right hon. Gentleman is saying. Does he agree that, if Chairmen of Select Committees are to be paid, it is even more important that nomination is made not by the Whips Office but by the House as a whole?

Mr. Williams: That is absolutely right. There cannot be independence through a system of patronage. They are mutually incompatible; those who give can take away.

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): My right hon. Friend mentioned my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who has specialist knowledge. As he has started naming names in this Chamber, may I mention my hon. Friends the Members for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) and for Islington, North (Jeremy Corbyn)? My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North has a particular interest in international development and foreign affairs. His contribution in the Chamber on those subjects has been considerable over the years. Their applications to serve on Select Committees have been refused, and that has happened time and again. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson) and my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) should be reinstated, and we should not forget those who want to be ordinary members of Select Committees but are just not getting a chance in this place.

Mr. Williams: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention but regret the fact that, unfortunately, she addressed her point to the person who is probably least able to help any of those to whom she referred.

Mr. McNamara: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, across the water in the Republic of Ireland, Chairmen of Select Committees—indeed, even the Irish Chairman of the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body—receive extra parliamentary salaries, which are all in the gift of the Government or Opposition leader of the day? They are questions of patronage. Does he also agree that, in—properly—considering membership, we should also look at the powers of Select Committees? Although a Select Committee—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): Order. There is a time limit on this debate and many Members want to participate. Will Members please make interventions brief?

Mr. McNamara: Only the House can command that a person appear before a Select Committee. That power should go to the Select Committee so that it is not dependent on the Government majority of the day.

Mr. Williams: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. I hope you will note, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the breach of my commitment to be brief is the consequence of my hon. Friends' desire to hear me speak further.

My final point is on chairmanships. Surely the logical people to choose the Chairmen are the Committee members themselves. They know the expertise and capabilities of their members, and that, too, would be a liberating factor. I urge the Leader of the House to consider that. He is in a unique position. His role provides a wonderful opportunity for anyone who wants to advance democracy and the rights of Parliament and the Back Bencher. I am sure that his heart is in the right place; I just hope that his actions will reflect his instincts.

5.35 pm

Sir George Young (North-West Hampshire): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). The House listened with respect to his balanced contribution. I shall seek to beat him for brevity if I cannot match him for wisdom.

I have three points to make. The first relates to the method of choosing the names for Select Committees. I speak as a new member of the Committee of Selection. I have attended only two meetings, but that has been enough to persuade me that it does not serve the House well. It has been captured by the usual channels, and I welcome the beam of light that is being shone on that obscure body this afternoon.

The Committee has nine members appointed by the House in the correct proportions of six, two and one. It is chaired with dispatch by the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam). Of the eight remaining members, five are Whips. Had my party not generously acceded to my request to have one of our two places, six of the eight would have been Whips. There is a convention among Whips that they do not challenge the nominations of other parties. If the other side wants to put someone on a Committee or to keep someone off whose interests may be relevant but unhelpful, that is not challenged. It is no secret that I recently proposed an amendment in the Committee. Like the man in the Bateman cartoon, I was shot down in flames.

Unlike other Committees, the substance of the discussion is not circulated beforehand. We know what Committees we are going to appoint, but we do not know the nominations. They are produced like rabbits out of a hat at the meeting and agreed, usually without discussion or division. The meetings last a matter of minutes. That may be all right for the appointment of some Committees, and I am not against the involvement of the Whips. They know Members' interests, their work load on other Committees and can get a regional balance. However, it cannot be right at the beginning of a Parliament for people to be appointed to Committees for the whole of the Parliament in that way.

There needs to be a more rigorous and transparent process, leading to an output that commands greater confidence. The Committees should be better balanced, without being over-dominated by the Whips. The names of those nominated should be available in advance and there should be an expectation that they will be discussed and defended before they are put to the House. The House can certainly go over the course again, as we are doing this afternoon, but the Committee of Selection should be doing a proper job in the first place. I welcome the announcement by the Leader of the House of a thorough review of how the selection process operates.

My second point is that the nominations matter; they are vital. All the recent reports on reform of the House focus on the role of independent Select Committees. They

should not be selected by the Government whom they are holding to account. Let us consider the Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions, which we are appointing tonight. One of the key political issues in coming months will be the tube—the private finance initiative, Bob Kiley, the Greater London assembly and so on. That requires no legislation. It will be covered briefly at Question Time and we can have an Opposition day on it, but that does not provide the opportunity to scrutinise the Executive. The Select Committee will be the only way in which the House can get behind the PFI for the tube.

Without being discourteous to whoever takes over from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), if she is not successfully reinstated, I doubt whether her successor will give the Government as hard a time. One of the weapons of the House is not quite being put beyond use, but being wheeled away from the front line. Using the alibi of mobility of membership, several independent-minded Members have been fingered and removed from Select Committees.

My final point relates to the membership of the Select Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons. In my view, what is needed is not so much a modernising Select Committee, but a strengthening Select Committee. Parliament's prime task is to be effective and to hold the Government to account. Yes, we should also work sensible hours, use modern technology and review antiquated procedures, all of which may well strengthen the House, but strengthening, not modernising, should be the prime purpose of the Committee.

The Select Committee that modernises or strengthens the House of Commons should not be chaired by the Cabinet Minister whose job it is to deliver the Government's often overloaded legislative programme. There could not be a clearer conflict of interest, nor an appointment more likely to short-circuit the whole machinery of accountability. The Leader of the House must be pulled two ways: between his duty to his ministerial colleagues through collective responsibility to secure the passage of their Bills, and his duty to the House to make sure that we do our job properly and have time to scrutinise the legislation.

The Leader of the House may well have radical ideas about reform of the House. I am sure that he would be a first-class witness before the Modernisation Committee. However, I say to him what I said to his predecessor: there is no role for the Leader of the House on a Select Committee of the House in charge of modernisation. It is like the Chancellor chairing the Public Accounts Committee.

Attempts to sort all these matters out at the end of the last Parliament were sadly unsuccessful. There can be no excuse for the House not getting it right now.

5.41 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): In the last Parliament, the Select Committee on Liaison, which consists of the Chairmen of the various Select Committees, was so concerned about how modernisation of the House was avoiding the need to develop and improve the powers of Select Committees that it produced a very balanced report in which it suggested to Parliament a way of bringing back to this place the power of scrutiny, which is what we are here for. That way was not only to improve the information and evidence-gathering techniques offered to Select Committees and the support for those who carry out the work, but to ensure that the members of the Committees were truly representative of all corners of the House of Commons.

I do not intend to detain the House long tonight, but I have to say that I am astonished by what has happened. I do not believe that I am irreplaceable on the Transport Sub-Committee: my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) and for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) have great knowledge of transport matters and either would make an excellent Chairman. The fact is that outside, the House, the current Parliament is perceived as not doing its job properly, and the Select Committees are regarded as a means of carefully examining not only what Whitehall and the Government are doing but what all the arms of government and their myriad agencies are doing. There is no other comparable form of machinery in the House of Commons. There is no other way of doing the job.

Although people do not always understand the intricacies of what we do here, they ask that the Members of Parliament who are sent here fulfil the role that voters expect them to fulfil, and that is not simply to go along with everything that the Executive propose. My commitment to the Labour party is total. My commitment to what is done in the name of the Labour party is sometimes less than total. I believe that the difference is essential. I do not undermine my Government by suggesting that they are not like the pope—infallible. I do not undermine the role of independent Secretaries of State if I dare, as a Committee member with other Committee members, to produce a report that examines their actions in detail.

What the Select Committees do matters. It matters because the House of Commons must never become a great morass of people doing what they are told not by the electorate but by the Executive. That is why it is important that we vote tonight on who serves on which Committee. That is why it is important to say to the electorate as a whole that we do a vital job. Give us more powers. Give us more support. Do not give us more money. As Chairman of a Committee, I do not want money: what I need is the right to question, to examine and to produce reports on what Her Majesty's Government are doing in the name of government.

It is because I have faith in the ability of the Labour party and a Labour Government to take just decisions that I know that they will not be frightened of the role of Select Committees in checking what they have done, what they are doing and what they intend to do. That is why I was elected. It is why we were all elected. If we forget that, the electorate will not.

5.45 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I address my remarks to the composition of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, with special reference to the Government side. In this Parliament, as in the previous one, seven Members were nominated from the Government side. Of those Members who sat on the Committee during the last Parliament, three were proposed for renomination. Of the remaining four, two have retired from the House, and one—the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott)—

[Sir John Stanley]

did not want to serve on the Committee because of her commitments. Thus, of the previous Members of the Committee on the Government side who were willing and able to serve, only one—the right hon. Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson)—was sacked from the Committee.

I certainly acknowledge that there could well be occasions when it is right to dispense with the services of the Chairman of a Select Committee. It would be legitimate to do so, for example, if the Chairman did not have an adequate grasp of the subject matter before the Committee. However, as the House knows, that is most certainly not so in the case of the right hon. Gentleman. He was, of course, a professional diplomat before he entered the House. He has spent years on foreign affairs in the House, including service as a Front-Bench spokesman for his party. He is a member of the North Atlantic Assembly. He has given years of service to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and, throughout most of the last Parliament, he was the chairman of its UK branch. I can tell the House firmly that, of all the members of the Committee during the last Parliament, no one had a greater or deeper knowledge of foreign affairs than he did. The breadth and depth of his knowledge certainly exceeded that of most of us.

It would be right to dispense with the services of a Chairman if the Chairman was indolent. I share with the House the fact that the right hon. Gentleman was extremely diligent. If we consider the many, many informal meetings of the Committee as well as the hours spent in formal meetings, his attendance record was superior to that of any other member of the Foreign Affairs Committee during the last Parliament.

It would be legitimate to dispense with the services of a Committee Chairman if the Committee failed to deliver the goods, in terms of reports to the House. On that count, the facts speak for themselves. After a helpful tip given to me in the cafeteria by the then Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), the Foreign Affairs Committee adopted the practice followed by the Home Affairs Committee of printing on the inside of each of its reports the full list of reports published by the Committee thus far in the Parliament. If the House looks at the final report, which we produced days before the Dissolution, it will see that the Foreign Affairs Committee under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Swansea, East produced in four years flat a total of 37 reports to the House, including major reports on human rights, weapons of mass destruction, the Kosovo war, European Union enlargement and several other equally important subjects. So the Committee, under his chairmanship, most certainly delivered the goods.

Finally, it might be legitimate to sack the Chairman of a Select Committee if his chairmanship skills were seriously deficient. The right hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying that there may have been one or two occasions when his natural Welsh loquacity got the better of him and landed him in hot water, but essentially his chairmanship of the Committee was eminently satisfactory. He chaired the Committee in a way that was fair minded, consensual and patient, and that delivered the goods. The facts speak for themselves.

Regrettably, the only conclusion that one can draw as to why the right hon. Gentleman has been sacked from the Committee—a matter on which, as the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Stunell) rightly pointed out, the Leader of the House was entirely silent in his opening remarks—is that the Foreign Affairs Committee produced a number of criticisms of the Government's foreign policy in the last Parliament.

I wish to make it clear to the House that those criticisms were not from one party on the Select Committee. They were not overwhelmingly from just part of the Select Committee. Such criticisms as there were in those 37 reports were overwhelmingly criticisms made by every member of the Select Committee and by every party on the Select Committee in reports that were unanimously agreed.

Therefore it is necessary to ask whether the House is prepared to tolerate a situation in which the Chairman of a Select Committee can be sacked for the supposed sin of having chaired a Select Committee that made criticisms of the Government. In posing that question, I say straight away that this is not an issue on which the official Opposition can make political capital. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning), the shadow Leader of the House, was wholly right not to do so. I, like most members of the official Opposition, remember with dismay and embarrassment the events that occurred at the opening of Parliament in 1992 when, in almost mirror circumstances, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) was not re-appointed to the Health Committee of which he had been Chairman, because that Committee had criticised the health policy of the Government of the day.

This is not an issue for party points. It is, however, an issue for House of Commons points. I state such a point, as I see it, in simple terms. If the Government are allowed to get away with the sacking of the right hon. Member for Swansea, East and the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), the message that will be sent not only to every Chairman of a Select Committee in this Parliament but to every member of a Select Committee in this Parliament is that, if they have the temerity to criticise the Government in the course of their Select Committee's work in this Parliament, they run the risk that they will be sacked at the beginning of the next Parliament.

That is not an acceptable proposition. It is not an acceptable system of duress of this legislature by the Executive. At the end of this debate, above all debates in this Parliament, I ask that we as a House put party last and the House of Commons first. We must make it clear to the Government that the right hon. Member for Swansea, East and the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich should be reinstated to their respective Select Committees, from which they should never have been sacked.

5.56 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I, too, shall be brief. I shall make two comments, the first to the Leader of the House and the second to the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg), who I am sure will be back in the Chamber in a moment to hear my comments.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has an ability with words which no other hon. Member can equal. Those who have such a gift know that it is easy for them

so to wave a wand and paint a picture that we are unaware of the message that we are supposed to receive. I stress that today my right hon. Friend was extremely clear about the directions that he wishes the reform of the House of Commons to take. He was sensibly silent about the membership of a couple of Select Committees. I shall return to that in a moment.

I make a plea to my right hon. Friend. It would help the House if, at some suitable opportunity—obviously not today—he, with his considerable abilities, began to spell out for us what he and the Government see as the functions of the House of Commons. In my 22 years in this place, the Executive seem to have been terrorised by a view of the House of Commons which might have been true in the middle of the 19th century, but is no longer true today. It is not our function to make and unmake Governments, to introduce major Bills or to trip up the progress of Government Bills.

We clearly have a job of scrutiny, but the function that the monarch had in the 19th century is now ours. We have the right to be consulted, to advise and to warn, but if the Government choose to ignore us, they will probably get away with it. However, there are people outside who are attentive and who build up an image of the way in which Administrations behave and perform. One—only one—of the reasons why the Opposition are in such poor health, if I put it as kindly as I can, is that when we were unelectable, they in government thought that they could do anything. The electorate had to put up with it, but the electorate did not forget. Once we were in a position to form a Government, the revenge of the electorate was mighty, and will clearly extend over more than one Parliament—perhaps over two or three.

There is a message to my right hon. Friend. The Government might get away tonight with sacking two hon. Members who should be members of Select Committees, and they might think little of it, but in the last Parliament, and in this Parliament, sadly, they continue to present an image of what they are like which, I am sure, is totally inaccurate. The image suggests that they believe that one can ride roughshod, and grab and take anything. The impression of a belief that we rule, no matter what people say, is being marked down on our card outside. When we are in difficult times, we will find, like the shambles of the Conservative party, that it is too late to reform. The electorate will have marked our card indelibly, and when the moment comes, retribution will be visited upon us.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will help this place by recognising that our main function is a continuous five-year election campaign. As all the parties will be setting out their stalls and trying to create good images of themselves and bad ones of other people, it is within that interplay that our checks and balances operate. For example, if the Government get away with what they want to do, they will be playing out part of that continuous election campaign. We might agree and say that it does not matter and that the Government should have the issue. Of course, we might also say that they are beginning to build an image that will make re-election that much more difficult. We who usually want the Government to have their programme—we have been put here to ensure that it is delivered—might want to say that it is in the best interests of ourselves and Parliament for us not to let that happen. That was the first point that I wanted to make.

Hon. Members kindly said earlier that I had applied to become a member of any Committee. My first such activity in this House was back in 1979, when the then Opposition thought that Select Committee chairmanships should be used to provide a sort of restart interview for ex-Cabinet members who wished to make their way back in the House of Commons. After a couple of weeks, the Whips gave way. David Ennals was not appointed, but Renee Short gained the position that she should have assumed. Later, I had a chance to serve on a Select Committee only because the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said that I should be on that Committee when the Whips attempted to keep me away from it.

That Committee behaved in the way that has been described by all hon. Members. It did not try to trip up the Government or to prove silly little points. We tried to begin a new agenda, and because we did so, the Government and the Opposition felt themselves to be free and secure enough to begin to rethink their position on welfare reform. In the long run, I do not believe that there is a conflict between good government and strong Select Committees. Select Committees are not in business to pretend that we are a Government in exile or that we are about 19th—century Members thinking that they can bring down Administrations. Rightly, we do not have the power to introduce Bills. If we had such characteristics, this country would no longer have responsible government. Come the elections, Governments could say, "We did our best, guv'nor, but all those Select Committees that you wanted us to establish kept defeating our programme, time after time." There is a role for Select Committees in terms of independence and setting new agendas. There is also a role for us to say—as I am now—that the Government are wrong and should think again.

I want now to make my plea to the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham, who has tabled a number of amendments. I should tonight call him my right hon. and learned Friend. By tabling his amendments, he has ignited a debate that has probably surpassed his best expectations. Obviously, he will wish to speak, but I ask him not to press his amendments. Labour Members will be loth to pick on some of our colleagues and execute them while supporting other colleagues, whom we might want to be appointed. We do not want to deal with the matter in public.

In the 1983 election, I rushed up to a house in which seven voters lived, thinking that they must be Labour supporters. I asked the woman who opened the door whether they were voting for us this time. She said, "No way." I asked, "Is your husband voting for us?" The answer was, "No way." I asked whether any of the children were voting Labour. "No way," came the answer. I then said, "Have any of you got jobs?" The woman said, "None of us." I asked whether they were all voting Tory. The woman said, "Yes; that bloody woman got us into this mess, and that woman can get us out of it." Similarly, we do not want to pick on individual Members and put others in their place. If I may say so, the Committee of Selection got us into this bloody mess and it can get us out of it. Even if the amendment that seeks to reject the membership proposals for two Committees and ensure that the Committee of Selection reports back early on Wednesday cannot be accepted, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will note that that is the wish of the Committee.

6.6 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): A few moments ago, the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said that she was not irreplaceable, but I should tell her that many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish that she had not been replaced and hope that something can be done about that in the next few hours.

I want to speak about the sub-plot that has been running in this debate. I refer to the private grief, as the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) called it, between the Liberal Democrat party and the minority parties—or certainly the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru. I want also to make a few remarks about the composition of Select Committees in general.

In speaking to amendments (b) to motions 15 and 19, and to the manuscript amendment to motion 17, I must say that I thought that the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Stunell) gave us a touch of candour when he said that he was beset by difficulties as a representative of the Liberal Democrats and the minority parties on the Committee of Selection. He said that he faced difficulties in deciding on certain occasions whether to nominate a Liberal Democrat or an SNP or Plaid Cymru Member in respect of a departmental Select Committee. He must have agonised about that choice. On the three such occasions that arose for him, he plumped for a member of the Liberal party.

I have some sympathy for the hon. Gentleman. I can imagine the difficulty of trying to say to the parliamentary Liberal party, "I had the opportunity of appointing one of you, but I thought that the SNP and Plaid Cymru had a better claim." I do not think that he would have been re-appointed to his current position if he had made such a remark. I do not underrate the difficulty that he faced, but I slightly resent his trying to gild the matter over and to say that it was a question only of numbers or experience. If it was a question of numbers, he has done a superb job. He has managed to get the Liberal party, which has 8 per cent. of Members of Parliament, 9.1 per cent. representation in the Committees—an over-representation of four hon. Members. The SNP and Plaid Cymru have an under-representation of one hon. Member both in the general and departmental Committee lists. Under- representation by one person might seem to be neither here nor there, but when a party has only two places on departmental Select Committees, one of them becomes proportionally very important.

The hon. Gentleman also said that selection was a question of experience. It is true that a large number of my hon. Friends are new Members of Parliament. However, when there was a choice in respect of the Select Committee on the Treasury between a new Member of Parliament from the Liberal party and a rather more experienced one from the SNP, he suddenly decided to give youth a chance, and nominated the Liberal Democrat. I do not mind the fact that he faced some difficulty, but I resent the humbug that is presented to the House. Its effect is such that even the Chairman of the Committee of Selection was not told about any difficulty regarding the Liberal party and others. I do not think that such behaviour does the party any credit. On the contrary, it gives me the impression that, for all the deserved criticisms that the hon. Member for Hazel Grove made of the Labour party, the outcome of the selection process would have been exactly the same if the Liberal Democrats had been in charge of it; the only difference would have been the level of sanctimony with which the selections were proposed.

Although it is true that it is generally invidious for hon. Members to consider amendments that propose replacing one Member with another, replacing a Liberal Member with a Scottish National Member or Plaid Cymru Member is justified under the current circumstances.

I have some experience of what the Leader of the House is going through. Two years ago, in the Scottish Parliament, there were three minority parties with one Member each. We had a Green Member, a Scottish Socialist and an independent. In statistical terms, such representation could not have guaranteed them places on the Committees of the Scottish Parliament. Those Committees are much more influential than Select Committees or even Standing Committees at Westminster. There was an agreement, which I helped to broker as Leader of the Opposition, to ensure that those minorities had a place on the Committees despite the statistics. That was the right decision. Instead of under-representing minorities, it would be wiser and fairer to over-represent them when possible to ensure that distinctive views are expressed. That would benefit Select Committees.

I know that the Leader of the House has an open mind on the matters that we are considering. I read his article in *The Times* last week and I listened carefully to his speech. I reluctantly agreed with much of what he said. He referred to Committee practice in the Scottish Parliament—and in the Welsh Assembly, which can take policy if not legislative initiatives—and I know that he will try to include some of that experience in Select Committees in the House of Commons.

I served on the Select Committee on Energy from 1987 to 1992. I therefore know that the dispatch of independent Committee members is not a new practice. That Select Committee was independent minded when it began its work in 1987. It produced a series of reports that were critical of the Government of the day. As time went on, members were selected who were described by other members as Whips' narks. On one occasion, two Conservative Members came to blows as they discussed who was informing the Whips about the various discussions in the Committee.

Mr. McNamara: Who were they?

Mr. Salmond: One of them has passed away, so I shall not identify them. None the less, a Select Committee was nobbled. It is not a new phenomenon, but I stress to any Labour loyalists who are present that that does not make it right. Just because the Tories did it does not make it right for the Labour party.

There are only two forms of checks and balances in this place. They are the revising Chamber, whose Members are increasingly appointed and is therefore the poodle rather than the watch dog of the constitution, and the Select Committee system. I hope that the role of the latter will be expanded. Select Committees constitute an early warning system of approaching trouble in legislation or Government practice. If they become neutered and their members are simply appointed, and if they are subject to intimidation and replacement, neither the early warning system nor the revising Chamber will be effective.

The Leader of the House, perhaps cleverly, as one of his hon. Friends suggested, said that he was open to change, which was inevitable. He also said that he was sympathetic to changes in the way in which all parties nominate Select Committee members. However, it would strengthen his arm in fighting for change if the House demonstrated its independence and rejected at least some of the Select Committee nominations this evening.

6.14 pm

David Winnick (Walsall, North): We should distinguish between some of the humbug and mischief making in the first part of the debate and the genuine anxiety that many of us feel about nominations for the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee. Some may say, "Look what happened in 1992. They did it." However, we would make a mistake if we repeated such actions tonight. If we support the recommendations of the Committee of Selection, we commit an action to which we strongly objected in 1992 when we were in opposition.

Moreover, such actions did not do the Tories much good. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) spoke about the arrogance of the previous Government. The decision in 1992 was a relatively minor factor in their self-destruction; nevertheless, it affected the morale of Tory Members of Parliament. It would be a mistake to repeat such actions.

Let me put the argument differently. If my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson) had been re-appointed, would any Labour Member have been surprised? The opposite is true: we would have taken it as a matter of course. We are therefore surprised that they have not been re-appointed. Several hon. Members wish to speak, and I shall briefly express three reasons why I hope that our large majority, about which I am pleased, will not be used tonight to support what is basically wrong. We have been told that we have a genuinely free vote.

First, there is no justification for not re-appointing my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich and my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East. If we consider all the criteria that the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) set out—ability, knowledge, attendance and conscientiousness—it is clear that they should be re-appointed. The Leader of the House has given no explanation for not re-appointing them. If the Government had at least given a reason, we could take it into account. We are entitled to an explanation; we should not simply act as a rubber-stamp. Perhaps some hon. Members believe that the decision is correct, but if we believe that it is wrong we should not rubber-stamp it.

The second reason is more important than individuals, if I may say that to my two hon. Friends. We need to reassert the authority of the House of Commons. There are many reasons for arguing among ourselves—for example, we may not like a policy—but we were elected as Labour Members of Parliament, not independents. We are entitled to stand as independents, but we know what the result would be. Like my colleagues, I want to be here only as a Labour Member of Parliament. I have no wish to sit in the House of Commons other than as a Labour Member. We therefore give the Government the benefit of the doubt on many issues, as happened in the last Parliament. Sometimes I was not happy with this or that, but on the majority of issues, I am pleased to support the Government. However, if we simply rubber-stamp a decision, which I, like many others, believe to be wrong, we act against the interests of the House and the parliamentary Labour party.

We cannot claim that there are political reasons that we should take into account. There is no general election for at least four years, no mid-term election and no crucial by-election. In those circumstances, we would say, "We'd better rally round. It would be unfortunate if the press got the impression that we were a divided party." To put it generously, we are not likely to experience difficulties from the Opposition, at least for a while. If we believe that the Government are wrong, there is no better time than the beginning of a Parliament to vote against them for all the reasons that I have expressed.

The final reason is that, if we rubber-stamp this decision tonight, this Government and other Governments in the future will say, "We got away with it, like they got away with it in 1992." The future Labour Government whom I hope will be re-elected might say that in the next Parliament. However, there has been enough of a row, and enough media difficulties—caused not by us on the Back Benches but by the Government—and if the Government do not get their way tonight, it is my humble view that that would make any Government far more reluctant to repeat what has been done.

I hope that I have not taken up too much of the House's time. For the three reasons that I have given, I hope that we will decide tonight not to approve the membership of the two Committees in question: the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee.

6.20 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Sleaford and North Hykeham): I know that the hour is late and that many hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall be brief and make my remarks in compressed form.

The right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) asked me not to move my amendment. With the consent of the House, I propose not to move it. However, I propose to vote against the substantive motion. We are grateful to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) and my right hon. Friend the Member for North-West Hampshire (Sir G. Young) for lifting the secrecy from the Committee of Selection. The plain truth that we must face is that that Committee does not exercise a judgment; it simply rubber-stamps the nominations of the parties. In reality, the Whips are choosing the Select Committees, and that cannot be right.

I hope that the House will forgive me for drawing on my personal experience. I was a Minister for 13 years, and have also been a Whip. During that time I never—or very rarely—found myself under pressure in the Chamber. However, I sometimes found myself under pressure when I was before a Select Committee. I believe that the Select Committees are the most important form of scrutiny that the House has, and if that is the case, we must reserve to the House the nominations for their membership.

I welcome what the Leader of the House said about the Modernisation Committee determining a new way of selecting the Select Committees. However, I hope that it will approach that task with a view to reducing the amount

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

of control that the Executive, or any party, exercises over its own members. I must point out to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (David Winnick) that I am increasingly the enemy of party. I want to diminish the influence of party in the House. That has always been my position, although I find it rather easier to express now than I did during my 13 years in government.

May I say to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and to the right hon. Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson) that the hon. Lady's speech demonstrated why we value her so much? She and the right hon. Gentleman are parliamentarians of distinction. If one were to ask why they were not re-appointed to the two Select Committees of which they were Chairmen, there would be no sensible answer, save that they presided over Committees that expressed authoritative criticism of the Front Bench from time to time. That is what they were meant to do, and that is what I hope they will continue to do in this Parliament.

The right hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)—who has been here throughout the debate—and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs. Ellman) will have noted that I have tabled amendments to take them off the Select Committees in question. There is nothing personal in that. I am afraid that if one is trying to put two people on those Committees, one has to take two people off. I hope that they will accept that I was not making any personal criticism of them.

Alan Howarth (Newport, East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman says that he intends nothing personal in his amendments. Earlier, he waxed eloquent on matters of parliamentary propriety. Will he therefore apologise to the House for having tabled amendments proposing that individual Members be appointed to Committees even though he had not consulted them?

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman may not have spotted the fact that I do not intend to move those amendments. I came to the conclusion that those hon. Members were unelectable, apart from any other reason, and that it was therefore not right for the House to consider their nominations. I therefore wished to withdraw my amendments.

The functions of the Select Committees are critical. We value the independence of the leading Chairmen that we have had. I do not want to divide—in any sense—the consensus that has been building up in the House. I hope that the right hon. Member for Swansea, East and the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich will again be able to serve on those Select Committees, and I do not want to reduce that possibility by moving my amendments. So, if the House will permit it, I shall not move them when they are called.

6.25 pm

Andrew Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I welcome the decision of the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) not to move his amendments. That is extremely helpful.

I want to talk about the Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions, and I shall start by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). The whole House, and the nation, have made it quite clear that we all respect the knowledge that she brought to that Select Committee in the last Parliament, and we cannot understand why we are not going to be able to use that knowledge in this Parliament. It is important that the House should show its respect for the knowledge that my hon. Friend brought to that Select Committee.

Less well recorded is my hon. Friend's work rate. There were times last year when she chaired both the Transport Sub-Committee and the main Committee of the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, and also attended the Environment Sub-Committee. That would be a formidable task for most people. However, in addition, my hon. Friend chaired Westminster Hall, as well as being a member of the Chairmen's Panel. She was therefore putting in far more work than many other hon. Members, and was doing so with a great deal of skill. That must be placed firmly on record. My hon. Friend would, of course, admit that she can be a little bit awkward on occasions, and she can certainly be disrespectful—but her work does the House of Commons proud, and it diminishes us all if we cannot find a place for her on a Select Committee at this time.

I am pleased that the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham decided not to move his amendments. He was a little unfair on my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs. Ellman), because she was one of the people on the Select Committee who came very close to equalling the record of my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich. She has an extremely good knowledge of regional and local government, and was excellent on questions of urban regeneration. It is unfortunate that her name was picked out as someone who should come off the Select Committee. She, too, had an extremely good work rate.

If one put a report before the Committee, one would know that the amendments that my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside tabled would be based on the fact that she had read the evidence and the whole of the report. There is always the temptation for a member of a Select Committee to flick through a report, find a particular page and table a few amendments, to pretend that they have been participating. In contrast, one always knew that my hon. Friend had done her homework, that she was a real participator, and one of the most skilful questioners. The House is therefore faced with a dilemma. However we get out of it, if we are not careful we shall have to take one person off a Select Committee to put someone else on. We should not run away from that fact.

How should the House move forward tonight? I plead with the Chairman of the Committee of Selection to acknowledge that, having listened to the debate, it would be perfectly easy for him not to move one or two of the particularly critical motions. He could decline to move them—the rest could be carried—and we could return to them later. If he insists on moving them, I would argue with my hon. Friends that we should vote them down. Having done so, we could then go back to the Committee of Selection on Wednesday and still get the whole process through—but it is no good our taking the easy option of voting the motions down unless we have considered the way forward.

There are ways of dealing with the matter. The first, and easiest, would be to amend Standing Orders to enlarge the membership of the two Committees in question by

one, so that there would be a place for the Member concerned on each one. That would involve two resolutions, which would be easy for the Leader of the House to introduce, to amend Standing Orders to make those extra places. That, in a sense, is the simple way forward, but Opposition Members, if they are so keen to make a change, would have to put up with a slight alteration in the party percentages on those Committees.

There are other ways forward that need to be considered. One problem with the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee is that the Department is primarily responsible for England. Most of the issues that it covers are devolved in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, but one proposed member represents a Northern Ireland constituency and two represent Scottish constituencies. They would consider the Committee's work even though 90 per cent. of it would not affect their constituents. There is no reason why a Member of the House who represents one part of the United Kingdom should not scrutinise events in any other part, but is the right balance struck by proposing for a Committee of 17 Members three who represent areas that are not directly affected by 90 per cent. of the Committee's work?

If Opposition parties are so keen for independent scrutiny to take place, why do they always press for their percentage on Select Committees? Why could they not consider proposing Members from other parties, particularly as in the last Parliament the Conservative party had considerable difficulty in finding Members to serve who turned up regularly? There are ways forward, and this is my plea to the Chairman of the Committee of Selection: do not move those particular motions. If they are moved, my plea to my hon. Friends will be to vote them down, on the understanding that the Committee of Selection can return to the matter on Wednesday and find a solution. There are solutions, and the Select Committees could still be set up before the recess.

6.31 pm

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): Although I cannot go along with everything that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Bennett) said, he has presented the House with a realistic solution to the dilemma facing us this evening. I hope that it commends itself to the Leader of the House and the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, who is not in his place.

The Leader of the House made an interesting speech, and I hope that it will be regarded as significant. I believe that he is genuinely anxious to improve Select Committees and their selection, and that he wants them to hold the Government properly to account. He can prove that by ensuring that the two motions are not moved. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) has done precisely the right thing, and will not move his amendments. It is invidious for the House, and for Government Members in particular, to face a choice between two Members. My right hon. and learned Friend has withdrawn one dilemma and it is up to the Leader of the House and the Chairman of the Committee of Selection to withdraw the other.

We are at the beginning of a new Parliament and the Government once again enjoy a very large majority, but I already detect signs in our debates that Government Members are conscious of the fact that huge majorities breed arrogance. I already detect a view that Government Members want to play a fuller part than they played in the last Parliament in holding the Government to account and in subjecting their actions to scrutiny.

We have heard a number of admirable speeches. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) made a splendid contribution, as did the hon. Member for Walsall, North (David Winnick). Both proclaimed their genuine pride in being members of the Labour party and supporters of a Labour Government, yet both called on their colleagues to consider what is proposed.

This Government are not the first to be guilty of making such proposals, and I have been in a position similar to that of the right hon. Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson) and the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich. In 1979 I served on the Education, Science and Arts Committee, which was chaired by a Labour Member, Christopher Price. He chaired the Committee with great distinction and authority, but lost his seat in 1983.

My party, which was in government with a huge majority—almost as big as that enjoyed by the present Government—decided that it wanted to take the chairmanship of the Committee to itself. I was the senior member, but I was considered far too dangerous and was bypassed. I was not allowed to be Chairman. I did not make a great issue of that at the time, because an ex-Minister for whom I had great personal affection was put in place, but it was wrong.

The name of the right hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), the former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, appears, as does mine, in the motion on the Foreign Affairs Committee. I have a great regard for him, and he knows that to be true, but it is wrong to shoehorn a former Cabinet Minister straight into the chairmanship of a Select Committee. That is not the right way to behave.

We heard an admirable speech from my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), who served on the Foreign Affairs Committee with great distinction in the last Parliament. He has personal experience, so he elaborated as perhaps no one else could on the important role played by the right hon. Member for Swansea, East in chairing that Committee. My right hon. Friend showed beyond any peradventure that removing the right hon. Gentleman was an act of malice or spite. It was not a constructive action or a recognition of his contribution to the affairs of the House.

The same can be said of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich. She is a doughty champion of Parliament, and although she is proud to be Labour just as I am proud to be Conservative, she puts her parliamentary duties above all others. She has served not only her party but the whole of Parliament by the way in which she has discharged those duties. To have a Select Committee system—or rather, a selection system—that ejects two Members of such quality and such independence of mind and spirit is an indictment of the system itself.

I couple with the names of those two Members that of the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). I did not know that he had sought to serve the House as a Select Committee member until I heard it in the debate. He had not even been particular as to which Committee it should be; he was happy to serve on virtually any Committee. A selection system that will not allow a man with one of

[Sir Patrick Cormack]

the best forensic minds in the House, and whose reputation for integrity and independence is second to none, to serve the House as a member of a Select Committee is appalling. Frankly, that made me almost as angry as the exclusion of the two former Chairmen.

What would Members say if we proposed that the Crown Prosecution Service not only select the judges, but appoint the juries? They would laugh such a scheme to scorn, yet in effect, the Government—*[Interruption.]* Well, they may laugh, but the selection system would allow the Government to select the jury and the judge to pass judgment on their own policies. That is nonsense.

I hope that the Leader of the House will heed the wise words of my right hon. Friend the Member for North-West Hampshire (Sir G. Young), the former shadow Leader of the House. As he and I have said before, it is wrong for the Leader of the House to be Chairman of the Modernisation Committee. It is right to have such a Committee—although I would prefer to call it an improvement Committee. My right hon. Friend wanted to call it a strengthening Committee. We want to strengthen and improve this place and the way in which it holds Governments to account, and it is wrong that the Leader of the House is on that Committee. Of course he should give evidence, and of course he should put papers and schemes before it, but he should not chair its deliberations.

We need to examine all our systems. The Modernisation Committee must be more demonstrably independent, and the Committee of Selection must be less demonstrably a rubber stamp. It is nonsense to have a Committee that merely receives the nominations from the two or three sets of Whips and says, "Yes, we'll have those." There should be a proper opportunity for Members to apply to a thoroughly independent Selection Committee, and to say on what Select Committees they wish to serve. I cannot think that any such independent Selection Committee would turn down applications from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich or from the right hon. Members for Swansea, East and for Birkenhead.

Jeremy Corbyn: I endorse what the hon. Gentleman says about applications. Does he also believe that all those who apply for membership of Committees should have their names published, so that it is transparent who applied and who was subsequently appointed?

Sir Patrick Cormack: That is a perfectly acceptable suggestion. I see no harm in that, and it would encourage Members to put their names forward. Over the years, many people have paid lip service to this other ladder. Far too many people come to the House so anxious to serve on the Front Bench that they subdue their own instincts. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Jeremy Corbyn) would never fall into that category, so he has never been on the Front Bench and will find it difficult to get on to any Select Committee on which he really wants to serve.

We should have a transparent system with a proper Selection Committee and proper applications. Members of House should know who has applied, and people should be selected to serve on Committees to which they can bring proper expertise, a true interest and true diligence. The attendance record of Select Committees is not always what it should be. *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members are nodding vigorously. It is important that those who are given this duty should discharge it properly, because they are acting on behalf of us all.

I shall finish where I began. The Leader of the House has gone—*[Interruption.]* Oh, no, he is still present. I apologise to him. I hope that he will heed what I have said, and will not press those particular motions, so that just as we have been spared having to make an invidious comparison between individual Members, we will be spared having to exclude two people of enormous worth, who have served the House in a fine manner over many years.

6.43 pm

Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): It was Adlai Stevenson who said, "With a tribute like that, I can hardly wait to hear myself speak." Yes, I am a victim—along with my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)—but whether I am an innocent victim will be for the House to decide. I am most grateful to all my hon. Friends who have paid tribute to me. I am deeply honoured by what the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) said. He was the Opposition leader on the Committee. We have had some differences, but I have always had enormous respect for him as a parliamentarian.

When I chaired the Welsh Affairs Select Committee 20 years ago, an academic accused me of being a democrat because of the way in which I ran the Committee. I pleaded guilty to that charge, and I hope that I ran the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in the same way.

The key factor is not the personal, but the principle. Parliament is falling into some disrepute. Coverage in the newspapers has plummeted. The public has switched off, as was shown by the apathy during the general election. What signal are we giving to the public? The last century was extremely hard on Parliaments because the professional civil service was far more expert, and because of the secrecy, the speed of events and globalisation. Select Committees are by far the best instrument for Parliament to be expert in dealing with experts. They must be seen to be independent if Parliament is to enhance its role.

My right hon. Friend has the ability to be a great Leader of the House. I have noticed, as no doubt have colleagues, that there was a difference between the tone of his admittedly positive speech to the Hansard Society last Thursday and what he said today. There was a gaping black hole in his speech last Thursday: there was no reference to what the Hansard Society and the Liaison Committee had said about the role of the Whips. Today, he grasped that nettle, and said something of significance about a review. I rejoice at that. Parliament faces a challenge, and I know that we will not fail.

6.46 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Rochford and Southend, East): It is wonderful that everyone has talked of the importance of preserving our democracy and fighting for the rights of individuals. I have been in the House for a long time, and I have heard that said on many occasions, but the interesting question is what we intend to do about it. If

my party feels as strongly as it says it does about this rotten and devious system of appointing Members to Select Committees merely on the instructions of Whips, what the blazes does it intend to do about it? If we really care, should not we say that we will make changes in the way in which we appoint Members to Select Committees? Nothing has sickened me more in my long time in Parliament than to hear Opposition Members shouting about what should be done when they can do something about it. If we think that democracy is at risk, we should do something about it.

If we really care, hon. Members should examine not just the chairmanship of two Committees but some of the decisions made about individuals, including the Member to whom I refer to in my amendment (b) to motion 17. For a brief period, I had the pleasure of serving on the Treasury Committee. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), with whom I do not agree on anything, was in my opinion one of its most effective members. To some degree, he was more effective than all the others put together.

The hon. Gentleman did not follow the rules. Members of the Treasury Committee do not decide what questions they ask: they are supplied to them by Clerks. At the beginning of a meeting, we had a bidding session to decide which of the named questions we wanted to ask. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch was different from others, in that he tended to ask his own questions. He upset things totally, and was a complete rascal.

I am worried about the question of ability. The House of Commons is different from most places of work, in that for most jobs people need A-levels, O-levels or university degrees. Parliament is unique: there are no qualifications for membership. To be a Member of Parliament people do not need to be able to read, write or count. A law that was laid down back in 1864 says that peers, lunatics or convicted criminals cannot be an MP. That offers us a wide scope to choose from, but it is amazing how one or two of each of those categories slips through from time to time.

The Members who have been chucked off Committees have great ability and are being discriminated against. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, with whom I hardly agree on anything, is one of the most highly qualified Members of the House. He was a successful graduate of Oxford, he is a barrister, and he has a constituency with some of the greatest social problems of the world. It made me sick to see him being chucked off while others were left on. My point is about democracy—it was not made in a party sense.

The House must wake up to the fact that, if we genuinely believe that Select Committees can achieve something and that democracy is in danger, we must make room for Members who are different, clever or on their own.

Another point, which, of course, is very much against the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, is that, as an individual, he did not always agree with everyone. Some members of our party do the same, and, as is probably known, there is currently a rule that we should not talk about the EEC at any time or in any way, because it is divisive and difficult. The Labour party has its rules too, and the hon. Gentleman sometimes breaks them.

The one thing we want, and it is desperately needed, is for the House of Commons to hear about democracy. We should give the Whips some idea of what we think. I believe that the right message would be conveyed if Members voted for amendment (b) to motion 17—with the agreement of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, whom I consulted before I tabled the amendment. I think he was rather surprised.

There is no point in just changing round some of the clever people who talk, and who always agree on everything. What is crucial is to preserve individuals.

Much has been said about the importance of Select Committees. I feel that there is a danger of our overstating that: democracy is far more important. I therefore hope that what I have said will be considered, for if such a message is conveyed to the Whips it will, I think, do more good than anything else.

Finally and most importantly, let me say to my own wonderful party that while it is great to hear us praising democracy, we must do something rather than just talking about it.

6.51 pm

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): I am grateful to be called, and very pleased to follow the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). This has proved, as I hoped, to be an extremely important debate in terms of the relationship between Parliament and the Executive.

I am deeply embarrassed to refer to my own position, but I am one of those who have been chucked out. I was joint Chairman of the Education and Employment Committee for four years, and was dispensed with rather summarily.

Two aspects of the debate, however, have been immensely encouraging. We have heard a constructive response from the Leader of the House, and we have witnessed the death throes of a wholly discredited system—a system that I operated for 10 years as Labour Chief Whip. At the end of my tenure I concluded that the rough justice that had been meted out was no longer tenable, and it was I who advocated in the Liaison Committee that Select Committee membership should be removed from the power of the Whips. I am delighted that the Liaison Committee agreed; I am also delighted that, with their silly behaviour, my right hon. Friends have underlined the wisdom of the Committee's decision.

I think that something very good will come out of this debate. I think the Leader of the House will prove a very progressive Leader: I think he will grasp the unique and historic opportunity to advance the power of Select Committees, and really begin to restore the dignity—as well as the power—of the House of Commons.

6.53 pm

Mr. Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield): Once again, we have had the opportunity to engage in a serious and important debate. I am grateful to the Leader of the House for outlining possible proposals for modernisation that would address some of the criticisms advanced today. There is no doubt that if that is done he will have the Opposition's co-operation and support, as has already been made clear to him.

[Mr. Dominic Grieve]

The fact that that is being promised, however, does not mean we should suspend our judgment on the motions. We have a right and a duty to exercise our judgment, and if what is coming from the Committee of Selection is wholly unfortunate and misplaced we should examine each motion and have the courage to reject those that appear flagrantly to fly in the face of common sense.

I hope that the House will be willing to consider particularly the motions relating to transport and foreign affairs, and decide whether the interests of the House are being properly served in the rejection of Members whose views have been valid and trusted in the past. I await some reassurance from the Minister that the problems raised by so many today are being addressed.

6.55 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office (Mr. Stephen Twigg): I thank all who have spoken. I shall try to respond to some of their comments, but I have only five minutes in which to do so.

The hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Stunell) suggested that speed was getting in the way of reform. The Government have no desire for that to happen. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has said on many occasions, we have tried to have the Select Committees up and running in time for the summer, and that is still our intention. As has been acknowledged by Members on both sides of the House, however, and as we have made clear, reform will now take place.

As my right hon. Friend said, when the Modernisation Committee meets on Wednesday—assuming that we appoint it tonight—he will want it to give priority to the way in which Committee members are appointed. I do not think we could have a clearer indication that there are no delaying tactics, and no attempts by my right hon. Friend to ensure that that speed gets in the way of reform.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said that there was no conflict between good government and strong Select Committees. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) gave the House the benefit of his considerable experience, and described Select Committees as the best innovation he had seen during his time in the House. I think Members in all quarters want to ensure that that innovation is advanced, and that reform takes place.

As a number of Members said, we have benefited not just from the Liaison Committee's report—my right hon. Friend said that it would form a basis for the Modernisation Committee's consideration on Wednesday—but from the important contributions of the Hansard Society, chaired by Lord Newton, and the Norton commission, appointed by the official Opposition. All those studies and reports will contribute to the important debate that the Modernisation Committee will launch on Thursday.

The right hon. Member for North-West Hampshire (Sir G. Young) could not stay, but passed me a note to explain why. Both he and the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) again raised the question of my right hon. Friend's chairing the Modernisation Committee. I think that my right hon. Friend's commitment to chairing the Committee reaffirms his personal commitment to making modernisation a priority. I see no contradiction between that and saying that we want to modernise, strengthen and improve the House. What my right hon. Friend and the Government are saying by proposing that he chair the Committee is that we place reform, renewal and improvement of the House and its Select Committee system at the heart of our priorities. That is reflected in what my right hon. Friend has said today, as well as in his important speech to the Hansard Society last week. We place modernisation of the House at the head of the priorities of its Leader.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) raised the question of payment of Committee Chairs. The proposal has appeared in a number of the reports to which I have referred, and we have made it clear that we will consult widely on it. It will form part of the inquiry conducted by the Modernisation Committee, and only if it enjoys wide support will it be put to the SSRB.

We have an opportunity to settle the issue, and to allow the work of the Select Committees to begin. Labour Members have a free vote. This is a matter for the House to decide, but I commend our proposals.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Harold Best, Tom Brake, Derek Conway, Keith Hill, Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, Albert Owen, Anne Picking and Syd Rapson be members of the Accommodation and Works Committee.

It being 7 o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to Order [this day], to put the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

ADMINISTRATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Nick Ainger, Patsy Calton, Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, Caroline Flint, Martin Linton, Julie Morgan, Dr. Nick Palmer, Mrs. Marion Roe and David Wright be members of the Administration Committee.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

That Mr. Chris Bryant, Mr. Frank Doran, Michael Fabricant, Mr. Adrian Flook, Mr. Gerald Kaufman, Alan Keen, Miss Julie Kirkbride, Rosemary McKenna, Ms Debra Shipley, John Thurso and Derek Wyatt be members of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee.

DEFENCE

That Mr. David Crausby, Mr. Bruce George, Mr. Mike Hancock, Mr. Gerald Howarth, Mr. Kevan Jones, Jim Knight, Dr. Julian Lewis, Patrick Mercer, Syd Rapson, Mr. Frank Roy and Rachel Squire be members of the Defence Committee.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

That Mr. David Chaytor, Valerie Davey, Jeff Ennis, Paul Holmes, Ms Meg Munn, Mr. Kerry Pollard, Mr. Laurence Robertson, Mr. Jonathan R. Shaw, Mr. Barry Sheerman, Bob Spink and Mr. Andrew Turner be members of the Education and Skills Committee.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

That Mr. David Borrow, Mr. Colin Breed, David Burnside, Mr. David Curry, Mr. David Drew, Patrick Hall, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Mr. Michael Jack, Mr. David Lepper, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Mr. Bill Olner, Diana Organ, Phil Sawford, Mr. Paul Stinchcombe, David Taylor and Mr. Mark Todd be members of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee.—*[Mr. McWilliam, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Foreign Affairs

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. David Chidgey, Sir Patrick Cormack, Mr. Fabian Hamilton, Mr. Eric Illsley, Andrew Mackinlay, Mr. John Maples, Mr. Greg Pope, Mr. Chris Smith, Sir John Stanley, Dr. Phyllis Starkey and Ms Gisela Stuart be members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

The House divided: Ayes 232, Noes 301.

Division No. 26] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atkins, Charlotte
Baird, Vera
Banks, Tony
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Begg, Miss Anne
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Hilary
Benton, Joe
Blackman, Liz
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Blunkett, Rt Hon David
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradshaw, Ben
Brown, Rt Hon Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burnham, Andy
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Caborn, Rt Hon Richard
Cairns, David
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Caplin, Ivor
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Cooper, Yvette
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr Jack *(Copeland)*
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dean, Mrs Janet
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Doran, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Ennis, Jeff
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foulkes, George
Gapes, Mike
Gilroy, Linda
Goggins, Paul
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hanson, David
Harman, Rt Hon Ms Harriet
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Healey, John
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Heppell, John
Hewitt, Rt Hon Ms Patricia
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hodge, Margaret
Hood, Jimmy
Hope, Phil
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Beverley *(Stretford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Johnson, Miss Melanie *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Joyce, Eric
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Kelly, Ruth
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lammy, David
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Love, Andrew
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
MacShane, Denis
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Meale, Alan
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Milburn, Rt Hon Alan
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Estelle
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Norris, Dan
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pike, Peter
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Cov'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salter, Martin
Sawford, Phil
Sheridan, Jim
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Singh, Marsha
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stoate, Dr Howard
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Timms, Stephen
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Ward, Ms Claire
Watson, Tom
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Wills, Michael
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Woodward, Shaun
Woolas, Phil
Wright, David *(Telford)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony McNulty and
Angela Smith.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allan, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Anderson, Rt Hon Donald *(Swansea E)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Austin, John
Bacon, Richard
Bailey, Adrian
Barker, Greg
Barnes, Harry
Baron, John
Barrett, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bennett, Andrew
Bercow, John
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Roger
Best, Harold
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Worthing W)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brake, Tom
Brazier, Julian
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen

Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Malcolm
Burgon, Colin
Burnett, John
Burns, Simon
Burstow, Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cable, Dr Vincent
Calton, Patsy
Cameron, David
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Casale, Roger
Cash, William
Caton, Martin
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chaytor, David
Chope, Christopher
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clwyd, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Iain
Collins, Tim
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Cotter, Brian
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Curry, Rt Hon David
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Quentin *(Grantham)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Davis, Rt Hon Terry *(B'ham Hodge H)*
Dawson, Hilton
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dobbin, Jim
Dodds, Nigel
Donohoe, Brian H
Doughty, Sue
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Etherington, Bill
Evans, Nigel
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Fisher, Mark
Flight, Howard
Flook, Adrian
Flynn, Paul
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Fox, Dr Liam
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Barry
Garnier, Edward
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gibb, Nick
Gibson, Dr Ian
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hammond, Philip
Hancock, Mike
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harvey, Nick
Havard, Dai
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver
Heath, David
Heathcoat–Amory, Rt Hon David
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Hendry, Charles
Hermon, Lady
Hinchliffe, David
Hoban, Mark
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Holmes, Paul
Hopkins, Kelvin
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Hurst, Alan
Iddon, Dr Brian
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keetch, Paul
Key, Robert
Kidney, David
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(E Yorkshire)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Laing, Mrs Eleanor
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lansley, Andrew
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laws, David
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Lewis, Terry *(Worsley)*
Liddell–Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Tony
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loughton, Tim
Lucas, Ian
McCafferty, Chris
McDonnell, John
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McNamara, Kevin
McWalter, Tony
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall–Andrews, Robert
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moore, Michael
Moss, Malcolm
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norman, Archie
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
O'Hara, Edward
Öpik, Lembit
Organ, Diana
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Albert
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Palmer, Dr Nick
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Pollard, Kerry
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Price, Adam
Prosser, Gwyn
Pugh, Dr John
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Salmond, Alex
Sanders, Adrian
Savidge, Malcolm
Sayeed, Jonathan
Sedgemore, Brian
Selous, Andrew
Shaw, Jonathan
Shephard, Rt Hon Mrs Gillian
Shepherd, Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Alan *(Nottingham S)*
Simpson, Keith *(Mid–Norfolk)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Rachel
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stinchcombe, Paul
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Stunell, Andrew
Swayne, Desmond
Syms, Robert
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher & Walton)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Dr Richard *(Wyre F)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Thurso, John
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Trend, Michael
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Tyler, Paul
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Webb, Steve
Weir, Michael
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Willis, Phil
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George
Younger–Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Field and David Winnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Ordered,

HEALTH

That Mr. David Amess, John Austin, Andy Burnham, Mr. Simon Burns, Jim Dowd, Julia Drown, Sandra Gidley, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Siobhain McDonagh, Dr Doug Naysmith and Dr Richard Taylor be members of the Health Committee.

Home Affairs

That Mr. David Cameron, Mrs. Janet Dean, Mr. Humfrey Malins, Mr. Chris Mullin, Bridget Prentice, Mr. Gwyn Prosser, Bob Russell, Mr. Marsha Singh, Angela Watkinson, Mr. Tom Watson and David Winnick be members of the Home Affairs Committee.

Information

That Mr. Richard Allan, Mr. Michael Connarty, Julia Drown, Michael Fabricant, Mr. Neil Gerrard, Mr. Peter Luff, Ann McKechin, Margaret Moran and Mr. Gwyn Prosser be members of the Information Committee.

International Development

That Mr. John Battle, Hugh Bayley, Alistair Burt, Ann Clwyd, Mr. Tony Colman, Mr. Nigel Jones, Mr. Piara S. Khabra, Mr. Edward Leigh, Chris McCafferty, Mr. Andrew Robathan and Tony Worthington be members of the International Development Committee.

Scottish Affairs

That Mr. Peter Atkinson, Mr. Alistair Carmichael, Mr. Peter Duncan, Mr. Eric Joyce, Mr. Mark Lazarowicz, Mr. John Lyons, Ann McKechin, Mr. David Marshall, John Robertson, Mr. Mohammad Sarwar and Mr. Michael Weir be members of the Scottish Affairs Committee.—[*Mr. McWilliam, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*]

Trade and Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Roger Berry, Richard Burden, Mr. Christopher Chope, Mr. Jonathan Djanogly, Mr. Lindsay Hoyle, Dr. Ashok Kumar, Mrs. Jackie Lawrence, Mr. Martin O'Neill, Linda Perham, Sir Robert Smith and Mr. John Whittingdale be members of the Trade and Industry Committee.—[*Mr. McWilliam, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*]

Amendment proposed: Line 3, leave out 'Sir Robert Smith,' and insert 'Pete Wishart'.—[*Mr. Salmond.*]

Question, That the Amendment be made, *put and negatived.*

Main Question put and agreed to.

Transport, Local Government and the Regions

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Andrew Bennett, Sir Paul Beresford, Mr. Clive Betts, Mr. Gregory Campbell, Mr. John Cummings, Mr. Brian H. Donohoe, Mrs. Louise Ellman, Chris Grayling, Helen Jackson, Ms Oona King, Miss Anne McIntosh, Mr. Bill O'Brien, Anne Picking, Dr John Pugh, Christine Russell, Mr. George Stevenson and Mr. Bill Wiggin be members of the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee.—[*Mr. McWilliam, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*]

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 308.

Division No. 27] **[7.16 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atkins, Charlotte
Baird, Vera
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Begg, Miss Anne
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Hilary
Benton, Joe
Blackman, Liz
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Blunkett, Rt Hon David
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradshaw, Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Rt Hon Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burnham, Andy
Cabom, Rt Hon Richard
Cairns, David
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Caplin, Ivor
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Cooper, Yvette
Corston, Jean
Cranston, Ross
Cruddas, Jon
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Doran, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Ennis, Jeff
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Foulkes, George
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gilroy, Linda
Goggins, Paul
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hanson, David
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Heppell, John
Hewitt, Rt Hon Ms Patricia
Hill, Keith
Hodge, Margaret
Hood, Jimmy
Hope, Phil
Howells, Dr Kim
Hughes, Beverley *(Stretford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Johnson, Miss Melanie *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Joyce, Eric
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Kelly, Ruth
Kemp, Fraser
Khabra, Piara S
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lammy, David
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Love, Andrew
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
MacShane, Denis
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mallaber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Milburn, Rt Hon Alan
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Estelle
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Norris, Dan
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Picking, Anne
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Cov'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry

Ross, Ernie
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Sawford, Phil
Sheridan, Jim
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Singh, Marsha
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stoate, Dr Howard
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Timms, Stephen
Todd, Mark
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Ward, Ms Claire
Watson, Tom
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Wills, Michael
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Woodward, Shaun
Woolas, Phil
Wright, David *(Telford)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony McNulty and Angela Smith.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainsworth, Peter *(E Surrey)*
Allan, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Anderson, Rt Hon Donald *(Swansea E)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Austin, John
Bacon, Richard
Bailey, Adrian
Banks, Tony
Barker, Greg
Barnes, Harry
Baron, John
Barrett, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bennett, Andrew
Bercow, John
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Roger
Best, Harold
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Worthing W)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brake, Tom
Brazier, Julian
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Malcolm
Burgon, Colin
Burnett, John
Burns, Simon
Burstow, Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cable, Dr Vincent
Calton, Patsy
Cameron, David
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Casale, Roger
Cash, William
Caton, Martin
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chaytor, David
Chope, Christopher
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clwyd, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Iain
Collins, Tim
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Cotter, Brian
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crausby, David
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Curry, Rt Hon David
Curtis-Thomas, Mrs Claire
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Grantham)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Davis, Rt Hon Terry *(B'ham Hodge H)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dobbin, Jim
Dodds, Nigel
Donohoe, Brian H
Doughty, Sue
Drew, David
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Etherington, Bill
Evans, Nigel
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Fisher, Mark
Flight, Howard
Flook, Adrian
Flynn, Paul
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Barry
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gibb, Nick
Gibson, Dr Ian
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hammond, Philip
Hancock, Mike
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harvey, Nick
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver
Heath, David
Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Hendry, Charles
Hermon, Lady
Hinchliffe, David
Hoban, Mark
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Holmes, Paul
Hopkins, Kelvin
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Iddon, Dr Brian
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keetch, Paul
Key, Robert
Kidney, David
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(E Yorkshire)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Laing, Mrs Eleanor
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lansley, Andrew
Laws, David
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Lewis, Terry *(Worsley)*
Liddell-Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Tony
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loughton, Tim
McCafferty, Chris
McDonnell, John
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McWalter, Tony
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marris, Rob
Marshall-Andrews, Robert
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Meale, Alan
Mercer, Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moore, Michael
Moss, Malcolm
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Naysmith, Dr Doug
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
O'Hara, Edward
Öpik, Lembit
Organ, Diana
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Albert
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paterson, Owen
Perham, Linda
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Pollard, Kerry
Powell, Sir Raymond
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Price, Adam
Prisk, Mark
Prosser, Gwyn
Pugh, Dr John
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Saimond, Alex
Sanders, Adrian
Savidge, Malcolm
Sayeed, Jonathan
Sedgemore, Brian
Selous, Andrew
Shaw, Jonathan
Shephard, Rt Hon Mrs Gillian
Shepherd, Richard

Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Alan *(Nottingham S)*
Simpson, Keith *(Mid–Norfolk)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Rachel
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stinchcombe, Paul
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Stunell, Andrew
Swayne, Desmond
Syms, Robert
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher & Walton)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Dr Richard *(Wyre F)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Thurso, John
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Trend, Michael
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watkinson, Angela
Webb, Steve
Weir, Michael
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Bill
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Willis, Phil
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George
Younger–Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Field and David Winnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

TREASURY

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Nigel Beard, Mr. Jim Cousins, Mr. Michael Fallon, Mr. David Laws, Mr. John McFall, Kali Mountford, Mr. George Mudie, Dr Nick Palmer, Mr. James Plaskitt, Mr. David Ruffley and Mr. Andrew Tyrie be members of the Treasury Committee.—[*Mr. McWilliam, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*]

Manuscript amendment proposed: Line 1, leave out "Mr. David Laws" and insert "Mr. Alex Salmond".—[*Mr. Salmond.*]

The House divided: Ayes 52, Noes 351.

Division No. 28] **[7.28 pm**

AYES

Bacon, Richard
Barker, Greg
Baron, John
Beggs, Roy
Bercow, John
Burns, Simon
Cash, William
Collins, Tim
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flynn, Paul
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Francois, Mark
Goodman, Paul
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, John
Hermon, Lady
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(E Yorkshire)*
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Llwyd, Elfyn
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Price, Adam
Prisk, Mark
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Salmond, Alex
Shepherd, Richard
Skinner, Dennis
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Swayne, Desmond
Trend, Michael
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Watkinson, Angela
Weir, Michael
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Bill
Wilshire, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Thomas and Pete Wishart.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Allan, Richard
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Atkins, Charlotte
Bailey, Adrian
Baird, Vera
Banks, Tony
Barnes, Harry
Barrett, John
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Begg, Miss Anne
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Hilary
Bennett, Andrew
Benton, Joe
Best, Harold
Blackman, Liz
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradshaw, Ben
Brake, Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brown, Rt Hon Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryant, Chris
Burden, Richard
Burnett, John
Burnham, Andy
Burstow, Paul
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Cable, Dr Vincent
Caborn, Rt Hon Richard
Calton, Patsy
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Caplin, Ivor
Casale, Roger
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chaytor, David
Chope, Christopher
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cooper, Yvette
Corston, Jean
Cotter, Brian
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis–Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Davis, Rt Hon Terry *(B'ham Hodge H)*
Dean, Mrs Janet
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Dodds, Nigel
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Doughty, Sue
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Peter
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Evans, Nigel
Farrelly, Paul
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flight, Howard
Flint, Caroline
Follett, Barbara
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Foulkes, George
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gidley, Sandra
Gilroy, Linda
Goggins, Paul
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hancock, Mike
Hanson, David
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*

Harvey, Nick
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Heath, David
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Heppell, John
Hewitt, Rt Hon Ms Patricia
Hill, Keith
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Holmes, Paul
Hood, Jimmy
Hope, Phil
Hopkins, Kelvin
Horam, John
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Beverley *(Stretford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Johnson, Miss Melanie *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Joyce, Eric
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Keetch, Paul
Kelly, Ruth
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lammy, David
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leigh, Edward
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Letwin, Oliver
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Lloyd, Tony
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McIsaac, Shona
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWalter, Tony
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Meale, Alan
Mercer, Patrick
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Milburn, Rt Hon Alan
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moore, Michael
Moran, Margaret
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Estelle
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norris, Dan
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Öpik, Lembit
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Sir Raymond
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Cov'try NW)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salter, Martin
Sanders, Adrian
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Sheridan, Jim
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Singh, Marsha
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Stunell, Andrew
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Syms, Robert
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Dr Richard *(Wyre F)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Thurso, John
Timms, Stephen
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tyler, Paul
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Watson, Tom
Webb, Steve
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Willis, Phil
Wills, Michael
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Wood, Mike
Woodward, Shaun
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wyatt, Derek
Younger-Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Noes:
Angela Smith and
Mr. Tony McNulty.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mr. Nigel Beard, Mr. Jim Cousins, Mr. Michael Fallon, Mr. David Laws, Mr. John McFall, Kali Mountford, Mr. George Mudie, Dr. Nick Palmer, Mr. James Plaskitt, Mr. David Ruffley and Mr. Andrew Tyrie be members of the Treasury Committee.

Welsh Affairs

Ordered,

That Mr. Martin Caton, Dr Hywel Francis, Mr. Martyn Jones, Julie Morgan, Albert Owen, Adam Price, Mr. Mark Prisk, Chris Ruane, Mr. Bill Wiggin, Mrs. Betty Williams and Mr. Roger Williams be members of the Welsh Affairs Committee.

Work and Pensions

That Miss Anne Begg, Ms Karen Buck, Mr. Andrew Dismore, Mr. Paul Goodman, Mrs. Joan Humble, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Rob Marris, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, James Purnell, Mr. Andrew Selous and Mr. David Stewart be members of the Work and Pensions Committee.—[*Mr. McWilliam, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*]

Modernisation of the House of Commons

Ordered,

That a Select Committee of fifteen Members be appointed to consider how the practices and procedures of the House should be modernised, and to make recommendations thereon;

That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House; to adjourn from place to place; to report from time to time and to appoint specialist advisers;

That Mrs. Angela Browning, Ann Coffey, Mr. Robin Cook, Mrs. Lorna Fitzsimons, Barbara Follett, Helen Jackson, Julie Morgan, Mr. Peter Pike, Joan Ruddock, Mr. Martin Salter, Mr. Richard Shepherd, Mr. Andrew Stunell, Mr. Paul Tyler and Mr. Nicholas Winterton be members of the Committee;

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House until the end of the present Parliament.—*[Mr. Robin Cook.]*

Ordered,

Deregulation and Regulatory Reform Committee

That Mr. Russell Brown, Mr. David Chaytor, Brian Cotter, John Cryer, Mr. Jeffrey M. Donaldson, Mr. Paul Goodman, Andy King, Dr Ashok Kumar, Mr. Andrew Love, John McDonnell, Mr. Denis Murphy, Dr Doug Naysmith, Mr. Peter Pike, Mr. Andrew Rosindell, Mr. Anthony Steen, Ian Stewart and Brian White be members of the Select Committee on Deregulation and Regulatory Reform.

Broadcasting

That Mrs. Helen Brinton, Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. James Gray, David Hamilton, Mr. Brian Jenkins, Mr. David Lepper, Mr. Iain Luke, Mr. John Lyons, Mr. Khalid Mahmood and Mr. Alan Reid be members of the Broadcasting Committee.

Procedure

That Alistair Burt, Mr. David Drew, David Hamilton, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Eric Joyce, Ian Lucas, Mr. John Lyons, Rosemary McKenna, Ms Meg Munn, Mr. David Rendel, Sir Robert Smith, Nicholas Winterton and David Wright be members of the Procedure Committee.

Standards and Privileges

That Tony Baldry, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. Russell Brown, Mr. David Chidgey, Ross Cranston, Mr. Andrew Dismore, Mr. Michael Foster (Hastings & Rye), Mr. Tom Levitt, Mr. Kevin McNamara, Mr. Alan Williams and Sir George Young be members of the Standards and Privileges Committee.

Environmental Audit

That Mr. Harold Best, Mrs. Helen Brinton, Sue Doughty, Mr. Mark Francois, Mr. Neil Gerrard, Mr. John Horam, Dr Brian Iddon, Tim Loughton, Ian Lucas, Mr. Michael Meacher, Mr. Jon Owen Jones, Mr. Malcolm Savidge, Mr. Mark Simmonds, Mr. Simon Thomas, Joan Walley and David Wright be members of the Environmental Audit Committee.

European Scrutiny

That Mr. Colin Breed, Roger Casale, William Cash, Mr. Michael Connarty, Tony Cunningham, Mr. Wayne David, Mr. Terry Davis, Jim Dobbin, Mr. Mark Hendrick, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. Jim Marshall, Anne McIntosh, Laurence Robertson, Mr. Anthony Steen and Mr. Bill Tynan be members of the European Scrutiny Committee.

Human Rights (Joint Committee)

That Vera Baird, Norman Baker, Jean Corston, Tony Cunningham and Mr. Shaun Woodward be members of the Select Committee appointed to join with a Committee of the Lords as the Joint Committee on Human Rights.

Public Accounts

That Richard Bacon, Mr. Paul Boateng, Mr. Ian Davidson, Geraint Davies, David Davis, Mr. Barry Gardiner, Mr. Brian Jenkins, George Osborne, Mr. David Rendel, Mr. Gerry Steinberg, Jon Trickett and Mr. Alan Williams be members of the Committee of Public Accounts.

Public Administration

That Annette Brooke, Kevin Brennan, Mr. David Heyes, Mr. Ian Liddell-Grainger, Mr. John Lyons, Mr. Gordon Prentice, Mr. Anthony Steen, Mr. Michael Trend, Brian White, Tony Wright (Cannock Chase), and Mr. Anthony D. Wright (Great Yarmouth) be members of the Public Administration Committee.—*[Mr. Robin Cook.]*

Business of the House

7.42 pm

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): I wish to make a short business statement.

In the light of the votes, the Committee of Selection will now have to consider revised proposals for nominations to the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee. I hope that that will take place on Wednesday.

The House will be invited to consider those nominations on Thursday after the debate on the Police (Northern Ireland) Amendment Order 2001. In order for it do so, it will be necessary to agree to set aside that part of Standing Order No. 121 that requires notice of such motions to be given two sitting days before the motions are taken. It may also be necessary for the House to sit beyond 7 pm on Thursday. I hope that, in the circumstances, the House will agree to both those procedural changes so that we can respond to the will of the House and, at the same time, set up all the Select Committees before the summer recess.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton): We shall, of course, be pleased to co-operate as much as possible to help the Government complete this business.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): We, too, of course, will co-operate. We recognise that the Leader of the House is trying to deal in the most sensible and expeditious way with the problem that his own side have created for him. We believe that it is important to get the Select Committees working as quickly as possible and we will do everything that we can to assist.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I welcome the statement by the Leader of the House. It is exactly the right reaction to the important events of this evening. However, he will not forget the significant concern shown across the House at the treatment of the minority parties. That has been indicated by votes that are well above our numbers.

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to hon. Members for their responses. I have recognised the problem that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) has identified and we shall look for ways of remedying it. I can only remedy some problems this week; I cannot promise to remedy them all.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): Given the statement that the Leader of the House has just made, will he recommend to the Select Committees that they meet on Friday, so that they can choose their Chairmen?

Mr. Cook: When Select Committees choose to meet is a matter for them. It is, of course, open to them to meet on Friday or, indeed, on any subsequent day. Select Committees are not tied to meeting while the House is sitting. They could, if they chose to do so, meet next week.

Northern Ireland

7.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Desmond Browne): I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 2001, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

I am grateful for the opportunity presented by this debate to explain the background to the order and explain why the Government believe that it is necessary to introduce it at this time.

The order provides for the conduct of elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly. It is being laid at this time purely as a precautionary measure. It is essential in order to keep open the option of elections if the Assembly fails to elect new First and Deputy First Ministers within six weeks. However, that does not indicate the Government's intentions nor commit the Government or the parties to this particular course of action. It is too early yet to say what will happen. This is contingency planning: all our focus presently is on working with the Irish Government to put together a package of proposals to carry forward the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement following last week's intensive discussions.

I should like to say something about the content of the order which, of course, is understood to be compliant with the rights under the European convention on human rights. It is being made under the powers of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and replaces the original order, the New Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 1998, which provided for the original Assembly elections only.

The provisions of this order provide for the conduct of all future Assembly elections. The content of this instrument is broadly in line with that of the original order save for the necessary modifications as a consequence of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and the Representation of the People Act 2000. One change that we have made is to the timetable for Assembly elections. All future elections will be based on a 25-day timetable rather than the 19-day one that was set for the 1998 elections. That makes sense as it brings Assembly elections in line with district council elections, which are also run on the proportional representation single transferable vote system.

As the original order provided only for the first Assembly elections, we planned to introduce these measures at some point prior to the programmed Assembly elections that are scheduled for 1 May 2003. However, as the House will know, the resignation of the right hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) as First Minister became effective as of 1 July and the terms of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 rendered that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) automatically ceased to hold office of Deputy First Minister at the same time.

The provisions of the 1998 Act state that, if the offices of the First and Deputy First Ministers become vacant, the Assembly must hold an election to fill the vacancies within six weeks. However, should this process be unsuccessful, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has to exercise his statutory duty and call fresh Assembly elections.

The order ensures that elections to the Assembly could be called if required. You, Mr. Speaker, will note that I used the word "if". The reason we are introducing the

order at this time is to ensure that all the options laid down in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 are open to us. It is an option, and it does not force either the Government or the political parties of Northern Ireland into one particular course of action. It is certainly not our intention, in laying the order, to railroad them into holding Assembly elections or to assume that the search for a new First and Deputy First Minister will be unsuccessful.

We are continuing our efforts, with the parties and with the Irish Government, to find a way forward in implementing the Good Friday agreement and it is hoped that the process of the Assembly electing new First and Deputy First Ministers will prevail. However, it is our fundamental duty to ensure that the procedures are in place should early Assembly elections be required. For that reason, I commend the order to the House.

7.49 pm

Mr. John Taylor (Solihull): We on the Conservative Benches are grateful to the Minister for setting out the main provisions of the order. As he has made clear, the order is technical in nature. Despite that, in the grand scheme of things, it could have profound implications for the political process in Northern Ireland—and even for the survival of the Belfast agreement.

Under section 31(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the next elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are due on 1 May 2003. The order enables the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to call fresh elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly in the event of a failure to elect a new First Minister and Deputy First Minister by 12 August. The only alternative open to the Government in those circumstances would be an order to suspend the institutions, such as occurred in February last year. Of course, nobody knows what the outcome of such fresh elections might be. They could produce a fresh basis for progress in the political process in Northern Ireland. Alternatively, they could simply entrench the current impasse.

The Opposition do not necessarily oppose fresh elections, but before the option is triggered, the Government should be aware that it is far from risk-free. To borrow a phrase, such elections would be a leap in the dark. Whether they are held will be for the Government to decide in the light of what might happen in coming days and weeks, and in particular the response of parties to the document on which they are working with the Irish Government. Only then could a proper assessment be made of what is the best or, as the late Ian Gow would have put it, the least dangerous way forward.

The fact that we are forced to debate this order is of course deeply regrettable. Many of us had hoped that, by now, all elements of the Belfast agreement would have been implemented in full by all the parties. That, alas, has not been so, and why the order is before us.

It is important for the House to be aware of why the agreement has not been implemented in full. It is emphatically not the result of any failure to deliver on his commitments under the agreement by the right hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble)—or, for that matter, the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and his party. Responsibility for failing to implement the agreement—and as a result the current impasse—rests firmly with those paramilitary organisations that have failed to decommission a single gun or an ounce of Semtex.

Decommissioning was a clear obligation under the agreement that was supposed to be completed within two years of the referendum. That was by 22 May last year. The date came and went; nothing happened. Then, also in May last year, the British and Irish Governments issued a statement setting out the steps that had to be taken to ensure full implementation of the agreement by the end of June this year. That was followed by an IRA commitment to begin a process of putting arms,

"credibly and verifiably beyond use".

More than a year later, that has still not even begun, as the report of General de Chastelain's decommissioning commission confirmed a fortnight ago.

The failure to decommission is not all. As well as being fully armed, paramilitary organisations remain fully intact. The beatings, shootings, murders and the orchestrated violence that we saw last week continue—yet during the same period, Sinn Fein has had Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive, 444 terrorists have been released early from prison and the morale of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has been seriously undermined.

It is no wonder that the confidence in the agreement of many moderate law-abiding Unionists has been stretched to the limit. They have seen a process that appears to be all take and no give by the paramilitaries and their political associates, who pocket gain after gain and give nothing in return. The people of Northern Ireland—in fact, the people of the island of Ireland—did not vote by an overwhelming majority in 1998 for what has been described as an armed peace. They voted to take the gun out of Irish politics for good and for a peaceful and democratic future underpinned by the principle of consent. The refusal of paramilitaries to decommission is the obstacle to all those things and—again—the reason why we are debating the order.

We wait to see whether the joint proposals of the British and Irish Governments are able to command the confidence and support of all pro-agreement parties, so that both options of suspension or elections can be avoided and the agreement fully implemented. We are told that those proposals will be forthcoming in the next week to 10 days. Given that the House rises for the summer recess at the end of this week, will the Minister say what opportunity there will be for Members of Parliament to examine and debate what the Governments come up with?

We are entering a critical period affecting the future of a part of the United Kingdom. Surely it is right and proper that this Parliament—which, after all, remains sovereign in Northern Ireland—should have the opportunity to debate the situation and have its views heard. We on the Conservative Benches, for example, would have serious concerns if anything were proposed that appears to reward those who have failed at every turn to fulfil their obligations, but punishes democrats such as the right hon. Member for Upper Bann and members of his party, who have done everything that has been asked of them, and more. In particular, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition made clear in the House a few days ago, it would be utterly wrong to give any further ground on security or policing reform before any decommissioning.

As the *Irish Times* put it in its editorial this morning:

"there must be no fudge on decommissioning of weapons. Those who enjoy the privileges of democratically elected office cannot remain wedded to an armed, illegal force. Sinn Fein and the IRA

must choose politics and politics alone—as the electorate demanded of them in May 1998. If they do not do so, the operation of the Belfast Agreement is a sham."

Decommissioning remains the key test of the seriousness of Sinn Fein-IRA intent. Is it committed to what the agreement describes as

"exclusively peaceful and democratic means",

or is its participation in the process simply what has been described as tactical use of the armed struggle? We on the Conservative Benches are in no doubt that responsibility for progress rests with Sinn Fein-IRA. The paramilitaries must deliver. In the event that that delivery is not forthcoming, the Government are right to retain the possibility of elections as an option, with the caveats that I mentioned at the outset. For that reason, we shall not oppose the order.

7.59 pm

Lembit Öpik (Montgomeryshire): The hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) said that we are entering a critical phase. I would say that we did so in the 1960s and that this order is simply another page in the current chapter of trying to find a solution.

Mr. Stephen Pound (Ealing, North): Surely we did so in the 1690s?

Lembit Öpik: Some may say so; I would be digressing if I tried to give even a brief resume of the highlights of that time.

It is worth stepping back and recognising that we have made quite a lot of progress towards peace. The difficulty now is the end game. The order before us is another tool in attempting to close the deal and achieve normality in the long term. Although it is regrettable that we have to face that eventuality, it is probably necessary.

However, the timing of the order is unhelpful. According to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, if the office of the First or Deputy Minister becomes vacant, an election must be held within six weeks to fill it, so there does not have to be an election to fill the posts for another month or so. The political parties in Northern Ireland are engaged in intensive talks to resolve the crisis. If the worst comes to the worst and the Assembly is unable to elect the First Minister in August, other options can be explored before it is necessary to hold Assembly elections.

The order allows elections for the whole Assembly to occur prior to May 2003, as set out in legislation, and is being made prior to the outcome of the talks. I am slightly concerned that the Government are sending out mixed messages to all those involved in the current process. As the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) said, there is no guarantee that elections will improve things. They may simply serve to polarise the positions in Northern Ireland and create a hardening and perhaps growing rift between the two key sides, as we saw about a month ago. Who knows whether the gamble will pay off? By tampering with the process to achieve an outcome, we are, to some extent, playing roulette because we cannot predict what will happen.

The process of having an election may necessitate a degree of entrenchment in the eyes of various Northern Ireland politicians, and that would mean that we have not made progress. I disagree with the Conservative party's implication that the republicans lack a commitment to show good faith to move forward. We can all agree that decommissioning has been a key sticking point. The paramilitaries—especially on the republican side, although individuals are culpable on both sides—have singularly failed to deliver that commitment. Nevertheless, the mood music has at times been more promising than the Conservatives make out. I hope that we will be careful not to hold back progress by making opportunistic comments in this place. We sometimes need to give the Government the space to have discrete conversations with those who can deliver the result.

That said, it is clear that even if the timing is regrettable, the order is a necessary tool in the range of devices that are available to the Government to make progress in what seems to be a stagnating process, and we will not oppose it tonight. However, there is no substitute for hardliners taking the opportunity not so much to be involved in elections, but to show more good faith than they have done to date. Whatever we do with the process here, it is their attitude and actions that will determine the outcome of events in the proceeding months.

8.3 pm

Lady Hermon (North Down): As someone who is strongly supportive of the Belfast agreement, I take no pleasure in seeing it in its present difficult circumstances. The extent of its difficulties is merely reflected by the fact that we are debating the order this evening when we should be looking forward to the scheduled Assembly elections far away in June 2003.

No one can gainsay that the IRA's failure to decommission its weapons is the reason—the main reason—why we have been brought to the regrettable stage of debating an order that prepares for premature elections to the Assembly. Decommissioning of illegal weapons was, and remains, an integral part of the Belfast agreement. Almost three and half years after it was signed, we are still waiting. I am on the record as having said that I am not a patient person in the best of circumstances; these are now difficult circumstances and I have completely run out of patience.

I also deeply resent being cheated, and I do feel cheated by the IRA for reneging on its promise made to all of us in Northern Ireland on 6 May 2000. It promised that it would verifiably and completely put its weapons beyond use. On the basis of that statement, I was one of the Ulster Unionists who, on 27 May last year, stood in the Waterfront hall and, despite a great deal of heckling, urged my colleagues in the Ulster Unionist council to jump first and take Sinn Fein back into the Executive.

We did jump first, and as a result Sinn Fein regained its two substantial Ministries within the Assembly—Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Education—but no decommissioning followed. I feel deeply cheated and, but for the resignation of the First Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) on 1 July, the Government would, I fear, have continued to tolerate no movement on the weapons issue. I am ashamed of that fact. His resignation should not have been necessary. I certainly regret that he felt compelled to resign, but I fully support his reasons for taking that step. The ensuing talks at Weston Park between the pro-agreement parties have ended without a breakthrough at all. Given that they were scheduled before 12 July, which is a sensitive enough time in Northern Ireland, it should come as no great surprise that there was no substantial or significant breakthrough.

Although Ulster Unionists have no fear of Assembly elections, I remind the Government that if there continues to be no movement on the arms issues, the D-word—decommissioning—will be the major factor in any election campaign. That is bound to polarise the two communities, as it did in the recent general election. If we head into elections in the autumn—as I say, we have no fear of them—*[Interruption.]* Despite the amusement of Democratic Unionist party Members, I assure them that we are confident that we will do well in the Assembly election.

The difficulty is that the decommissioning problem will not go away even if we have elections in the autumn. So I urge the Government to give serious consideration to the other options, however unpalatable, especially suspension. They did not like it the last time, but it must be considered again. Last week we debated electoral fraud. There are no reforms in place to combat that before the Assembly elections. It does not take a crystal ball to predict that there will be a significant number of absent voters west of the Bann. I urge the Government to consider all options and remember that decommissioning must be dealt with; elections in the autumn will not take away the problem.

8.8 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): We just heard the confessions of a pro-agreement Unionist who admits to having exercised poor judgment in advising colleagues to trust the IRA. The hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) has learned to her cost that it should not have been trusted.

Elected representatives from Northern Ireland have few powers in the House because of our numbers. The one authority that we have is to speak on behalf of those we represent and to tender advice to them. When we tender advice, we need to summon up all our experience of those whom we are being asked to trust and determine whether there is anything in their past behaviour which would show them worthy of that trust. In this case, few intelligent people would have been prepared to advise the people of Northern Ireland that they should trust the IRA and put their future in its hands.

The Ulster Unionist party has learned the electoral price of putting its trust in the Provisional IRA—it has had to pay a heavy cost indeed. I find interesting the UUP's enthusiasm for elections while remaining willing to encourage the Government to consider other options, including suspension. The hon. Member for North Down did not clearly state her preference—whether she would prefer no institutions to institutions in which there were fewer representatives from her party—but perhaps she will get around to it at some point.

The Minister said that the order is a necessity and that it is part of the Government's contingency planning, but he did not state in precise terms what contingency would bring it into use. Even if the circumstances that he spelled out were to arise, there is no guarantee that the Government will use this contingency measure because, as the hon. Member for North Down said, other options are open to the Government.

I am sure that the House would regard it as a cynical exercise if the Government were to have tabled the draft order knowing full well that they had no intention of using its provisions. However, Government advisers are openly telling the press that they prefer suspension to elections. If the Minister were to encourage some of us by stating that if the circumstances—in his terms, the "regrettable" circumstances, although I might describe them otherwise—arose in which no First Minister or Deputy First Minister was elected before the six-week period had expired, he would act under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and use the order to call elections, the House will have used its time wisely tonight. If, on the other hand, he has no intention of doing that—I shall explore some of the reasons he might have for not doing it—the Government are engaged in a cynical exercise tonight.

I thought I detected in the speeches of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Front-Bench spokesmen a notion that is foreign to my concept of democratic principles: they advised the Government that the outcome of any election was not wholly certain and that Ministers did not really want to hold an election unless it was going to provide the desired result. The people of Northern Ireland are being told that the Government are putting through an order tonight and they will allow Assembly elections to take place, provided the people vote the way that the Government want them to. That is the message from both the Minister and the Front-Bench spokesmen for the principal Opposition parties: such is their adherence to democracy that they will allow the people of Northern Ireland to have a vote, provided they vote the way they want them to.

In fact, the Government know that the electorate will not vote the way they want them to. Recent experience tells them that. The UUP professes enthusiasm for elections, but whatever the tough talk in the Chamber tonight we know that in the 13 of Northern Ireland's 18 constituencies in which the Democratic Unionist party and the Ulster Unionist party went head to head, the DUP got five Members of Parliament elected while the UUP got four, and the DUP beat the UUP in eight of those constituencies while the UUP beat the DUP in five. Taking all of the votes cast for the two parties in those 13 constituencies, the DUP got 20,000 more votes than the UUP. Those are the facts that the Minister and his colleagues will take into consideration when deciding whether or not to use the order before the House tonight. I hope that the Government get better polling information than the *Belfast Telegraph* managed during the general election.

If whatever soundings they take lead them to judge that they can get an election result that suits their policy, Ministers will use the order and go to the country, but I judge that the electorate have not changed from 7 June—if anything, they have come to a stronger realisation that Sinn Fein-IRA are not fit to be in government. That was our belief from the start and it has been borne out by Sinn Fein-IRA's behaviour ever since.

To the Unionists, the process has involved the making of concession after concession to Sinn Fein-IRA while getting next to nothing in return. The Provisional IRA has not decommissioned one weapon, one bullet, one ounce of Semtex, one detonator—it has not moved at all on that issue. Its representatives are happy to talk to people and issue statements containing well studied words, but they have not delivered the product—indeed, they do not intend to deliver the product and they were not required to do so by the Belfast agreement. The agreement required only that they make sincere and genuine efforts to do so.

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

A later agreement indicated that the Provisional IRA would be prepared to decommission in certain circumstances—if the context was right. That context is, of course, a united Ireland. If the Provisional IRA can see that progress towards a united Ireland is irreversible, it will be prepared to consider decommissioning. Many of us saw that back in 1998 and our views have been justified.

I note that the Minister holds out the hope of the current round of negotiations, which is now complete. We are told that the two Governments are to go away and draw up a paper that will, according to the press—I shall be interested to hear the Minister confirm or deny this—be provided to pro-agreement parties. It would appear that the Government, indulging their fascist inclinations—*[Interruption.]* Government Members can tut as much as they want, but they should listen before arriving at their conclusions.

The reality in Northern Ireland is that there are four main parties. My party is larger than both the Social Democratic and Labour party and Sinn Fein. The Government want to speak to Sinn Fein—they repeatedly ask for and hold meetings—and they do the same with the SDLP. However, they do not do that with the DUP; they do not want to hear views that differ from their own. The Government issue invitations to talks at Weston Park not to the DUP, but to those who hold the same views on the Belfast agreement as they do. That is the form of democracy being exercised by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

My question is a simple one. If the tuts from Government Back Benchers are anything to go by, they expect the Minister to stand and say that on the same day as the parties that support the agreement receive the documentation, the parties that are against the agreement will do so as well. That would be the proper thing to do. A major political party, one that is bigger than the parties to which the Government are currently talking, is outside the process, but it is entitled to see what proposals are being made on the future of Northern Ireland. My party's electoral mandate means that we have a greater stake than the SDLP and Sinn Fein. I want the Minister to clarify that point.

The hon. Member for North Down said that an alternative was available—suspension. In that, we see the hypocrisy of the SDLP. When the first suspension of the institutions in Northern Ireland was being considered to salvage the hide of the right hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), the SDLP said that the Government could not suspend—that it was dreadful even to contemplate suspension. Its representatives hightailed it to Dublin and asked the Government there to put pressure on the UK Government to ensure that the institutions of the Belfast agreement were not suspended, saying that to do so would be to ensure the death of the agreement itself.

However, because the SDLP knows that suspension is now the alternative to an election—an election in which its strength is likely to be reduced—to save its own hide it is urging the Government to choose suspension rather than elections. Although it is not always the case that the pattern of the past is repeated in such circumstances, thus far the position has always been that the SDLP, the IRA and the Dublin Government demand one thing—namely, suspension rather than an election—and I rather suspect that, during the next few months, there will not be too many people pulling out their copies of this order to look at the arrangements for the election process.

The outcome will of course be determined on the basis of the paper being provided by Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Irish Republic. I note that although the former First Minister for Northern Ireland told us that the process he had entered into at Weston Park would address only one subject—decommissioning—the heralded paper deals with a whole series of issues, including policing, demilitarisation, or normalisation depending on how one wants to describe it, and other matters such as the equality agenda.

It has been indicated, rightly, by the Front-Bench spokesman for the Conservative party, the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), that there is huge concern in Northern Ireland about further concessions being offered to Sinn Fein-IRA on policing. That is a matter of concern not only within the Unionist community but for the police service itself. There is massive demoralisation in the force. At present, hundreds of people are taking sick leave. More than 800 have already left the RUC. If further concessions are offered to the IRA for political purposes, that will be a heavy blow and one from which the service will never recover.

The hon. Gentleman said that there should be no further concessions on policing until decommissioning had taken place. I am sure that was loose wording, but it is worth clarifying the point. My view is that there should be no further concessions on policing before, during or after decommissioning takes place. The so-called concessions in the Patten commission report have been delivered. There is no requirement on the Government to go beyond that in terms of practical policing, and I do not believe that the Government should move on that issue. If the Government are seen to be providing policing concessions to Sinn Fein and the SDLP in order to extract some weapons from the IRA, that will undermine the whole political process—a process that no longer enjoys the support of Unionists.

Mr. Tom Harris (Glasgow, Cathcart): Earlier, the hon. Gentleman made a disparaging remark about my hon. Friends. Does he agree that the majority will should hold sway in Northern Ireland in relation to reform of the police service? It is surely the overwhelming will of the people of Northern Ireland that the police services in Northern Ireland be reformed as part of the Good Friday agreement. Is he not guilty of ignoring the democratic will of the people whom he represents?

Mr. Robinson: I think that the hon. Gentleman is confused on two issues: first, as to what people voted for in the referendum, which I assume is what he refers to as the view of the people of Northern Ireland. The people of Northern Ireland were told by the former First Minister that the Belfast agreement would save the RUC. That was the premise on which the Ulster Unionist party fought the Belfast agreement referendum. As far as Unionists were concerned and certainly for those who trusted the former

First Minister, their view was that by voting in favour of the Belfast agreement they were voting for the salvation of the RUC.

Lady Hermon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robinson: I shall give way in a moment, but I want to deal with the second point raised by the intervention of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Harris). Majority rule in Northern Ireland is not the policy of the hon. Gentleman's Government: it is no longer policy for Northern Ireland. The present policy for Northern Ireland, enshrined in the Belfast agreement, is that there is a requirement to have the support of a majority of both sections of our community. I point out to the hon. Gentleman that there is no support from the Unionist community for those proposals—not only on policing but also on other issues.

Mr. John Taylor *rose—*

Mr. Robinson: I shall give way to the hon. Member for North Down and then to the hon. Member for Solihull.

Lady Hermon: To correct a major point made by the hon. Gentleman, those of us who actually voted for the Belfast agreement did so in the knowledge that we were voting for police reform. As he well knows, the articles and the terms of reference set down in the agreement, for which I voted, stated that the Independent Commission on Policing had to bring forward the means of encouraging widespread community support. That is what I voted for but it has not been delivered, so we do not have the form of policing that we actually voted for. We, too, are bitterly disappointed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst): Order. After that debate within a debate, I remind the House that we are discussing the arrangements for the conduct of elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Although the debate may be wide ranging, I do not believe that it should be as wide ranging as it has become during the last few moments.

Mr. Robinson: Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall respond briefly to the point made by the hon. Member for North Down. She has it wrong: that is not what the Belfast agreement said. It stated that the outcome had to be capable of having the support of a widespread section of the community. Is the hon. Lady saying that she will not support the new police service for Northern Ireland, because I certainly would not be saying—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have just ruled. The hon. Gentleman is trying to continue the mini-debate that I suggested should be terminated.

Mr. Robinson: Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall leave it there. I was only tying up loose ends. I give way to the hon. Member for Solihull—unless he, too, wants to take part in the mini-debate.

Mr. John Taylor: I am cowed by your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I was about to ask the hon. Gentleman if he agreed with my interpretation of Patten: that it was intended to apply to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be cowed.

Mr. Robinson: The Assembly for which the order provides a process for new elections was set up under the Belfast agreement. The Assembly was one of the key features of that agreement, but is no more or less important than those features, such as policing, decommissioning and the whole issue of prisoner releases. All those matters were the subject of the decision relating to the Belfast agreement. If the other factors of the agreement have not been delivered, the Assembly for which the order is being introduced no longer has the same meaning or the same significance: nor indeed is it a part of the same process on which the people of Northern Ireland voted in the referendum in 1998.

In closing, I say to the Government that it is not sufficient for them to attempt to put sticking plaster on the wounds of the agreement. That simply will not work. The requirement is for the Government to make a fresh start: to recognise that the agreement has failed; that the agreement no longer has the support of the majority of Unionists; that no process can stand or live in Northern Ireland that does not have the support of the majority of Unionists; and that there is thus a requirement for a renegotiation, to have an agreement that is capable of winning the support not only of nationalists but of Unionists as well.

8.28 pm

Mr. John Taylor: I realise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is only with the leave of the House that I can speak a second time in these proceedings. I defer to you in the matter. Must that be tested or is there a ruling from the Chair?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If no one objects, the House gives leave to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall be brief.

The hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Lembit Öpik) quite fairly corrected me. He said that my text implied that we were entering a critical phase. I ought to have said "a new and difficult phase". Along with the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Pound), who made a sedentary intervention, I accept that the problems are far from new. They are well over 300 years old or even more. I shall pass on the comments of the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire to my speech writer.

I was also corrected by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) about concessions on policing. I want the hon. Gentleman to know that my views are much closer to his than he may imagine. Although I know that I am trespassing now, I am coming to an end, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I always regarded Patten as being predicated on peace first, then Patten. These are, perhaps, differences between the two sides of the Chamber in an area in which we have tried to be helpful, as the record shows.

I conclude with a short anecdote. I remember my first insight, well over 30 years ago, into Northern Ireland society. I went to play golf in Northern Ireland and was asked whether the golf club to which I belonged in England was a Catholic golf club or a Protestant golf club. Nobody had ever asked me such a question before, and it gave me an insight into a rather different society, which was none the less part of my own country.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the House for letting me respond briefly.

8.31 pm

Mr. Browne: I thank the hon. Members who contributed to the debate, and I am grateful for the expressions of support for the order from the hon. Members for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), for Montgomeryshire (Lembit Öpik) and for North Down (Lady Hermon). In this short summing-up speech I shall endeavour to respond to the comments and questions that arose during the debate.

I assure the hon. Member for Solihull that any package that emerges over the next week or so must be acceptable to all sides if it is to be effective. The Government's aim, and the priority throughout, remains the full implementation of the Belfast agreement. If we succeed in producing a package that meets that objective, every side wins and there are no losers.

The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) invited me to speculate on the content of the package of measures. I am not prepared to do so. At this stage, such speculation would be unhelpful. Although I cannot say what will be in the package or when it will be completed, I can assure the House that both Governments are aware of the need to make early progress on all the outstanding issues.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East somewhat unworthily accuses the Government of cynicism. Nothing could be further from the truth. In my opening speech I made clear the Government's position as regards the order. The Government hope that the normal process will take its course and that the Assembly will elect a new First Minister and Deputy First Minister, but we must ensure that if elections are required, the necessary technical steps have been taken. That is the purpose of the order. I am not prepared to answer hypothetical questions based on an assumption of failure in respect of that objective.

Finally, I say to the hon. Member for Belfast, East that the Government's primary goal is to implement the remaining aspects of the Good Friday agreement, which was voted for by the majority of the electorate in the north and south of the island of Ireland. It is only natural, therefore, when formulating ways in which that agreement can finally be implemented in full, that the Government should do so in negotiation with the pro-agreement parties.

The Government have said on numerous occasions that the agreement remains the best opportunity that we have to bring lasting peace to Northern Ireland. It is our duty to do what we can to ensure that the agreement is fully implemented. It is not up for renegotiation. We will do whatever is most helpful to the process of implementing the outstanding areas of the Good Friday agreement. That is the priority. Exactly how the proposals are delivered, and to whom they are delivered, is a secondary issue.

As I said in opening the debate, it is essential that we set in train the mechanisms for holding Assembly elections in Northern Ireland. It may be necessary to hold such elections later this year. Elections are in any case scheduled for 2003, but no matter when they happen, we must ensure that the system for conducting them is in place. The statutory instrument will form the basis for all future elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, and I am grateful to the House for allowing time to consider the order this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 2001, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

Section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993

8.35 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Ruth Kelly): I beg to move,

That this House takes note with approval of the Government's assessment as set out in the Financial Statement and Budget Report 2001–02, and the Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report 2001–02 for the purposes of section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993.

I am delighted to be here, but I am even more delighted to see the hon. Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin) sitting on the Opposition Front Bench. I thought for a minute or two that the Labour party might have to put up another "Wanted" poster while the Whips desperately tried to find him, but luckily, here we are, face to face.

Each year, the Government are required to send information to the European Commission setting out our main economic policy measures.

Mr. Desmond Swayne (New Forest, West): Shocking.

Ruth Kelly: Nevertheless, it is the case.

It is important that we provide the information. The procedure is set out in articles 99 and 104 of the EC treaty, which relate to the broad economic policy guidelines, convergence and stability programmes and the excessive deficits procedure. The purpose of the reports is to help to ensure that member states' economic policies are consistent with the goals of the treaty. Those goals are set out in article 2, and include non-inflationary economic growth that respects the environment, a high level of employment and social protection, and raising the standard of living and quality of life, as is consistent with the Government's approach to economic policy. Section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, which is usually known as the Maastricht Act, requires Parliament to approve the Government report that is sent to the Commission for that purpose.

The Government's strategy for economic policy is set out in the "Budget 2001" report. Today we have the opportunity to debate that document, as it will form the basis of the information that we send to the Commission. Sharing the information in the Budget documents with our European partners allows us to influence Europe, and to bring employment and growth to Britain and other member states. "Budget 2001" describes the Government's strategy to raise Britain's national economic potential and to achieve high and stable levels of growth and employment along with rising living standards for all. The Budget will help to build a stronger economic future for Britain, through reforms that will put work, enterprise and families first.

The key elements of the Government's economic strategy, as set out in the Budget report, are to deliver macro-economic stability to provide a platform for long-term sustainable growth and employment; to meet the productivity challenge through promoting competition, enterprise, innovation, skills, investment and public sector productivity; to increase employment opportunity for all; to ensure fairness for families and communities; and to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come, by protecting the environment.

The Government's first economic priority on coming to office in 1997 was to deliver stability for the long term, with the recognition that economic stability is a precondition for achieving our objective of high and stable growth and employment. We therefore introduced the new macro-economic policy framework, which is based on the principles of transparency, responsibility and accountability. The framework is already promoting economic stability by delivering low inflation and sound public finances.

We have introduced an open and transparent monetary framework to deliver low and stable inflation; a new fiscal framework based on a prudent approach to the public finances and underpinned by two strict fiscal rules; and a new public spending framework which is integrated into the fiscal framework, to provide for better long-term planning and ensure a greater focus on the quality of public service provision. We are already seeing the rewards of the new macro-economic framework.

Mr. Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton): Will the Economic Secretary remind the House of the Government's policy for the exchange rate within that new macro-economic framework?

Ruth Kelly: The Government want a long-term, stable and competitive exchange rate, and that is exactly what we are working towards, as we seek to provide a foundation of stability based on low inflation and prudent public finances. That is the best way of delivering a platform for stability.

Inflation in the United Kingdom has been significantly less volatile since 1997—lower for longer than at any time since the 1960s, and in line with our target. Now, long-term interest rates are about the lowest for 35 years, reflecting a sustained reduction in inflation expectations.

The new fiscal framework has put public finances in a healthy and sustainable position. The Government inherited public finances that were in poor shape, yet since 1997 they have been transformed. The Government have cut borrowing by more than £44 billion since 1996–97. Building on that achievement, the Budget underpins the spending plans set out in the 2000 spending review, and locks in the fiscal tightening of the previous Budget.

The Government have ensured that we remain on track to meet our fiscal rules, while releasing resources for sustained investment in key public service priorities. Public sector net investment will more than double to 1.8 per cent. of gross domestic product by 2004–05. The spending review allocations included real average growth of more than 5 per cent. a year from 2000–01 for education, more than 5 per cent. a year for health, 20 per cent. a year for transport spending in England, and 4.2 per cent. a year for the criminal justice system in England and Wales.

In the Budget we have been able to allocate an extra £1 billion for education, an extra £1 billion for health and an extra one third of a billion pounds to help to tackle drugs. That is over and above the sustained investment announced in last year's spending review. The Government can provide those resources because of their prudent handling of the economy. Even under the most cautious assumptions, our projections show surpluses on the current Budget in each of the next five years.

Public sector net debt has fallen from 44 per cent. of GDP in 1996–97 to 31.8 per cent. at the end of 2000–01. It is projected to stabilise at about 30 per cent. of GDP

[Ruth Kelly]

for the remainder of the projection period covered in the Budget. That compares with a doubling of the debt burden in the 1992–97 Parliament. Our prudent approach to the management of public finances means that the debt ratio can be combined with rising public sector investment, thus tackling years of neglect of the public infrastructure.

A sound and credible platform of economic stability has been achieved under the Government's new frameworks for monetary and fiscal policy. Our commitment to stability and prudence is for a purpose: unemployment is now the lowest since the 1970s; since the 1997 election, employment has risen and unemployment has fallen in every region. Employment has risen by more than 1.2 million since the 1997 election, with more people in work than ever. The United Kingdom is enjoying the longest period of sustained low inflation since the 1960s.

Growth of 2.5 per cent. is expected this year, and inflation is expected to remain close to the Government's target in the period ahead. Independent forecasters agree with our assessment.

The Budget responds to the challenge of meeting the fiscal rules over the economic cycle and underpinning the 2000 spending review by continuing to lock in stability for the long term. The platform of stability provides the basis for raising productivity. Meeting the productivity challenge offers the prospect of higher growth and increased employment opportunities, with low inflation and low interest rates. It is a key route to raising living standards. It is a moment of opportunity for the UK, and a challenge to everyone involved.

The Government's long-term ambition is to close the productivity gap between the UK and its main competitors. To that end, we have identified five key topics for action: strengthening competition, encouraging enterprise and innovation, creating incentives for investment, investing resources in skills, and working to improve public sector productivity.

Mr. Swayne: Does increasing productivity apply to the public as well as the private sector? The Economic Secretary said that competition was one of the methods of achieving that. Why, therefore, is competition excluded from the public sector?

Ruth Kelly: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to me, he would have noted that I specifically spelled out that we were taking steps to improve public sector productivity. They must go hand in hand with improving our overall competitive position.

Building on previously announced provisions, the Budget contains a package of measures to help small businesses, including implementing the pre-Budget report proposals to reduce the impact of VAT, reduce their administrative burden and improve their cash flow. Consultation will take place on proposals for a new research and development tax credit for large firms and there will be full financial flexibility for regional development agencies from 2002–03, matched by increased accountability through objectives and targets to meet their strategic goals.

We shall be working to make capital markets more efficient by taking forward all the recommendations of the Myners review, addressing distortions in decision making by institutional investors and expanding the scope of enterprise management initiatives. Meeting the challenges of raising productivity and closing the gap with our main competitors will help to raise living standards in the economy as a whole. However, we need to do more to build a fairer society by making work pay, giving families a better deal, and protecting the environment.

The Government are working to deliver employment opportunity for all—the modern definition of full employment—thereby tackling a significant underlying cause of poverty and deprivation. Our strategy is based on helping people to move from welfare to work, easing the transition to work, making work pay and securing progression once people are in work. Our goal is that by the end of the decade there will be a higher proportion of people in work than ever before.

The Government have already taken significant steps towards achieving that objective. To help make work pay and to improve work incentives, they have introduced the national minimum wage and a new 10p rate of income tax, cut the basic rate of tax to 22p, and reformed national insurance contributions. For low and middle income families with children, the introduction of the working families tax credit has made a significant difference to family incomes.

The Budget took action to increase employment opportunities by enhancing the new deal, which has already helped more than 270,000 young people from welfare into work. In the new deal for lone parents there will be further help with training, with starting up in self-employment, and with child care costs. Resources will also be allocated to enhance the new deal and other programmes over the coming three years, focusing on employer needs, on the hardest to help, and on the most disadvantaged areas.

To help make work pay, the Budget increased the basic credit in the working families tax credit by £5 on top of indexation, and extended the 10p rate of income tax by £300 over and above indexation, helping 2.5 million taxpayers. There is no better time to encourage the long-term unemployed, and those who have become particularly detached from the labour market, back to work. It is estimated that there are 1.2 million vacancies in the economy as a whole.

The Government continue to work on building a fairer and more inclusive society—in particular by tackling child poverty, helping pensioners, rewarding saving, investing in public services and ensuring that the tax system is fair. Everyone should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and enjoy the benefits of high, stable economic growth.

Mr. Edward Davey: On the Minister's point about reducing child poverty, the Government claimed at the last election that they had taken 1.2 million children out of poverty. However, the latest statistics in a survey published this week showed that those claims were incorrect, and that the Government's measures have taken less than 500,000 children out of poverty. Will the Minister tell the House what extra measures the Government are now proposing to tackle the problem that they have so far failed to address?

Ruth Kelly: I have just been outlining the Government's approach to tackling child poverty. The best way to do it is

to provide families with a route into employment, to make work pay and to provide a ladder of opportunity for families so that people can continue to progress once they are in work. That is the simplest and best way to tackle child poverty at its root, and it is what we are doing.

The Budget takes further steps towards creating a fairer society. The Government are taking action to boost the incomes of hard-working families, and helping families when their children are very young. Building on record increases in child benefit, the Government introduced the children's tax credit, worth up to £520 a year for about 5 million tax-paying families, and, recognising the additional costs of a new child in the first year, in April 2002 we will increase that to £20 a week for families in the year of a child's birth. All those measures will have a significant impact on tackling child poverty.

The Budget also includes a package of measures on maternity pay and parental leave, including increases in the flat rate of statutory maternity pay and maternity allowance, paid adoption leave from 2003 and a doubling of the threshold for small employer relief, so that about 60 per cent. of all firms paying statutory maternity pay each year can reclaim their costs in full, plus compensation. There will also be a further increase in the sure start maternity grant from April 2002.

The Budget includes a major package of measures to boost pensioner incomes, acting to end pensioner poverty and ensuring that all pensioners share in the rising prosperity of the nation.

As well as the measures announced in the pre-Budget report, from April 2003 the Budget raises the age-related income tax personal allowances over and above indexation, and through the remainder of the Parliament will raise those allowances by reference to rises in earnings rather than prices. About 1 million savers, many of whom are pensioners, will benefit from the widening of the 10p income tax band, which will apply to savings income. From April this year, the average pensioner household will be £600 a year better off than in 1997 as a result of the personal tax and benefit changes introduced during the last Parliament.

The Government are building a stronger economic future for Britain. That gives a better deal for the people of Britain. It will help us to meet our objectives of high and stable growth and employment and a fairer society for all. Those are the right economic policies for Britain. They are also in line with the objectives of the European Union.

Approving the motion will enable the United Kingdom to meet its treaty obligations, provide information and participate fully in the important process of multilateral surveillance and economic co-operation, as provided for in articles 99 and 104 of the treaty. I hope that the House will support the motion.

8.51 pm

Mr. Oliver Letwin (West Dorset): I begin by welcoming the Economic Secretary to the Dispatch Box and her new post. There is a distinct risk, which worries some on this side of the House, that she might prove to be a distinguished occupant of that post, but time will tell.

The motion is highly misleading. It has hardly anything to do with the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, but much to do with the Red Book. It is a bizarre feature of our constitutional arrangements that, having debated the Budget for I do not know how many days, we return to it for a 90-minute debate when most good folk are asleep and nobody is paying the slightest attention. That probably explains why the Economic Secretary, despite her world-renowned intellectual prowess, chose to re-read a speech that has undoubtedly been concocted on other occasions.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Andrew Smith): It is a good speech.

Mr. Letwin: It is an excellent speech. It was good first time round and it will be good next time round, but unfortunately it told us little that is new. As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will probably be the only person in England who is listening to me by the time that I finish my remarks, I hope that you—

Mr. Smith: Try the £20 billion.

Mr. Letwin: I shall eschew that pleasure. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will bear with me if I depart from the norm and make an argument about the real subject of the motion—the assessment of the UK economy that is in the Red Book. I should correct myself immediately: I want to make an argument about the assessment of the UK economy that is not in the Red Book.

It is a strange feature of our world that the old Budget report was renamed when the 1993 Act was passed. It is now called the Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report and Financial Statement and Budget Report. The reason for that is to enable us to conform to the need to report to the European Communities on our economic and fiscal strategy and, indeed, the background to it—hence the assessment. Alas, however, only the name changed, not the contents. There never was a real assessment of the economic scene in those documents and there is not now.

Let me begin at the beginning with points of agreement. We share aims, but that is a turn up for the books. There was a time when we did not share aims. There was a time when Labour Governments and Labour Oppositions had other aims that led to gross inflation, the ownership of the means of production by the state on an increasing scale, the prevalence of trade unionism and I know not what other "glorious and golden goals".

Thank goodness—I mean this genuinely, thank goodness—we now live in a world that is more difficult for Conservative politicians because there is much in it that we share. That is well expressed in the new article 2 of the treaty on European Union, which, as the Economic Secretary said, specifically states that we are to seek

> "a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment . . . a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion".

Who in their right mind could conceivably object to that?

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): I thought that at this point I would ask my hon. Friend what, on the face of it, may seem a banal question. If the economic indicators of most of our continental European partners were heading in the wrong direction, would we still want

[Mr. Eric Forth]

our economy to converge with them? The words that my hon. Friend has just read out imply convergence at any price. Surely my hon. Friend does not believe that we should readily mould our policies with the aim of converging in an adverse direction. Will he make that quite clear?

Mr. Letwin: I completely agree with my right hon. Friend, although I disagree with him about the interpretation of the words that I read out. As the record will show, I specifically left out a phrase in new article 2, which speaks of

"a high degree of convergence of economic performance".

I did not read out that phrase, because I do not believe that that is a shared aim. However, the rest of the article that I read out is a shared aim. I do not believe that a high degree of convergence of economic performance is a shared aim because I do not believe that economies converge—they sometimes cross like ships in the night, as the economies of the north-east and the south-east of Britain have from time to time. Moreover, I do not believe it is a shared aim for the very reasons that my right hon. Friend gave. Convergence is good only if performance converges on the good.

We also agree with the Government about aims. On page 1 of the Budget report, the Government state that the aims of their strategy are

"delivering macroeconomic stability;
meeting the productivity challenge;
increasing employment opportunity for all;
ensuring fairness for families and communities; and
protecting the environment."

Those could have been the stated aims of any Conservative Administration in the past 40 years, and we share those aims. The problem we are discussing is not about aims: it is a problem about means and about our understanding of where we stand today.

The picture that the Economic Secretary painted of the economy was not so much glowing as utterly golden—a Midas picture in which nothing was wrong and nothing was worrying. In her description, we benefited from sustained and permanent growth, with low inflation, ever higher productivity and greater employment. From her description—I know that she does not believe this—one might have thought that the world around us was rosy in every respect.

That is odd, because her colleague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was quoted in *The Sunday Times* as saying:

"There are risks in the world economy at the moment. The downturn in the world economy has not reached its bottom. It is in many ways far more severe than we expected a few months ago because it has spread from America, in particular to Germany and, of course, we have no growth at all in Japan."

The Chancellor was right about that.

A week later, in the same journal, Stephen Roach, chief economist at Morgan Stanley, put it rather more bluntly:

"We have been warning of this possibility since the start of the year, but now it's time to make it official. The world is in recession."

There is a great difference between the surroundings of the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom itself, which, as the Economic Secretary rightly said, is not in recession. However, the world as a whole is in dreadful difficulties.

Last year, the economy of the United States grew by 5 per cent., whereas this year it is expected to grow by less than 2 per cent. US manufacturing is in recession, retail sales have slowed, capital investment is way down, US trade figures are down and there is all the reason in the world to suppose that those effects will be exported. The Chancellor was absolutely right about Japan, whose growth is unlikely to exceed 1 per cent. for the next two or three years. Germany is afraid that growth may plunge to zero in the second quarter of this year. Growth in the euro zone in the past 12 months is down a full percentage point on the previous year, and industrial production has slowed. That is why the European Central Bank has had to revise its growth forecast downwards, and Euro-inflation at 3 per cent. is well above target. Meanwhile, we have the oil problems. If the Economic Secretary had not read that speech, but had chosen to take another one off the shelf, she would have recognised all those phenomena.

The fact is that the world in which we live is risky and difficult economically at present, and we must ask ourselves whether the United Kingdom economy is structured to resist the difficulties. Can we be not just confident but—if I may be somewhat impolite, as the Economic Secretary was—almost complacent about our economy's condition, or have we problems of our own that need attention?

The Economic Secretary's view on that was in line with the Red Book. It is possible to comb the Red Book repeatedly and endlessly—as Labour Members will know, during the election I had a bit of time in which to ponder things repeatedly and endlessly—but nowhere in the palimpsest is it possible to find a description of the real difficulties facing the British economy. That may have nothing to do with the fact that it was produced by Her Majesty's Government, or again it may have something to do with that. One way or another, however, the problem is that it does not reveal the current state of affairs.

I want to dwell on a specific phrase in article 2 of the treaty, which will not upset my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth). Article 2 refers to

"a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities".

We are meant to agree to report tonight that the House accepts that the assessment of the British economy in the document referred to is right, and shows that there is a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities in this country. I wonder whether, on reflection, the Economic Secretary would want to advance that argument. I should be very surprised if the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr. Davey) wanted to do so, and I certainly do not. I want to advance the opposite argument, because I think it fairly clear that the UK economy currently suffers from some serious imbalances. Many of them have been obscured over the past four years by the Government's undoubted achievements in macro-economic, monetary and fiscal control; but, beneath that, there is a worrying picture of imbalance.

Let me explain—at rather tedious length, to get the thing on the record—what I mean by imbalance. First, there are the regional imbalances. In April this year, unemployment levels in the UK as a whole averaged 5 per cent. That is not a good record in comparison with those of one or two other countries, but it is much better than has sometimes been the case. Nevertheless,

it disguises vast regional discrepancies. At the same time, unemployment in the south-east of England was 3.3 per cent., and in the north-east it was 7.7 per cent.—more than double the level in the south-east. Indeed, it is clear that the averages in the north-east, London, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are completely different from those in—if I can put it this way—the rest of England.

Such a regional imbalance may not be deeply worrying in itself, although I suppose it would be difficult for the Government to maintain that they were not somewhat worried, because they continue their regional policy. It is a long-established doctrine that the main purpose of regional policy is to even out regional imbalances, rather than to create wealth in itself: that has been a Treasury doctrine for many years. If that is the case, it must also be the case that the Government have some worries about regional imbalance, because they clearly cannot be operating a policy aimed at removing a problem that they do not consider to be a problem.

But alas, regional imbalances are not the only or, indeed, the most serious imbalances that the economy currently suffers. A much more serious issue is the trade imbalance. I am sure that inside the Treasury the Economic Secretary and her colleagues spend much time discussing the trade imbalance; it would be unusual were they not to do so. However, I did not hear much reference to the trade imbalance in the Economic Secretary's speech. That is surprising, because the trade imbalance is not a small matter. It is not even a medium-sized matter. It is enormous.

The trade in goods in 2000 as a whole was in deficit by £28.8 billion. In the first quarter of this year, it was in deficit by £7.4 billion. Even when the surpluses in services are taken into account, the total trade in goods and services was almost £18 billion in deficit last year and almost £5 billion in deficit in the first quarter of this year. Those are large numbers that have persisted for some time and have been growing. The imbalance has existed for almost five years now. I checked earlier today and it is not since 1870 that a trade imbalance has afflicted the UK economy for so long.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that the existence of a regulatory mechanism between economies—such as a variable exchange rate—has always been the mechanism by which, over the long term, trade imbalances can be corrected? He will know that that was the case for historic variations between the pound sterling and the dollar, or the yen or the continental currencies. Has he given any thought to the significance of the possibility that we will join the euro and our possible inability then to correct the trade imbalance that he is discussing?

Mr. Letwin: My right hon. Friend is right that one of the ways in which the trade imbalance traditionally corrects itself is through an improvement in the terms of trade—through exchange rate differentials. If the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton were right, and his party could achieve a reduction in the exchange rate, through a miracle of some sort, followed by a locking-in at a lower exchange rate, that would help to cure the imbalance. However, if we were forced to lock in at a higher exchange rate, as I suspect would happen, we would lock in the imbalance for some time.

The trade imbalance that we face is not likely to be cured by a shift in the exchange rate in the near future. It might be, but I doubt that the Economic Secretary would claim that that will happen. When the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton asked a genuine question in the middle of her brilliant but old-fashioned speech, she was unwilling to engage in debate with him about the right level of exchange rate. That was, I suspect, because the Government have eschewed the idea of targeting a specific exchange rate. The hon. Gentleman will no doubt raise that subject later, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we may yet hear that fascinating debate. However, I suspect that the Government are probably wary, as they have been for the past four years, of trying to set an exchange rate, which, as my right hon. Friend says, makes it odd that they are nevertheless talking about trying to join the euro.

Mr. Edward Davey: When does the hon. Gentleman think that the floating exchange rate that we now have in the UK will start to address those imbalances, and when does he expect the depreciation before the automatic adjustment on which the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) is so keen?

Mr. Letwin: The answer is that I, like the hon. Gentleman, do not know. I suspect that there will have to be a restraint of domestic demand, which I will come to shortly, rather than a change in the exchange rate. We will see. Nevertheless, I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me, because it is true and a matter of fact, that there is a major trade imbalance, which has persisted for an extraordinarily long period. Trade imbalances can last for extraordinarily long periods if they are financeable and, at present, ours is. I am not seeking to make any apocalyptic statement—that would be quite false. Our trade imbalance is being happily financed, but markets are fickle and moods change. Whether one can continue to finance that kind of trade imbalance for very much longer is open to question.

If we merely had a regional and a trade imbalance, the situation would be noteworthy but not as serious as the real one. We face another kind of imbalance, more serious in many ways than either of those. We have a two-speed economy. Production industries grew in the last quarter, the first quarter of the year, by 0.7 per cent., at a time when, as the Economic Secretary made clear, the economy as a whole is growing at more than 2 per cent. and the service sector—so-called—at more than 3.7 per cent. There is a huge imbalance between two major parts of our economy.

I am making my case stronger by making it weaker in the sense of not taking into account the exceptional cases, such as those that affect my constituency. A recession is going on in agriculture; the industry has seen negative growth for a very long time. There has been a minor recession in the construction industry for a rather shorter period.

There is a massive imbalance between various sectors of the economy. In fact, I suspect that it is understated by the figures that are typically used. The term "service", as the Economic Secretary will be aware from her previous work with the Bank of England, which has done some noteworthy work in this field, is widely abused in the sense that it covers a multitude of things. Some are really other forms of industrial production such as telecoms

[Mr. Letwin]

software manufacture, while some are pure services in the sense of human beings looking after one another. I suspect, although I do not know, that disentangling the one from the other would show a further imbalance that accentuates the nature of the imbalances across the economy as a whole. I suspect that the pure services sector is growing even faster than 3.7 per cent., because some things classed as services, such as software, are, if not in positive decline, nevertheless growing very slowly.

The Economic Secretary painted a picture of continuous and unalloyed bliss across the economy. Instead, the economy suffers from marked and continuing regional imbalances, from a growing, prolonged and unprecedented trade imbalance and from significant discrepancies between various sectors of the economy in their rate of growth or decline.

If that were all, the situation would be bad enough, but it is not all. The economy is afflicted by another very serious imbalance—that between the corporate and domestic sectors. It is quite a striking imbalance. Over the past five years, output has risen by 14.7 per cent.; domestic demand has risen by 20 per cent. We have a major problem with profits. It is affecting, and previously prospectively affected, the stock market. James Hall, the managing partner of Accenture, the strangely named management accountancy firm, says:

"What we are seeing is a slowdown in both manufacturing and service sectors that depend on demand from businesses."

At the same time, figures from Experian, an information service company, show that the United Kingdom is experiencing its longest period of falling profitability since the early 1990s.

Profitability measured by the average return on capital has fallen for seven successive quarters. In the business sector, therefore, and the business-to-business sector, which depends on business, there are major problems with profitability, whereas domestic household demand remains high. To be tedious about the matter and to remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I am sure that, by now, you are the only one awake—we have regional imbalances, trade imbalances, an imbalance of services versus industrial production and a significant and sustained imbalance of the corporate sector versus the domestic sector.

I regret that the tale does not end there, because we also have a serious imbalance in domestic savings, which is the flip side of the coin of strong domestic demand. I fear that we have made that point on numerous occasions, but it remains true. In the first quarter of this year, the savings ratio in this country dropped to 4.1 per cent. Last year, in the previous Red Book, the Treasury correctly noted that there were problems ahead if the savings ratio remained low; it has remained extremely low by historical standards and today is less than half what it was in 1997. We therefore have regional imbalances and trade imbalances; we have imbalances between production and service industries, between the corporate and domestic sector, and between saving and household expenditure.

That is not a balanced development of economic activities. When one thinks about it, it is astonishing that the Economic Secretary—one of the few people to occupy such a post who understands these matters—made a speech about the 2001 Red Book and the governance of the United Kingdom economy without mentioning those five vital and worrying features of our current economic circumstances. That worries me because, if she and her colleagues are not attending to those imbalances, they may become more, rather than less, worrying.

The situation is worse than being merely imbalanced. The next item on which we, the Government and all right-thinking people agree is that, in the words of article 2 of the treaty on European Union, we wish to achieve and maintain

"a high level of employment".

We have a high level of employment; we have had rising employment and falling unemployment—worthy things of which the Economic Secretary was proud and made much. Alas, when one looks behind the current statistics and tries to get a sense of what is going on in the real economy, again, there are worrying signs.

The average earnings index in the first four months of this year for the whole economy showed year-on-year percentage changes starting at 4.5 per cent. in January and rising to 5.2 per cent by April; the Economic Secretary may well have more up-to-date figures at her command. Over the whole of 2000, annualised average rates of 4 to 5 per cent. were in evidence. To a moderate degree, wage inflation is with us. However, the marginal utility of labour, which will critically affect the long-term propensity of the economy to generate employment or otherwise is not just affected by wage rates. As the Economic Secretary is clearly aware, it is also affected by on-costs, the social costs of labour, the effects of productivity—which, alas, has not risen nearly as fast as we had hoped—and the ability of firms to be more productive in their use of labour and to find ways of making more from their labour. It is in that last respect that the biggest worries arise, and I shall come to them in a moment.

The particular employment problems that we see over the horizon are more likely to arise in small and medium firms than in large firms. Our economy is out of balance in another respect: the effects of Government action, which I shall describe in a moment, on the largest firms have almost certainly been less accentuated than on the small and medium firms, and it is in the small and medium-firm sector that we would expect to find sustained growth of employment.

In fact, over the past few years, the rate of increase in employment and the rate of decrease in unemployment have not been as sparkling as we might have hoped, given the overall growth in demand. They have not been as sparkling as they had been in the previous few years under the previous Administration at an earlier point in the economic cycle and not as sparkling as in many other countries.

Not only is our economy imbalanced in many ways, but it is not showing the growth of employment and the reduction of unemployment that we would have hoped for under such apparently benign economic circumstances. We must now ask ourselves whether the Government are doing something about all this. Does the Red Book, which does not describe any of what I have just described, or the Economic Secretary, who did not describe any of what I have just described, have a strategy to deal with those matters?

Is there something in the Red Book or was there something in the Economic Secretary's speech to address those imbalances? I have to say that I may have gone to

sleep—that is unlikely because the Economic Secretary's mellifluous tones are always sufficient to keep me awake—but I did not notice anything in her speech about a strategy to deal with those problems. It is not surprising, as she did not mention the problems, that she did not mention the solutions, but the fact is that there was no such strategy. Search as I might, with however much leisure the Chief Secretary may have been able to give during the election, I was unable to find in the Red Book any strategy for solving those problems there either.

The fact is that we have a Government of elegant ostriches; they are hiding their head in the sand of their own achievements; hence they do not see the problems to which I have alluded and, as a consequence, they do not even begin to have developed a strategy to deal with them. They are officially unproblems, thus there are unsolutions for them. However, the situation is worse than that because, at least in respect of the level of employment, the Government are taking active, well formulated, strategically designed steps to accentuate the problem.

The comments of external observers are extremely instructive. In March this year, Herr Bernd Atenstaedt of the German Industry Association in the United Kingdom said:

"we see the first signs of an increase in regulations, which will make Britain less attractive as a location".

He means, of course, as a location for investment, hence for the generation of jobs.

Geraint Davies (Croydon, Central): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the slight reduction in the rate of increase in employment is matched by an increase in the growth and productivity that would be expected as we approach full employment? On the point about German growth, does he accept that the International Monetary Fund's latest forecasts show a 40 per cent. reduction in German growth and a halving in United States growth and that, in fact, our growth is holding up very well at about 2.6 per cent., compared with Treasury forecasts of 2.5 per cent.? The basic point is that we are very strong indeed in the world scenario and that we need no lectures from the Germans.

Mr. Letwin: I shall soon come to some lectures, given by some Englishmen, although I do not share the hon. Gentleman's xenophobia. Had he been present at the beginning of my remarks he would have heard—

Geraint Davies: I watched it on television.

Mr. Letwin: Had the hon. Gentleman not been moving between the one and the other, he would have heard me acknowledge the truth of his remark that there has been a huge slowdown in many other parts of the world and that, so far, we have been remarkably insulated. The whole tenor of my arguments is that there are worrying signs that we may not sustain that magnificent isolation from world events. I do not predict that we cannot; we do not know. I hope that we can and, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, we have so far. I am portraying the worrying signs.

Mr. Bernd Atenstaedt's remarks about our economy were not made because he is a German but because he is an educated economist. The British Chambers of Commerce—hardly a group of Germans—says about the United Kingdom economy:

"The bottom line is that the sheer quantity of red tape on business is damaging our economy, stifling enterprise, job creation and economic growth."

In June 2000, Ruth Lea of the Institute of Directors said:

"If this Government is interested in strangling business in red tape, it is succeeding. Some bosses are having to give up a day a week to cope with all the regulations."

I could go on rather tediously quoting such sources.

Mr. Swayne: Is not the opinion of the Germans, whom the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Geraint Davies) mentioned, important in so far as foreign opinion is currently financing the trade imbalance?

Mr. Letwin: My hon. Friend is right and, to be serious about the issue of xenophobia, the UK has always depended heavily on a large amount of external investment. It is one of our proudest achievements that, in our period in office, we reached the stage that more was invested externally in the UK than in the whole of the rest of continental Europe. I do not know, but I suspect that that may still be the case. We certainly depend on external investment.

This country also depends on internal investment and what attracts the external investor attracts the internal investor—the entrepreneur within the UK—and vice versa. The regulations and red tape that have been introduced are beginning to have a serious effect in eroding confidence in small and medium-sized enterprises and the people who are thinking of investing in them. That is a worrying sign. That problem is not being imposed on us from without nor has it grown within the market or the private sector. It has been imposed on the market by the Government.

There are many other sources from which one can glean the same picture. In the past year, the House passed 3,865 new regulations which, I think, is the highest figure on record. In March this year, an edition of *Forbes* contained a damning article on the present Government's fondness for regulation under the title "Tony Blair's Red Tape Factory". In a survey of Institute of Directors' members after the pre-Budget statement, 90 per cent. said that the Chancellor had not done much to reduce the regulatory burden on business and 44 per cent. of companies cited the regulatory burden as a barrier to growth. One can go on and on.

What the Government have done, continue to do and—from all one can tell from the Economic Secretary's remarks—are happy to do is to continue regulating ever increasingly the small and medium sector, which is the sector that gives rise to employment growth. They ignore regional and trade imbalances and imbalances between production and services, between the domestic and corporate sectors and between savings and the creation of extra jobs. They adopt no strategy to deal with the imbalances but a positive strategy to worsen the difficulties that small firms face in generating new jobs at the rate that we require.

I am glad to say that I am nearing the end of my remarks. The Government are serious about their fiscal strategy and they have allowed the Bank of England to be serious about the control of the money supply. However,

[Mr. Letwin]

if they were also serious about making it their business to deal with the serious structural problems that affect the economy, the Economic Secretary would have made a speech about that issue. She would not have said what I said, but she would have acknowledged the problems and told us what the strategies were for dealing with them. The fact that she has not is, I suspect, due not to her ineptitude, but to the fact that the Government do not have any such strategies. That is the most worrying trend of all.

9.29 pm

Mr. Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton): We need to remember the purpose of this debate, on which the hon. Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin) touched at the beginning of his remarks. Our job is to scrutinise the documents that the United Kingdom sends to the European Commission. The ability to do so is the result of a Eurosceptic amendment to the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993 on the Maastricht treaty tabled by Conservative Back Benchers who were not terribly happy with their Government, who they thought were too Euro-friendly.

We must question why the amendment was tabled—it is a fairly good one—and why we should be scrutinising such documents. Presumably, we wanted to ensure that the UK's contributions to the debate about the eurozone and the European Union economy are well founded. That is an important part of what Ministers do at ECOFIN. We wanted to ensure that the information that our EU partners have about the UK economy is sound, so that we can improve their knowledge and understanding of it. One would have thought also that we wanted to ensure that the information that we send to our European partners would assist and enhance the UK's negotiating position in the different EU economic forums.

Mr. Letwin: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that almost certainly those who tabled the amendment did not imagine that the Red Book would be re-labelled "the assessment" and we would find ourselves debating the same item twice?

Mr. Davey: The hon. Gentleman, not for the first time, anticipates what I was about to say. The Red Book is certainly not written for such purposes; it is written for a domestic audience. In the last Parliament, it was not really an account of what was going on in the UK economy and public finances. Increasingly, it is becoming a document of Government spin and propaganda. The Budget 2001 document was a Panglossian pre-election propaganda sheet. It was hardly a detailed addition to economic analysis of the UK economy and public finances. That was pointed out at the time, it was a shame at the time, and to try several months later to send it off to Brussels and Strasbourg as a fair reflection of what is going on in the UK economy is total nonsense. The idea that we should approve the motion is also nonsense.

Let us consider how the document performs the three roles to which I have referred. Does it contribute to the debate on the EU economy? The EU economy is hardly mentioned in the document. We have analysis of Group of Seven activity and analysis of the United States economy, which is understandable and one of the better parts of the document, but nothing to do with the EU. Box 3.2 describes European economic reform following the Lisbon summit, but that is all about micro-economics and long-term productivity issues, which are important but hardly relevant to the debate of macro-economic trends in the EU to which the UK should be contributing.

If we are bothered about influencing debates and the positions of our EU partners, surely we should be sending documents that give our view on what they are doing. This House should be debating what the Government are proposing to tell our EU partners about how their economies are performing and the eurozone is going. We are not given such information or a chance to debate a very important matter. As the hon. Gentleman said, the Government should be writing those documents, presenting them to the House and sending them to Brussels—not this absolute nonsense.

Does the document improve the knowledge of our EU partners of the UK economy? Clearly it does not, as the hon. Gentleman set out in great detail. For obvious reasons, it is out of date. Presumably it was written in January or February and many changes have taken place in the United Kingdom and the world economies since then. For example, paragraph 2.26 on page 24 of the Red Book states:

> "Manufacturing output growth was the fastest for six years, but continued to lag behind the expansion in services."

The document makes other references to how the manufacturing sector is doing quite well. However, according to national statistics for the first quarter of this year, manufacturing output fell by 0.7 per cent. That is a worrying development, but it is not mentioned in the Red Book, which is again Panglossian about an important sector of the UK economy.

The Chancellor used to go on about manufacturing when he was in opposition. An evening did not seem to go by without him appearing before a television camera telling us about the importance of that industry. He seems to have forgotten that now that he is in government. His policies do not seem to be developing the manufacturing sector—the document is clearly remiss on that.

I shall not go on about the imbalances, as the hon. Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin) did. I share his analysis—it is good that the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have that in common. However, the document clearly failed to improve our EU partners' knowledge and understanding of the UK economy. At the summit after its publication, the forecasts for the UK's public finances for 2005-06 were available and the Chancellor was rapped over the knuckles by our EU partners in the Commission for running a sustained deficit of 1 per cent. of gross domestic product. His remarks when he returned were terse. He said that our EU partners had got it wrong; they did not understand that his approach was cautious and prudent and that the deficit related only to investment.

I think that the Chancellor was right. I understand why he was so annoyed by the EU partners and the UK press coverage of what they said. It goes to show that the document does not properly explain the UK position. It is not written for that purpose. If we want to ensure that our EU partners understand the UK strategy, we should write a document that tries to do that. The Government are failing in their mission.

I imagine that the Minister will say that the Commission was worried about the UK's performance not against the Maastricht criteria, but against the broad

economic policy guidelines. They are vague and have no binding effect if a country breaches them, and she would be right to explain that. Nevertheless, there is no mention of those broad economic policy guidelines in the document or of how the UK is performing against them. There is not even a proper analysis of how it is performing against the Maastricht criteria. The document has no intention of addressing the purpose for which it is supposed to be approved by the House. Again, it fails in its prime purpose.

The third reason why we might want to send the document to the Commission and our EU partners is to enhance the UK's position in future negotiations and discussions about what is in the interests of the UK economy, perhaps because we are thinking of negotiations in the run-up to a possible entry to the single currency. The most important negotiations in the next few years are those on UK entry, except that the document is almost silent on that. There is a box on EMU preparations taken solely by the UK Treasury within the domestic economy, but it has nothing to do with negotiations or the exchange rate. That is where the document is most lacking.

I spent an interesting 15 minutes prior to the debate trying to find references to the exchange rate. They were difficult to find. Perhaps I missed a few references in my brief flick through the document, but the first mention of the exchange rate that I found was on page 163. One might have thought that the exchange rate would be rather more important in the assessment of economic policy, but it merited no earlier mention than that.

Mr. Letwin: We cannot allow this golden opportunity to pass without asking the hon. Gentleman whether he would like to state—for the first time ever, I think—whether the Liberal Democrat party also has an exchange rate policy, and if so, what is the target exchange rate?

Mr. Davey: I am sorry to disabuse the hon. Gentleman, but in several speeches Liberal Democrats have explained our exchange rate policy. In the debate on the economic aspects of the Queen's Speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor) set out our policy clearly, but so that the hon. Gentleman does not have to consult *Hansard*, I shall remind him of what my hon. Friend said.

About 18 months ago, the Liberal Democrats commissioned a panel of experts to consider what preparations the UK should make—including in respect of the exchange rate—before putting the question on joining the single currency to the people. That panel proposed a range of values—1.25 to 1.45 euros to the pound—at which it thought that, if the UK entered the single currency, it would do so at a competitive rate.

That conclusion was published about a year ago, so it might now be out of date, but our aim in appointing the panel and publishing its conclusions was to start a debate in this country on what might be a sustainable long-term exchange rate for the pound against the euro. That is a debate in which we would be happy to engage and one in which we hope the Conservatives and the Government will engage as well, because it is extremely important that we start to influence our EU partners in terms of a sustainable rate.

Mr. Letwin: I did not ask the hon. Gentleman what rate his panel of experts—of which I was aware—thought might be appropriate for entry. I asked what is the target exchange rate. Let me put it this way: would the hon. Gentleman sponsor measures to manipulate the UK exchange rate to that target rate; and if so, what measures?

Mr. Davey: Again, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and St. Austell. Liberal Democrats have said that the very fact of the Government saying that they intend to join the single currency and putting the issue to the people will cause a market correction.

If the hon. Gentleman doubts that, I refer him to events that took place several weeks ago. After the Labour Government were re-elected, the markets assumed that it was more likely that the UK would enter the single currency and the pound-euro rate adjusted very quickly. Bizarrely, Her Majesty's Treasury and the Bank of England stepped in to stop a depreciation in the pound, even though that depreciation was welcomed by the manufacturing sector, agriculture and the tourism sector throughout the country—indeed, it was a depreciation that people had been seeking for some time.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Including people in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Davey: Indeed, including people in the hon. Gentleman's West Dorset constituency. That was a valuable depreciation. That chain of events reinforces our argument that if the British Government could come clean and get rid of the ambiguity that surrounds their position—it is the only thing about their position that is clear—the markets would adjust. Then, we could begin a debate with the markets, with our EU partners and within the House on what would be a sustainable rate at which we might enter the single currency.

Mr. Letwin: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall not pursue this issue more than one step further, but it is important that we know the answer and we appear to be getting somewhere. If the medicine that he has just recommended did not, in his view, cure the patient—in other words, if the statement of a target rate of entry did not produce an adjustment to that rate—what other active steps, if any, would the Liberal Democrats recommend taking to manipulate the exchange rate?

Mr. Davey: The hon. Gentleman should talk to those of his colleagues who set the rate for sterling when we went into the exchange rate mechanism. They did not have measures to manipulate the rate; instead, the Government fixed a rate. Unfortunately, when fixing the rate, they failed to carry out proper negotiations with our EU partners and the other members of the exchange rate mechanism. Instead, in a move that caused great problems, they told our EU partners, "That's the rate we're going to go for."

To answer the hon. Gentleman, it is possible that the Government could take that line. If they did not think that the market rate was correct—that it was either too low or too high—they could set a rate by negotiation with our EU partners. Indeed, that is what several countries did in the run-up to the adoption of the euro in mainland Europe. They made clear their decisions as to which direction they wanted to take, so the markets glided into sustainable rates.

[Mr. Davey]

The problem, and the problem with the document, is that the UK Government are not attempting to do that: there is no attempt to influence the medium-term equilibrium exchange rate for sterling and to ensure that our negotiations are built on past statements. Both last year and the year before that, I made that point in Committees that were undertaking a similar function to the one in which we are currently engaged. At that time, the Red Book seemed extremely complacent about the exchange rate—worryingly so—because the rate was causing such great problems. However, the Government's pronouncements in the Red Book seemed to deny those problems. I pointed out to the Government that it was against Britain's long-term interest to send documents to Brussels and Strasbourg stating that the current rate of exchange was not a problem.

When those negotiations take place, our European partners will be able to dust down those documents, which we think are of no concern, and will say to the UK Government, "Hold on. In 1999, in 2000, in 2001, you sent us a document which said that the exchange rate was not a problem. You said that it was not affecting your tradeable sector, your agriculture and your tourism." That would weaken our hand in negotiations. It is a very silly thing to do.

Mr. Barry Gardiner (Brent, North): Although I hesitate to support the hon. Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin), the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr. Davey) has still not answered the question about Liberal Democrat policy: if the markets did not glide into the appropriate exchange rate that he identifies as Liberal policy, what further active measures—if any—does he suggest that a Liberal Government would pursue in order to achieve that effect?

Mr. Davey: Let me surprise the House by giving the hon. Gentleman a direct answer. He was not listening properly to my reply to the hon. Member for West Dorset. We would negotiate a rate. The rate would be fixed when we decided. That rate could be higher or lower than the rate obtaining in the market at the time. We should have to see what the rate would be.

The serious point is that this document, which we propose sending to Brussels and Strasbourg, will be of no benefit for the long-term negotiating position of UK Ministers—whatever the Government. We are saying to our European partners that we are happy with sterling so over-valued. That message will come to haunt us.

When the House votes on the motion, Members on the Liberal Democrat Benches will vote against it. The document does the Government no favours in the way that it sets out the UK's economic position for our EU partners. That will prejudice the long-term interests of this country.

9.49 pm

Mr. Desmond Swayne (New Forest, West): My hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin) was forensic in exposing the imbalances in the economy to which the Financial Secretary did not draw attention. I share one particular view with my hon. Friend: I am not too concerned about a trade imbalance, if it can be financed. It is worth remembering that even when this country was at the height of its economic power, as the workshop of the world, we persistently ran a balance of trade deficit on merchandise trade. At the time, that was largely financed by services, especially shipping. Now, of course, it is financed largely by inflows of capital. With the willingness to continue to finance that will come the adjustment in the exchange rate necessary to correct the overall merchandise trade imbalance. That is the economic theory. The reality will be rather less pleasant, as the correction is not necessarily one to which we should look forward in terms of its consequences for the real economy and real jobs.

I shall concentrate on a slightly different aspect of the Minister's remarks. She set out cogently the objectives of the process—to maintain quality of life and what she called a high level of social protection. She drew attention to the Government's ability to spend, for example, £1 billion more on the health service as a consequence of the Budget.

The Government's chosen measure of that high level of social protection and high quality of life is the health service. That is reflected in the Prime Minister's words when he promised the people world-class public services. In other words, we must compare our public services with the best. In comparisons in terms of outcomes, we are way behind those in whose league we should be. The Government, however, have chosen to measure by input and throughput. The input measure that they chose was the average spend as a proportion of gross national product on, for example, health care.

The hon. Lady's £1 billion will not take us very far. The Government chose as a measure the average EU spend on health, but their method of measuring the average was a little awry. For example, according to the Government, the way to measure the average health expenditure of Belgium and Germany is to add the two together and divide by two—not a very precise measure of actual expenditure in those two economies on any weighted basis.

The other trick is to include the United Kingdom in that equation, so that our lacklustre performance brings down the average that is to be our target. If we removed those distortions from the Government's calculations, I suggest that to reach the level of gross national product spend that should be the Government's target if they adhere to the criterion of world-class public services, they would need to spend another £20 billion a year. To make that up would require much more than the £1 billion to which the hon. Lady drew attention. A 30 per cent. increase in income tax would be necessary.

The Government have ruled out the possibility of that additional resource coming from any source other than public revenue. The proportion of GNP spent by other European Governments on health is broadly the same. The difference comes from the additional resources that our economic partners get largely from private sources, which we continue to deny ourselves. On 26 June the Secretary of State for Health said in the Chamber that happily, health provision in this country is through a monopoly supplier in the form of the NHS, and so long as there is a Labour Government, that will remain.

Mr. John Bercow (Buckingham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Surely the phenomenon on

the continent that he describes is not evanescent; it is enduring. Given the advances in medical science, which we welcome, and the corollary—that whenever we devise a new cure, we create a new queue—we ought properly to focus on the way in which private resources can effectively complement the role of public provision in turning care from a word to a deed.

Mr. Swayne: That is an important point. My concern about the Government's determination to retain a monopoly in respect of health care arose from what the Economic Secretary said about the need to increase productivity. She said that she intended to increase productivity, and to do so in the public sector in particular. That prompted my intervention, but she did not answer my question, as it concerned the role of competition. She drew attention to the fact that we needed more competition to achieve greater productivity. However, my question is this: how does that fit in with monopoly supply in the public sector? If Labour Members believe that monopoly supply is the way to produce greater productivity and a better public service, they belong in a mausoleum in Red square, rather than in a modern economy. That is what the Soviets believed, but such a system did not work or deliver.

Let me move from that particular measure to the general rationale for the debate. The decision to publish information to be supplied to the European Union as a measure of our economic performance is not made in a vacuum. It has an aim that stems from the Maastricht treaty, whose overwhelming purpose was to secure economic and monetary union. The purpose of publishing the information and supplying it to the European Union is to provide a measure of our performance in reaching the objective of economic and monetary union.

It was on that score that the Economic Secretary's speech was entirely lacking. She made not the slightest mention of such measurement, but it is especially important, as the Government will at some stage publish their estimate of how the United Kingdom economy is converging. It would have been interesting to have been given in this debate at least some measure of how that process is proceeding, but such information was entirely absent from her speech, which was the feast without Banquo's ghost in that respect.

If the purpose of the Government's policy is, as we must assume, to secure an increase in economic growth over time that is steady rather than variable—in other words, to try to iron out some of the variances in the trade cycle by providing a stimulus in the trough when unemployment is increasing and a restraint at the top when full employment is approached—the issue of convergence is vital. For that policy to continue if we have the same interest rate as our Union partners, as would happen if we were to achieve the objective of economic and monetary union, it would be vital for those economies to move in the same economic cycle, so that the troughs and peaks coincided. It would be necessary to ensure not only that the stimulus of a reduced interest rate arrived at the right moment and did not exacerbate inflation, but that the reduction in the interest rate did not arrive at the wrong moment and so exacerbate unemployment.

Those conditions are vital for any pursuance of the economic objectives of high social protection and so on to which the Economic Secretary drew our attention, but she gave no measure of our progress towards such convergence. In that respect, I found her speech extraordinary.

9.59 pm

Ruth Kelly: I thank the hon. Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin) for his kind words about my appointment and for introducing a lighthearted note into the debate. I am glad that he had sufficient time in the election campaign to consider the state of the world economy. Perhaps he had slightly more time than he anticipated.

Before considering the detailed points, many of which were interesting, it may be helpful to remind hon. Members of the motion, which asks the House to approve the Government's assessment in the Budget report of the medium-term economic and budgetary position. Passing the motion will enable the United Kingdom to make an effective contribution to multilateral surveillance in the European Union.

I shall consider some of the detailed points that were raised during the debate, and begin with those of the hon. Member for West Dorset. He was right to point out that world growth has slowed. Indeed, as we projected in the Budget, the growth rate of the world's major economies is expected to halve this year. No country can insulate itself from world economic events, but the UK policy remains well placed to respond to economic developments. We have a framework that means that we are better able to cope with any downturn in the world economy. Nearly all commentators expect continued growth with low inflation in the UK. The assessments of the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are all in the range of 2.5 per cent. to 2.7 per cent. this year.

Mr. Letwin: Does the Economic Secretary accept that I did not challenge that? I asked whether current imbalances showed that the underlying economic trends were more worrying.

Ruth Kelly: I was about to tackle the numerous imbalances that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. There were so many that I almost lost count; perhaps he will forgive me if I forget to mention a few.

First, he mentioned the trade deficit. Perhaps he agrees that some increase is to be expected during an international slowdown. As he said, the trade deficit can readily be financed. The forecast in the Budget for the current account deficit is 2.25 per cent. of GDP this year, compared with a trade deficit of 4.25 per cent. under the previous Government in 1989. That did not prove difficult to finance. Total goods export volumes will be 5.5 per cent. higher this year than last year.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman referred to the regional imbalance. The Government are taking action to improve regional economic growth with the new regional development agencies, which will play a key strategic role in driving economic development forward. In the 1980s, the Conservative Government stood back from promoting regional economic development. If they had a policy on the regions, it was to run down already disadvantaged areas so that they were in an even more desperate position.

[Ruth Kelly]

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the two-speed economy. Record employment growth clearly increased household wealth, and high consumer confidence is increasing consumer demand. As I said earlier, we cannot insulate ourselves from a downturn in the world economy, but the answer is not to massage the exchange rate down artificially, but to steer a course of stability through the economic slowdown.

The hon. Gentleman made no suggestions for promoting a better economic policy. I was looking forward to hearing him spell out the way in which he would initiate £20 billion of spending cuts. However, he made no proposals.

I suggest—

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 16 (Proceedings under an Act or on European Union documents).*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think the Ayes have it.

Hon. Members: No.

Division deferred till Wednesday 18 July, pursuant to Order [28 June 2001].

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [28 June],

That Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 26th October, 2nd, 23rd and 30th November 2001, 11th, 18th and 25th January, 15th March, 12th and 19th April, 10th May, 21st June and 19th July 2002.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

Punjabi Community

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

10.5 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington): Sat shri kal, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is a Punjabi greeting to commence the debate on the Punjabi community in Britain. I shall start by explaining the genesis of the debate. For some years in the late 1980s and the 1990s, thanks to the hard work of my hon. Friend the Member for Warley (Mr. Spellar), now the Minister for Transport, a number of MPs came together under the auspices of the all-party group on human rights in the Punjab. The group took up the concerns of the Punjabi community in Britain about the abuse of human rights in the Punjab resulting from the period of troubles in that region during the 1980s and early 1990s.

In the last Parliament, in consultation with representatives of the Punjabi community, my colleagues and I widened the scope of the all-party group to enable it to represent in Parliament the Punjabi community on the full range of issues of concern to Punjabis in Britain. In March last year, members of the all-party group secured the first debate on the Punjabi community in Britain in thehistory of the British Parliament. Our aim as a group is to secure regular debates on the issues of concern to that community. Tonight's debate provides us with an opportunity to gauge progress on the issues that we raised in our debate last year and to draw attention to the agenda of issues and the programme of work that the all-party group has set itself for the forthcoming Session of Parliament.

That agenda of issues has been drawn together on the basis of extensive consultation with organisations representing the Punjabi community in Britain. On all those issues we need the continuing attention and support of the Government. The agenda of issues to be addressed in the coming Session is therefore a direct reflection of the concerns of the Punjabi community in Britain and the debates of the all-party group.

A prime issue of concern to the Punjabis in Britain, which we identified in last year's debate, is the operation of the visitor visa system. The whole community has welcomed the Government's reinstatement of the visa appeals process. In last year's debate, Members expressed anxiety about the possible introduction of a bond system, and the level of charges to be levied for appeals. It was greatly appreciated, therefore, when the Government dropped the proposals for bonds and subsequently reduced the charges for appeals.

None the less, many of our constituents continue to experience considerable problems with the visa process. Time after time, visas are refused for family members, often grandparents travelling for weddings, funerals and the birthday celebrations of grandchildren. The system still works to divide families, often in the most heart-rending way. In many instances, the appeal process serves only to rubber stamp the initial decision of the entry clearance officer, and letters of support from MPs appear to count for very little.

The all-party group proposes that an independent review of the visa system be undertaken—a short, sharp exercise to examine how fairly the system is operating,

possibly involving an element of "mystery shopping" to test whether the process is equitable. The all-party group would be pleased to discuss with the Minister how that proposal could be implemented.

In addition to visitor visas, constituents report continuing problems when seeking employment permits and visas for staff recruited in the Punjab. These problems have been experienced by priests and specialist teachers; even one of my local restaurants, the Saffron, which serves some of the best Indian cuisine in London, had a problem with securing the entry of a renowned Indian chef. We are aware that the Government have embarked on a debate about the future of work permits and employment quota systems, and this issue could possibly be addressed within the ambit of that discussion.

In response to Members' requests, the Government have undertaken two further reforms in relation to visas and immigration, which were also highlighted in last year's debate. The first is the commencement this year of the scheme to register all immigration advisers. The scheme provides the opportunity not only to monitor and raise the standards of advice on visa and immigration procedures, but to drive out of existence the despicable crooks who prey on some of the most vulnerable people in our society. The all-party group wholeheartedly endorses the new scheme.

Another reform is the Government's proposal to establish a visa office in Jalandhar in Punjab where advice and assistance can be given to visa applicants. That measure responds to our plea in last year's debate, which was made on behalf of members of our constituents' families who have to undertake the long and expensive journey to Delhi in person. Sometimes up to 16 hours' travel is involved. However, in our meeting with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office last week it was sad to learn that the proposal for the new visa office, which was submitted to the Indian Government some time ago, remains on Indian ministerial desks. I want to use tonight's debate to urge the Indian Government, in the friendliest terms possible, to expedite that important initiative. It would greatly assist all our constituents.

Another focus of the all-party group's attention is support for Punjabi culture in this country. Our view is that its maintenance and promotion in Britain represents not an argument for separatism or preference, but a means whereby people who are confident in the understanding and knowledge of their own culture can better integrate and live harmoniously with those from different backgrounds and other cultures.

In practice, we have interpreted that commitment as support in education for the first Sikh school in the history of this country. Guru Nanak school is in my constituency, and with the award of voluntary-aided status and associated funding from the Government, it is flourishing and securing some of the best educational results in London—and in the rest of the country. However, demand for places vastly outstrips the number available, so we hope that the Government will give a sympathetic hearing to a bid for the much-needed expansion of the school in September. The catchment area goes beyond my constituency, covering Hounslow, Ealing and Slough.

The Punjabi language is a key issue, which we addressed in last year's debate. Securing one's culture involves maintaining the ability to speak one's mother tongue, and ensuring that others have access to an understanding of one's history, culture and beliefs. The all-party group is keen to work with the Department for Education and Skills to advise on curriculum development in relation to the Punjabi community and Sikhism.

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough): As the Punjabi language is probably the second most spoken in this country—it is the first language for many people—is it not important to give people in that community access to radio? The Minister is not responsible for that issue, but perhaps she will pass on to her colleagues in another Department the Punjabi community's eagerness to use the new access radio licences to provide radio through the medium of Punjabi. That would enable it to use radio licences to reinforce and develop the language.

John McDonnell: I am grateful for that intervention, and shall make a plea to the Government on the subject.

The all-party group suggests that we assist in a survey of local education authorities to ascertain what support is provided for teaching Punjabi where parents request that facility. My hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart) is correct: with 1.3 million Punjabi speakers in Britain, Punjabi has become this country's second language. That wealth of Punjabi speakers is a real asset in a globalised economy, and I agree that the scale of Punjabi speaking in this country should be reflected in the support given to cultural outlets available to the Punjabi-speaking community.

The best example is the limited number of radio stations broadcasting in Punjabi. Most are on short-term licences associated with the celebration of the Versaikhi period, but several excellent applications are being prepared by the Punjabi community. Last year the all-party group organised a seminar on radio licensing, and we believe that we might have facilitated the approach to the Government that will enable them to award new licences to Punjabi-speaking community organisations.

Greater recognition is also needed to preserve and promote Punjabi sport—kabbadi, for example, which is a form of what I can only describe as high-speed wrestling, or rugby without the ball. One day someone might explain the rules of kabbadi, which are complicated and brutal. The UK kabbadi federation is not even recognised by the visa office, and teams are often prevented from travelling to the UK from the Indian sub-continent. Many MPs have had to intervene on several occasions just to secure a player's entry to this country.

An understanding of the history of the Punjab, especially the Sikh Khalsa, is critical to the maintenance of Punjabi culture. The recent celebration of the 300th anniversary of Versaikhi by institutions such as the Victoria and Albert museum did a great deal to promote a greater appreciation of that culture among both Sikhs and the general population. This year we will witness the celebration of the bicentenary of Maharajah Ranjeet Singh, and this month the V&A has organised a seminar on "Preserving the Sikh Heritage". The Sikh material heritage ranges from simple pieces produced in homage to Sikh gurus to precious art works and gems in museums and royal collections. The Koh-i-noor diamond, which is part of the Crown jewels, is a Sikh artefact given to Queen Victoria—some say under duress—by the last Maharajah Duleep Singh.

[John McDonnell]

The all-party group is anxious to encourage a discussion of how this unique heritage can be preserved for future generations and made more accessible to the current generation. This is not an attempt to repatriate these objects, as with the Elgin marbles—the Queen can rest assured for the time being. Instead, we need to examine how co-operation between Governments and community organisations can best assist in preserving and holding in trust these priceless objects for the worldwide Sikh community.

Another key agenda issue for the all-party group for the coming period is the development of economic links between Britain and the Punjab. Later this year, the group aims to host a seminar on the potential for economic development initiatives, which could be of mutual benefit, bringing together Government agencies, Punjab state bodies and private sector representatives from Britain and the Punjab. The objective is to examine what assistance can be provided to Punjabi commerce and agriculture, especially through enhanced opportunities for inward investment and for export via increased airport capacity. They also need help to tackle the increasing problem of water scarcity and diversion, and cropping policies in the Punjab.

We remain interested in human rights issues. Undoubtedly, there are concerns about the Indian Government's failure to allow United Nations rapporteurs to enter the country and go to the Punjab. We will continue to press the matter until we secure a truth commission—or at least an extension of the remit of the Indian Human Rights Commission—to investigate the disappearance of large numbers of people throughout the 1980s during the crisis in the Punjab.

That is a substantial agenda for an industrious all-party group, and we are addressing many other issues on behalf of the Punjabi community in Britain. We can succeed with that agenda only with the support of the Punjabi community, and the continuing support of the Government, which we are pleased to have received throughout their previous term of office and hope to receive throughout their present period of office.

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Angela Eagle): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) for securing, for the second consecutive year, a debate on the Punjabi community in Britain. We still face many challenges on race relations. It is right to highlight the success of our many and varied communities. I thank my hon. Friend for reminding us of the significant contribution that the Punjabi community makes to the economic and cultural life of this country.

These debates provide an important opportunity for us to be reminded at first hand of community concerns, and my hon. Friend has set those out clearly. Last year, the difficulties that many members of the Punjabi community face in travelling to Delhi to apply for a visa were explained. As my hon. Friend the Member for North Warwickshire (Mr. O'Brien) said in reply to last year's debate, the Government were aware of suggestions that there should be more visa issuing offices in the sub-continent and were examining the matter. As my hon. Friend was happy to report, in December we asked the Indian Government for their agreement to open visa liaison offices in Jalandhar in the Punjab and a similar office in Ahmadabad in Gujarat.

We continue to press the Indian Government for approval for the offices, at which point we can begin to recruit and train locally employed staff. This matter was raised with the Indian Government on 21 June by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Bradshaw). I am happy to discuss with the all-party group the issue of visas and work permits, to see how we can make the system more user-friendly. I am glad to have my hon. Friend's support on the registration of some of the legal advisers, which is going ahead as a result of legislation passed recently.

Human rights in the Punjab were mentioned. The situation has improved greatly since the troubles ended some eight years ago, and we recognise the need to ensure that all allegations of abuses are investigated. Ministers and officials have made clear to the Indian authorities the importance of investigating abuses and bringing wrongdoers to justice, and we have consistently urged those authorities to allow access to India for international human rights groups, including the United Nations rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial executions.

We have also been trying to work with the authorities in a practical way. Through our high commission in New Delhi, we have been able to engage in some human rights project work in the Punjab that aims to improve police skills. Projects have involved co-operation between UK and Indian experts and the Punjabi police training college and have focused on child-friendly policing, policing for vulnerable groups and co-operation with youth clubs and children's groups.

I agree with my hon. Friend that promoting an understanding between different cultures to tackle racism is central to our policy. We firmly believe in the importance of teaching young people the value of diversity and of a proper sense of society and their place in it. That is why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary introduced citizenship education to the national curriculum when he was Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

The programme for the study of citizenship in secondary schools will be introduced as part of the national curriculum in September 2002. It is already in the primary curriculum, as part of personal social and health education. For the first time all pupils will be taught about the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the UK, and about the need for mutual respect and understanding.

I will convey to the appropriate Department what my hon. Friends the Members for Hayes and Harlington and for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart) said about Punjabi language radio licences.

We believe that the measures we are introducing in schools will help to ensure that future generations grow up with a clear concept of citizenship—an understanding of the value of diversity, and a respect for individuals from different cultures and backgrounds. I know that those values are shared by the Punjabi community.

We must ensure that communities have the skills and knowledge to make their views known. In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes

and Harlington, for example, the local authority has secured nearly £180,000 over three years to run a community development project under the community networks support programme of the Home Office "connecting communities" grant. The money will be used to establish a consortium of minority ethnic community organisations, which will act as advocates on behalf of member organisations and the communities they represent.

John McDonnell: One of the issues that we raised in last year's debate was the importance of funding for gurdwaras. We wanted to establish the principle that the "connecting communities" funds could be re-used to support them.

Some of the discussions with community support organisations prompted consternation in the Punjabi community in Britain about the proscription of the International Sikh Youth Federation, which we envisaged as a key organisation working in the community for peace and harmony generally.

Angela Eagle: I understand my hon. Friend's concern about the proscription of any organisation, but I assure him that this was not done lightly or without appropriate information. If my hon. Friend wants to make any other representations, I shall naturally be more than happy to hear them.

Kabbadi sounds like an interesting sport. As one who suggested that chess should be classed as a sport and is still trying to achieve that aim after a number of years, I know how difficult it is to introduce new sports, especially those involving rough and tumble. I wish the Kabbadi Association in Britain well, and hope that the sport spreads.

Fiona Mactaggart: My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned kabbadi and the issue of civic education and giving responsibility to the community. One of the problems is that those messages are contradicted in practice by the way in which some people are treated when they seek entry to Britain as visitors. In New Delhi, more than in any other post on the subcontinent, would-be visitors are pre-sifted and not properly given a chance to make their case before an entry clearance officer. Perhaps my hon. Friend could encourage her colleagues in the Foreign Office to ensure that they advise those staff of the contradictory effect that their actions have on the feeling of success in the community here when their relatives are not even allowed to apply to visit.

Angela Eagle: I take my hon. Friend's point. In mitigation, all I would say is that the New Delhi post is especially busy and has a huge throughput. I will certainly draw my colleagues' attention to the points she has made. We need to look at work permits, which my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington mentioned, to see how we can achieve an appropriate balance and deal with everyone fairly, quickly and efficiently. That is often difficult to achieve, but I assure my hon. Friends that the ministerial team at the Home Office are spending much time considering how to do so.

The debate has done much to remind us all of the importance and benefits of living in a diverse society, and it has reinforced the reminder given by my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Lammy) during Tuesday's debate on Bradford that we must not lose sight of the considerable examples of success in many of our multi-ethnic communities. It is right to concentrate on problems, but it is also important to concentrate on the positive aspects of diverse community life. Therefore, I again congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington on bringing this subject before the House.

The Government welcome the positive contributions made by the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh members of the Punjabi community in Britain, and we all share the vision of a society free from prejudice in which differences between religions and ethnic communities are not only respected and valued, but celebrated and promoted. We will continue to work with the Punjabi community and all communities to ensure that that development continues. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said in the House last week,

"The vast majority of people in our society, regardless of their ethnic background, want the same things for themselves and their children."—[*Official Report*, 10 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 664.]

Our aim is to create an inclusive and fair society, and local communities that meet the needs of all groups.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 17 July 2001

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

The Secretary of State was asked—

Foot and Mouth

2. **Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East): If she will make a statement on the impact of foot and mouth on tourism in Scotland. [2639]

6. **Mr. A. J. Beith** (Berwick-upon-Tweed): What steps she has taken to facilitate cross-border co-operation over the handling of the foot and mouth crisis. [2643]

The Minister of State, Scotland Office (Mr. George Foulkes): The impact of the foot and mouth outbreak has been severe in Scotland, as in the rest of the United Kingdom. There has, however, been active cross-border co-operation. The Scottish Executive have worked well with Whitehall Departments on both policy and operational aspects. All agencies, including the Scotland Office, have co-operated in getting across the message that Scotland is open for business.

Dr. Lewis: I am reassured by that response from the Secretary of State, but has he found in Scotland, as we have in the New Forest, that one effect of the crisis has been that many tourist centres and businesses that have never been closed have been shunned by people wrongly thinking that they were closed? Will he do everything in his power to advertise the fact that tourist centres in Scotland are not closed, in many cases never have been closed, and should be visited at every opportunity? The tourism industry—certainly in the New Forest, where foot and mouth did not even break out, and, I am sure, in Scotland—has been desperately hard hit.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman is right about everything except one point: I am only the Minister of State, not yet the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State and I have been very active in promoting the fact that Scotland is open for business. My right hon. Friend went to the Trossachs, Loch Lomond and Ben Nevis very soon after the crisis began, to illustrate the fact that they were open. I went to Stirling castle and Stirling jail—*[Interruption.]* The old jail. I went to Culzean country park, and spoke to journalists in Brussels—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That was my only overseas visit, apart from going to the Western Isles. I also met overseas journalists who came to Loch Lomond and other parts of Scotland. The Secretary of State and I, along with our colleagues in the Scottish Executive, will do everything that we can to get over the message that Scotland, like other parts of the UK, is very much open for business and welcomes tourists, wherever they come from.

Mr. Beith: Is the Minister aware that, whereas during earlier stages of the outbreak the Scottish Executive, as well as handling the crisis rather better than those in England did, were helpful to those of us who had to deal with problems on the English side of the border going into Scotland, there is now a limit on cross-border movements, so that farmers who have cattle in equivalent condition and want to send them to the abattoir in Ayr or Bathgate cannot do so, even though the limit seems to have no scientific basis? Will he arrange for civil servants of the two Administrations to talk to each other more, so that they can discuss the matter?

Mr. Foulkes: The civil servants of the two Administrations are in very close touch, on that and other matters. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is to meet Rhona Brankin, the Minister responsible for such matters in the Scottish Executive, so there will be discussions at ministerial level later this afternoon. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will take on board the point that the right hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Russell Brown (Dumfries): Will my hon. Friend listen sympathetically to the concerns of many hill sheep farmers whose markets have been closed off and closed down as a direct result of restrictions on animal movements designed to combat foot and mouth? Will he undertake to discuss with colleagues appropriate compensation arrangements?

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend is right; we are certainly taking that on board. There is a huge problem with 3.5 million hill lambs, which must be dealt with in one way or another, because they will suffer if left on the hills during the winter. They can be slaughtered and go into cold storage, and farmers can receive compensation. Alternatively, we could eat more lamb. We are considering all the options. I attended an ad hoc meeting on the matter on Wednesday, and the Secretary of State is attending another later this afternoon. We are treating it as a matter of great urgency.

I know that some regard suggestions such as that we should eat more lamb as a bit of a joke, but this is a serious matter. Eating more lamb would certainly help to solve the problem and reduce the amount of compensation that we would have to pay.

Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the approval in Europe of a procedure called alkaline hydrolysis at elevated temperature—he does not need to remember all that—which would get rid of the need for mass burial and rendering? A firm in my constituency holds the licence for such a procedure, which would have obviated many of the problems of foot and mouth, and dealt with BSE,

too. Does my hon. Friend welcome the tremendous opportunity for a major manufacturing facility in Scotland to deal with such crises?

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend has made that suggestion before, and it is one that we should take on board. I can assure him that there have been no new cases of foot and mouth in Scotland since 30 May. That is no cause for complacency, but things seem to be improving significantly. Cleaning and disinfecting of farms is well under way: we have already done more than half the infected farms in Scotland. The farms involved were in a small area around Dumfries and in parts of Galloway and the borders—the rest of Scotland was not affected. We have been trying to broadcast that message as widely as possible.

Single Currency

3. **Mr. David Cameron** (Witney): If she will make a statement about the involvement of the Scotland Office in preparing Government and businesses for the introduction of the euro. [2640]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mrs. Helen Liddell): I meet my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to discuss that and a wide range of issues. In addition, I liaise closely with colleagues in the Scottish Executive who take forward euro preparations through the Scottish Euro Forum.

Mr. Cameron: Will the right hon. Lady be making a separate assessment of the Scottish economy in relation to the five economic tests? If so, how, when and where will it be published? If not, why not?

Mrs. Liddell: I will not be making a separate Scottish assessment.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Does the Secretary of State agree that it is important that businesses be aware of the euro and make preparations? The scotch whisky industry is a highly successful industry, achieving more than £2 billion of sales and securing more than 50,000 jobs. Would we not be hiding our heads if we failed to act responsibly and did not open up channels with such businesses?

Mrs. Liddell: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The introduction of notes and coins at the turn of this year will be important to Scottish business. My hon. Friend mentions the scotch whisky industry in particular, but 63 per cent. of Scotland's exports overall go to our European partners, and if businesses do not prepare for the introduction of the euro, opportunities will missed. The Department of Trade and Industry and other Government Departments have been actively encouraging businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, to prepare for the introduction of the euro. Many think that that is simply a matter of implementing new systems, but the fact is that when 12 of the EU's member states are using the euro, price transparency and the competitiveness of Scottish business will be thrown into sharp relief.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): In the context of the Government's preparations for the introduction of the euro, will the Secretary of State estimate—to the nearest 10,000, say—how many fewer manufacturing jobs there are in Scotland now than when the Labour party took office in 1997? How many of the job losses does she attribute to the overvaluation of sterling against the euro, and how many to other Government policies?

Mrs. Liddell: The hon. Gentleman displays the flawed economics that he displayed during the general election campaign—as a result of which there are now more Scots in the Cabinet than on the Scottish National party Benches here. Let me point out that during the election campaign, he and other members of his party made it clear that they would rather tie the Scottish currency in an independent Scotland to the pound or to the euro. One of the reasons why his party lost the election so decisively was the flawed economics that he and his colleagues displayed. The Labour Government's policies have resulted in the lowest unemployment in Scotland for 25 years, and more Scots in employment now than for a generation.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Pollok): Does the Secretary of State accept that it would be utter madness for us to join the euro at the current rate of exchange? Does she agree that we require either a substantial devaluation of the pound or an appreciation of the euro before it would make sense even to consider joining? Is it not a fact that those who call for us to join the euro now, including those in the SNP, do not have Scottish industry's best interests at heart?

Mrs. Liddell: My hon. Friend makes an important point about the assessment we must make of whether to recommend to the people in a referendum that we should join the single currency. A key element is to ensure sustainable convergence, which is why the position adopted by the Government—making the assessment according to five economic tests set by the Chancellor—is the logical way forward. We must be certain that every decision about the single currency is taken in the best economic interests not only of Scotland, but of the whole United Kingdom. That is why our policy of prepare and decide is the best possible one.

Mr. Michael Moore (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Secretary of State accept that Scottish farmers' businesses are being damaged by the continuing uncertainty about the euro? Given the Government's unwillingness to commit to a referendum on the single currency, will she at least give a commitment that full agrimonetary compensation will be paid to farmers this year? Will she explain what steps she is taking to ensure that there is a new scheme in place when the current one ends in 2002?

Mrs. Liddell: The hon. Gentleman is being misleading when he says that we will not commit to a referendum. We have made it clear that we will commit to a referendum. Indeed, the decision whether Britain should enter a single currency will be taken in the best interests of the Scottish, and British, economy. Far from the position of the Conservative party—later this afternoon, it will decide whether its leader will be someone who proposes that we should never enter a single currency, someone who proposes that perhaps we should enter a single currency, or someone who says, "Yes please, can

we enter into a single currency right now?"—we shall make a decision based on the best prospects for the Scottish and the British economy.

As for agrimonetary compensation, the Government have gone to considerable lengths to ensure that there is adequate foot and mouth compensation for farmers, not just in general but in specifics. More subsidy is paid to farmers in the United Kingdom than to all other sections of our industry put together, because the farming community requires that—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was a good full reply.

Mr. Iain Luke (Dundee, East): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that Europe is Scotland's largest export market, on which hundreds, indeed thousands, of jobs depend? Does not the sterile anti-euro stance of the Opposition puts those jobs in jeopardy?

Mrs. Liddell: My hon. Friend, from his considerable experience of such matters, makes an important point. What he says is accurate, and whenever we see the Opposition divided on the issue of Europe, we know that they do not have the interests of Scottish industry at heart, just as they do not have the interests of British industry at heart.

Mr. Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield): I am sure that the right hon. Lady is familiar with the Chantrey Vellacott report, which says that the costs to the private sector in Scotland of joining the euro would be some £3 billion on a gross domestic product just in excess of £56 billion. No doubt she agrees that that is a substantial sum. Is it not the case that the longer the Government delay that decision, the higher those costs will be? That point has already been made to the right hon. Lady in a number of questions. If the Government are serious about the matter, is it not time that they came to a decision? Do they not risk incurring substantial costs for the Scottish economy which, at the end of the day, may have been wasted?

Mrs. Liddell: I wonder whether I am welcoming the hon. Gentleman to the Dispatch Box in his role as spokesman for Scotland for the last time. We expected his hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Duncan) to be at the Dispatch Box today. Indeed, we look forward to the next Scottish Grand Committee, when the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale may be the Front-Bench spokesman who opens for the Opposition, then becomes their Back-Bench representative, before resuming his Front-Bench role to close the debate.

As for the question asked by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Grieve), the Government will decide whether to recommend joining a single currency in a referendum based on this country's best economic interests, not on some ideological dancing on the head of a pin—which, it seems, would be the Opposition's position. Our recommendation will be in the best interests of the people, and the decision will be made by them.

Mr. Grieve: I had rather hoped to move on to another topic, but I think that I shall return to my original question. Does the right hon. Lady agree that the £3 billion of estimated cost to the Scottish economy that would be incurred by joining the euro will be increased the longer the decision is delayed, and that the money could well turn out to be wasted? Will she please answer that question now, rather than giving me an interesting and diverse explanation of who will be sitting where in the Scottish Grand Committee?

Mrs. Liddell: The illogicality of the hon. Gentleman's question beggars belief. If the wrong decision is taken about the interests of the people of this country, it will cost the economy considerably more, which is why the Government's position of assessing the five critical economic tests is right.

Fuel Duties

4. **Mr. Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire): What representations she has received about the effects of fuel duties in Scotland. [2641]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mrs. Helen Liddell): I have regular discussions with a number of interested parties on a wide range of issues affecting Scotland, one of which relates to fuel prices.

Mr. Paterson: That was a bland answer, considering that 95 per cent. of goods in Scotland are transported by motorised truck. How many letters has the Secretary of State had from businesses whose competitiveness has been crushed by the pernicious fuel duties imposed by the Government? Can she name three businesses in Scotland that have been made more competitive by those fuel duties?

Mrs. Liddell: I would point out to the hon. Gentleman that the Government have introduced a package of measures that is specifically friendly to motorists in Scotland. The measures introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget have led to cuts in fuel duty of 4p per litre for motorists and 7p a litre for hauliers. Those measures benefit every business in Scotland.

Mr. Calum MacDonald (Western Isles): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Office of Fair Trading is investigating the causes of the disproportionately high petrol prices in the Western Isles, which are not due to taxes or duties, because the same taxes and duties apply everywhere else in the United Kingdom. They are the result of a commercial interest. Will my right hon. Friend ascertain when the findings of the Office of Fair Trading inquiry will be published, and undertake to implement them?

Mrs. Liddell: I will certainly undertake to do that; my hon. Friend makes an important point. Having filled my tank on Saturday at a rural filling station in the highlands, I am well aware of the difficulties being experienced in the highlands and islands. My colleagues in the Scottish Executive have introduced the rural petrol stations grant scheme, which is intended specifically to assist filling stations in remote areas. I know that my hon. Friend welcomes that. I undertake to ensure that the findings of the survey of petrol prices will be published as early as possible.

Mr. Peter Duncan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale): Is the right hon. Lady aware of the direct threat to the

economy of Wigtownshire? She will be aware that many hauliers and holidaymakers detour via the Irish sea crossing to southern Ireland en route to Northern Ireland rather than cross my constituency to Stranraer, because they can buy fuel at half price in southern Ireland, rather than paying the extortionate price of £4 per gallon in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale.

Mrs. Liddell: I take this opportunity to welcome the "Westminster one" to the Chamber. Let me not diminish the hon. Gentleman's considerable achievement in winning his seat. However, does his win not say something about the performance of the Scottish National party, which still managed to lose a seat on one of the worst nights for the Tories in a generation?

What the hon. Gentleman says about the difficulties in Wigtownshire is something that I acknowledge, and that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer acknowledged when he introduced the new system of vehicle excise duty, especially the development of what is called the Brit disc. That is specifically designed to assist hauliers and give them access to fuel at a competitive rate that will allow them to carry out their business without a competitive disadvantage.

Mr. Michael Weir (Angus): Does the Secretary of State understand that the high price of fuel impacts on all aspects of the Scottish economy, especially in rural areas? Does she think that taking 75p in tax for each pound charged on petrol is too much, too little or just right? Is there a European Union country that takes more in tax on petrol than the United Kingdom? May we have a straight answer at least once this afternoon?

Mrs. Liddell: As the hon. Gentleman is a new Member, I feel that one should be understanding about the questions that he asks. However, if he checks the level of motoring taxation in Scotland with that in the rest of the EU, he will find that we sit in the middle. Opposition Members talk about fuel taxes, but they fail to take into account any consideration of the environment. Perhaps that explains why, with the exception of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), they have all been returned to this place with roughly 30 per cent. of the popular vote.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Does my right hon. Friend share my concern that although when the barrel price of oil was $10 there was not a large fall in the price of petrol at the pump, now that the price is $25 a barrel, the companies are claiming that that is why their price cannot come down at the pump? Will my right hon. Friend enter into discussions with the companies about how much profit they are making from the international sale and retail of fuel? While she is at it, will she get them to explain why fuel is 3p a litre cheaper in her constituency than in mine?

Mrs. Liddell: I assume that my hon. Friend is a regular visitor to my constituency, given that his family comes from there. The Government do not become involved in companies' pricing decisions. However, I recognise my hon. Friend's point about prices at the pump when oil was $10 a barrel. As the Grangemouth refinery is in his constituency, he is well aware of the important impact on the Scottish economy of having a more sustainable oil price now. It is important to secure jobs in my hon. Friend's constituency and in other constituencies throughout Scotland. The Government believe that competition, and competitive pressures on oil companies, are one sure way of reducing petrol prices, as we see with pricing in supermarket and hypermarket filling stations.

Mrs. Eleanor Laing (Epping Forest): I listened carefully to the Secretary of State's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Duncan), who is very welcome indeed at Scottish questions, especially by my colleagues and me. The right hon. Lady has admitted that high petrol prices are causing a problem for rural businesses, farmers and other people in rural communities—especially in Scotland, by comparison with the rest of the country. As those prices result from taxation, not from the original pricing, will she undertake to make representations to the Chancellor before the next Budget to reduce, or at least hold steady, the current tax on fuel?

Mrs. Liddell: I take this opportunity not only to welcome the hon. Lady to the Dispatch Box—we did not expect to have her company today—but, on behalf of the whole House, to give a welcome to Matthew Wallace Laing, who is now five weeks old. We are delighted to see the hon. Lady here and looking so well. On her substantive point, the Government have recognised the difficulties of rural communities and others, which is why my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has taken action resulting in an average reduction of 4p a litre for petrol.

ADVOCATE-GENERAL

The Advocate-General was asked—

European Court of Human Rights

23. **Miss Anne Begg** (Aberdeen, South): What Scottish cases are pending before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. [2601]

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Dr. Lynda Clark): Of the current cases against the UK that have been notified to the UK to date, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has identified four as being of particular interest to a Scottish Executive lead Department. Those cases involve a number of issues about the application of article 6, which concerns the right to a fair trial, article 5, which concerns the right to liberty and security, and one case involving article 3, which prohibits inhuman or degrading treatment.

Miss Begg: Is the Advocate-General involved in any of the cases, or does her involvement stops once a case gets to Strasbourg? Is she likely to be involved in such cases in future?

The Advocate-General: I am not currently involved in the four cases to which I referred, but some of them are still at a very early stage in the procedure before the European Court of Human Rights. Obviously, as a UK Law Officer, I am available, if requested, to give advice

about such matters or to appear on behalf of the UK. I am certainly willing to do that in the European Court of Human Rights, as I have done in many of the other courts.

Subordinate Legislation

24. **Annabelle Ewing** (Perth): If she will make a statement on the application of schedule 7 3(1)(b) of the Scotland Act 1998. [2602]

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Dr. Lynda Clark): Paragraph 3(1)(b) applies to numerous powers to make subordinate legislation under the Scotland Act 1998. It requires affirmative resolution procedure to be used where the subordinate legislation alters the text of an Act of the United Kingdom Parliament.

Annabelle Ewing: I thank the Advocate-General for her answer, but I should like to pursue the matter a wee bit further. Will she confirm that a detailed reading of the Scotland Act shows that when reference is made to an Act of the Scottish Parliament, the term "Act of the Scottish Parliament" will be used? Similarly, will she assure us that when reference is made to an Act of the Westminster Parliament, the term "Act of the UK Parliament" will be used? Will she therefore confirm that if an annulment is sought for supposed elements of an Act of the Scottish Parliament that are ultra vires, the UK Government would be required to invoke the special case procedure set out in schedule 7 3(1)(b)?

The Advocate-General: Fortunately, I almost understand the hon. Lady's question. Basically, when an Act refers to an Act of the UK Parliament, that is exactly what it means. Similarly, when an Act refers to an Act of the Scottish Parliament, that is what it means. It depends entirely on the interpretation provided in the Scotland Act 1998 and the Interpretation Act 1978.

Euthanasia

25. **Mr. James Wray** (Glasgow, Baillieston): What recent advice she has given on legislation relating to euthanasia. [2603]

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Dr. Lynda Clark): I give legal advice on a range of matters as and when required. The Government have no plans to introduce legislation relating to euthanasia. In Scotland the matter is devolved to the Scottish Executive, and I understand that they have no plans to introduce legislation relating to euthanasia, either.

Mr. Wray: There is much confusion in Scotland with regard to euthanasia. Neither Ministers in Scotland nor the Cabinet Office at Westminster understand where responsibility lies. It is not dealt with, along with surrogacy and abortion, under the part of schedule 5 to the Scotland Act that covers health and medicines, so the rule of thumb is used, in case of biotourism. As the criminal law, including the law with regard to murder, is devolved, is not euthanasia, too, a devolved matter?

The Advocate-General: My hon. Friend is correct. The criminal law, including that with regard to murder, is devolved, and in certain circumstances the taking of human life will be murder—or it could be culpable homicide. Euthanasia, as defined by Scots law, is not acceptable and is contrary to law. That is a devolved matter for the Scottish Parliament.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

The Parliamentary Secretary was asked—

Asylum Seekers

29. **Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley): What assessment she has made of the adequacy of legal representation available to asylum seekers. [2608]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Ms Rosie Winterton): The Legal Services Commission and the community legal service partnerships continually monitor and assess the adequacy of legal service provision available to asylum seekers, including legal representation. We believe that there is now generally adequate provision throughout England and Wales, but will look to meet any local difficulties that may arise.

Ann Clwyd: I welcome my hon. Friend to her new position, and wish her a long and happy life at the Dispatch Box. However, I have to disagree with what she has just said, because my experience in visiting Cardiff prison recently and talking to asylum seekers suggests that their legal representation is extremely inadequate. I had intended to ask the Department whether, as so many asylum seekers are being dispersed outside the London area, any progress had been made in building up a network of specialists in asylum law throughout the United Kingdom. Certainly asylum seekers in Cardiff prison are inadequately represented.

Ms Winterton: I know that my hon. Friend is extremely concerned about the situation in Cardiff. I read the powerful points that she made in her recent Adjournment debate, and I agree that the Government must ensure that asylum seekers, wherever they are, have proper legal representation. We have taken on board her suggestion that there should be a network of advisers throughout the country. One of the recent improvements that we have made is to ensure that only legal advisers who are specialists in asylum law can give advice to asylum seekers. We have also increased the number of immigration practitioners throughout the UK, looking particularly at areas to which asylum seekers have been dispersed where there may not have been a tradition of such legal advice. There were particular problems in Cardiff prison, and a number of changes have been made following a visit from the Legal Services Commission—but if my hon. Friend believes that problems are still outstanding, she should write to me and I shall look into them myself.

Sir Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): I, too, warmly welcome the Minister to her new post and wish her well.

Bearing in mind the Government's policy of firmer, fairer and faster reception of asylum seekers, is it better that initially and temporarily, they should be held in prisons or reception centres?

Ms Winterton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind welcome.

Asylum seekers are held in prison only as a last resort. We believe that the changes that we have made will assist in speeding up the process.

Putting people in detention centres as soon as they arrive, as the Conservative party suggests, is unworkable and unaffordable. However, we hope to lessen the number of those who are detained in prisons when other centres open later in the summer.

Immigration Appeals

30. **Fiona Mactaggart** (Slough): How he plans to deal with the backlog of immigration appeals; and if he will make a statement. [2609]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Ms Rosie Winterton): Immigration appeals have benefited from the significant resources that the Government have invested in improving the appeals process. Waiting times in the Immigration Appellate Authority have reduced considerably from more than 40 weeks at the end of March 2000 to less than 20 weeks at the same point this year.

Officials from the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, the IAA and the Lord Chancellor's Department continue to work closely together to ensure that there are no undue delays in dealing with immigration appeals.

Fiona Mactaggart: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer and welcome her to her new post.

I am pleased to hear the extent to which the processing of immigration appeals is being speeded up. However, the same cannot be said about asylum appeals. What progress is being made in dealing with the 65,000 asylum cases that are being moved into the appeals system?

Ms Winterton: I thank my hon. Friend for her kind remarks. She is right that immigration and asylum appeals should be tackled as quickly as possible, and that immigration work should not suffer through increased asylum appeals. The latest assessment shows that in approximately 52,000 asylum cases, an appeal has been lodged with the IND, but they remain in the appeals system. In the past year, we have taken several steps to tackle that problem and ensure that asylum and immigration appeals move through the system quickly.

First, we have increased the number of courtrooms. Secondly, we have more than doubled the number of asylum adjudicator sitting days. We have also increased the number of staff in the IND who prepare and present appeals, and the number of interpreters.

I hope that my hon. Friend will welcome the fact that those measures mean that average waiting times for asylum and immigration appeals have more than halved in the past year. However, I assure her that we shall continue to consider all options for tackling appeals quickly.

Human Rights Act

31. **Mr. Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire): If he will make a statement on the impact of the Human Rights Act 1998 on the future of magistrates courts. [2610]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. Michael Wills): As the hon. Gentleman knows, implementation of the Act is at an early stage. It came into effect only in October last year. It would therefore be premature to draw any firm conclusions now. However, magistrates courts committees have provided data for the period between October 2000 to March 2001. That shows the Human Rights Act has had no significant impact on the work load of the courts or the infrastructure required.

Mr. Paterson: I welcome the Minister to his new post, and I hope that he will not emulate the inept complacency of his predecessor, who flatly refused to take on board the imminent catastrophe that faced magistrates courts after Human Rights Act was passed. In Oswestry, £350,000 of taxpayers' money was spent on modernising the magistrates court over five years. Now, £197,450 will have to be spent to make it comply with the Human Rights Act, which deems it an infringement of human dignity to be seen in any public part of the court in handcuffs. Does the Minister agree that if central Government cause a problem, they should provide the funds to solve it?

Mr. Wills: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words of welcome. I am afraid that I have to disagree with almost everything else that he said. Briefly—

Mr. Paterson: Tell me what is wrong, then.

Mr. Wills: I will, if I may, tell the hon. Gentleman precisely what he said that was wrong. First, he was wrong about my distinguished predecessor, in whose footsteps I am very proud to follow. Secondly, there is no imminent catastrophe—

Mr. Paterson: There is!

Mr. Wills: If the hon. Gentleman really wants to be reassured—

Mr. Paterson: Come to Shropshire.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr. Paterson) must calm down.

Mr. Wills: Mr. Speaker, I am trying extremely hard to bring some comfort to the hon. Gentleman, but he is obviously determined to get over-excited about this. I accept his kind invitation: I would be delighted to come to Shropshire, because I would be able to explain to him in situ—he obviously does not want to listen to me here—that there is no imminent catastrophe as a result of the

Human Rights Act. There is no evidence of such a catastrophe and, on the Labour Benches, we believe in proceeding on the basis of evidence.

Mr. John Burnett (Torridge and West Devon): I welcome both the new Ministers to their appointments and I congratulate the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Wavertree (Jane Kennedy), on her promotion. I would also like to pay tribute to the former Member for Wyre Forest, who was a conscientious and knowledgeable Minister.

The Government commissioned Bristol university to produce a report entitled "The Judiciary in the Magistrates Courts", which was published in December last year. For what purpose did the Government commission that research? Do the Government have proposals for the lay magistracy and, if so, what are they?

Mr. Wills: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words, and for those—by contrast with those of the hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr. Paterson)—about my predecessors. He will be aware, with his distinguished background in the law, that we are awaiting publication of the Auld report. It would be premature to say too much until my colleagues and I have read it, as it may well have implications for the future of the lay magistracy. We have made it very clear, as has Lord Justice Auld, that we see a valuable role for the lay magistracy, and we expect that to continue.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I do not know what happened in Shropshire, but in the adjacent county of Cheshire there was a very welcome and sophisticated programme of training for magistrates before the introduction of the Human Rights Act. May I seek my hon. Friend's assurance that that training will also be available to newly appointed magistrates? It would take additional time and resources, and would need to be like that provided for existing magistrates.

Mr. Wills: My hon. Friend is quite right—he so often is. The catastrophe that the hon. Member for North Shropshire is so keen to predict has been avoided because we have prepared extremely carefully and made sure that everyone involved got proper training. I can assure my hon. Friend that we will continue to provide whatever training is necessary.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Surrey Heath): May I add my congratulations to the two new Ministers on their appointments? The Parliamentary Secretary, the hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Ms Winterton), has been promoted from being a Parliamentary Private Secretary, and the other Parliamentary Secretary, the hon. Member for North Swindon (Mr. Wills), was previously our Minister for patriotism. I am not sure whether he regards his change of role as a promotion or not. In any event, we welcome him to his Department.

The closure of magistrates courts in every county is something for which the hon. Gentleman and his Government have to take responsibility. It is not good enough for him to say, as his predecessors did, "It is up to local magistrates courts committees." He must recognise that the courts are closing, precisely as my hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr. Paterson) said, because they are being told that they cannot afford the cost of the modifications resulting from the Human Rights Act. Courts round the country have to be modified and, because the Government will not pay for the modifications, those courts will close. Such closure is the denial of local justice by stealth. Will the Minister address that problem which his Government have created?

Mr. Wills: Again, I suppose that I should be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his words of welcome. I should add that he will continue to hear from me on national identity.

Clearly, the hon. Gentleman has some difficulty understanding how the system operates and I look forward to educating him a little more about how it works over Question Times to come. Of course, as the hon Gentleman knows extremely well, the provision of justice through magistrates courts is a matter for local magistrates courts committees. I am glad that he mentioned money, because we are proud of our record in funding the modernisation of the court service. We are proud of what we have done to ensure that magistrates courts deliver the system of justice to which the public are entitled.

The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that, in the past four years, we have increased by 12.8 per cent. the money available to magistrates courts to modernise. He keeps referring to the closure of magistrates courts. Of course some magistrates courts committees will decide that, in the interests of an efficient, effective and secure system of justice, some magistrates courts will close. That is inevitable and we make no apology for it. What matters is the service that the public receive and we shall ensure that they get the service that they deserve.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

The President of the Council was asked—

Electronic Voting

42. **Mr. Simon Thomas** (Ceredigion): If he will bring forward proposals to introduce electronic voting to the Lobbies of the House. [2623]

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): In the last Session, the Modernisation Committee conducted a survey of Members' views on electronic voting. A majority of hon. Members who responded were against such an innovation.

Mr. John Bercow (Buckingham): Excellent!

Mr. Cook: Including the hon. Gentleman. I shall discuss with the Modernisation Committee whether there would be any value in revisiting the issue in this Parliament, but such a major change could not proceed without substantial support.

Mr. Thomas: I thank the Leader of the House for his response and pay particular tribute to the reforming zeal that he has shown on taking up his new post, especially in the announcements that he made last night. What estimate has he made of the time that we waste voting in the Lobby? The devolved Administrations in these islands

vote in minutes whereas we take hours. Has he made any estimate of how much extra time we would have to scrutinise, for example, Select Committee reports or the Executive if we voted in an alternative way? We could keep a Lobby a day for the Lobby junkies, but time could also be freed up for scrutiny in the House. Incidentally, we could also get rid of the abomination that is deferred voting. Will he reconsider?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman is quite right to go to the heart of the debate, which is whether electronic voting would permit quicker voting. There would be a time saving. It is also important to bear in mind the fact that the eight minutes that are required to enable Members to attend before the Doors are locked represent the majority of the time taken for Divisions of the House. Unless it were proposed that those eight minutes should themselves be reduced, electronic voting would save three or four minutes per Division at most. That is not without significance in itself, but it must be weighed against the fact that most Members when last asked wanted the present system, not electronic voting. The final decision must be for the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one reason why a majority of the House has continually argued the case for voting in the manner that we do is that, although it takes 15 minutes, it enables Members of Parliament to put Ministers and Cabinet Ministers under scrutiny when we have not been able to find them during the rest of the week?

Mr. Cook: I am very familiar with the principle that my hon. Friend enunciates. I assure him and the House that all electronic voting systems that were considered in the last Parliament required the personal presence of the Members voting. For example, if we were to introduce smart cards, all Members would have to go through the Aye or No Lobby, although they might be able to go through more quickly. There is a balance to be struck.

Laptop Computers

43. **Mr. Michael Jack** (Fylde): What plans he has to ensure that laptop computers can be used in the Committee Rooms of the House. [2624]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office (Mr. Stephen Twigg): I am aware that the right hon. Gentleman has raised the matter before and I have considerable sympathy with the argument that the House should move with the latest technology. In the first instance, that is a matter for the Chairmen's Panel, which must rule on what is and is not permissible in Standing Committee. However, in the last Parliament the Modernisation Committee considered the way in which Parliament uses information technology and it may well return to that issue in this Parliament.

Mr. Jack: I am most grateful to the Minister for his very positive response to my small campaign, particularly in the light of the fact that, as a result of the agreements made last week, Members are, among other things, to be able to have a laptop computer. Those could be used, for example, to take bulky documents, such as notes on clauses for the Finance Bill, into the Committee Room in electronic form, but we are not permitted to do that. A small hand-held computer, however, can be taken into Committee.

May I urge the Minister to continue the work that he mentioned in his answer, particularly through the Modernisation Committee, so that Members—especially Opposition Members—can sensibly use electronic aids to enhance their ability to scrutinise the Government's work?

Mr. Twigg: I am well aware of the right hon. Gentleman's long-standing small campaign, which may reach fruition in the coming Session. I am also aware of the advantages that he has described. As I have said, this is a matter for the Chairmen's Panel in the first instance, but I believe the Information Committee has already conducted an experimental paperless meeting that was viewed positively by its members, and I therefore believe that progress will be forthcoming.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I wholeheartedly endorse the comments of the right hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), and welcome what my hon. Friend has said.

The main chamber of the Californian Assembly has a laptop at every position. That has not disrupted its work, but has enhanced it, and many other Parliaments are doing the same. We are lagging behind, and I urge my hon. Friend to use his good offices to press the programme forward.

Mr. Twigg: Clearly the small campaign has cross-party support. One of the changes in Standing Orders agreed during the past few weeks will enable Committees to work more closely together, which will give the Information, Modernisation and Procedure Committees an opportunity to work together on this matter.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton): While there are clearly several advantages in proceeding with the investigation of the use of laptops in Committees and so on, I caution the hon. Gentleman, especially in the light of what was said by his hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller). If we are to set a precedent, obviously it may well apply to the Chamber. The idea of our having to gut the Chamber and fit it out with tables and chairs—or, heaven forbid, have some sort of hemicycle and look like every other Parliament in the European Union—is one that I would resist at all costs.

Mr. Twigg: I am well aware that the hon. Lady would wish us to resist learning from other countries in the European Union, but I am not sure that her view is shared by all Members, or even by those on the Opposition Benches. I think that if we can learn lessons from positive examples in other parts of the world we should do so, and I believe that we can do so in the case of the instance raised by the right hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack).

Scrutiny

44. **Mr. David Clelland** (Tyne Bridge): What proposals he has to increase the amount of pre-legislative scrutiny. [2625]

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): The Queen's Speech announced four draft Bills, including major Bills on communications and rail safety. I will aim in future Sessions to introduce as many Bills as possible in draft, but in view of constraints such as the availability of parliamentary draftsmen, it will take time to achieve a system in which scrutiny in draft is the norm.

Mr. Clelland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that during the last Parliament I had the privilege of serving on the Armed Forces Bill Committee? As he will know, the Committee was something of a hybrid, being part Select Committee and part Standing Committee. That gave us an opportunity to cross-examine witnesses and visit establishments affected by the legislation before beginning the Standing Committee procedure and considering amendments. I know that the Government's enthusiasm for Select Committees has taken a bit of a knock recently, but does my right hon. Friend feel that the same process might be suitable for other legislation in future?

Mr. Cook: First, let me assure my hon. Friend that my enthusiasm for Select Committees remains undiminished. Indeed, this Government have established the Select Committees faster than any previous Parliament. I agree with his central point, however: if we achieve legislation in draft, we are more likely to have good legislation when it is published. In this case good scrutiny makes for good legislation, and for good government.

I certainly give my hon. Friend an undertaking—in the light of his, and my, experience of draft legislation—that I will seek wherever possible to introduce Bills early enough for them to be considered in draft.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Last night the House was concerned primarily with who should be our parliamentary watchdogs, and a shot, or a fuselage of shots, went across the Government's bows.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Fusillade!

Mr. Tyler: I am sorry—a fusillade. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for correcting me.

Now, however, we should move on to consider how we can make the Select Committees more effective. I know that the Leader of the House has in mind pre-legislative scrutiny that is appropriate to such Committees, and I think he also has in mind a rolling programme of legislation so that we do not try to cram it all into one Session. Can he give an assurance not only that those issues will be addressed urgently, but that Committees' scrutiny of European legislation will be improved? It is primitive and far less effective in this House, in this place, in this country than in most neighbouring European countries.

Mr. Cook: I am not entirely sure that all the shots last night went over our bows, but I absolutely agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said about Select Committees. Indeed, in the previous Parliament, the Modernisation Committee identified Select Committees as one of the forums in which pre-legislative scrutiny of draft Bills could be carried out. I would encourage departmental Select Committees to fulfil that function.

I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the way in which the House carries out its European scrutiny. That issue will need to be addressed by the Modernisation Committee, but I put down a marker that one of the ways in which it could be addressed is to mainstream European scrutiny throughout the departmental Select Committees, rather than hiving it off into a separate forum.

Miss Anne Begg (Aberdeen, South): I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that, in the Scottish Parliament, pre-legislative scrutiny is part of the legislative process. Will he undertake to look into how that is working in the Scottish Parliament: not only the upside on how well it is working, but some of the flaws of the system? For example, I believe that there is some problem with the foxhunting Bill because of the composition of the Committee that has been considering it. However, I join others in arguing that if there is merit in the proposal, and I believe that there is, the scrutinising role of Select Committees should be enhanced in that way.

Mr. Cook: I am very happy to say to my hon. Friend that I have already met my opposite number in the Scottish Parliament and hope to visit the Scottish Parliament in September to see what lessons we can learn. It has had an advantage that we do not have: it has created the rule book from scratch. There has been no base on which to build and nothing to constrain it. There may be lessons that we can learn and I am happy to study them.

Mr. James Gray (North Wiltshire): Although the House welcomes the pre-legislative scrutiny—after all it was a Conservative Government who first brought in the notion of publishing draft Bills in advance—will the President of the Council acknowledge that no amount of pre-legislative scrutiny should reduce the important scrutiny of a Bill once it has gone through its First and Second Readings on the Floor and is in Committee? At no stage must that scrutiny, which after all is party political—pre-legislative scrutiny tends to be cross-party—be reduced.

Mr. Cook: Nobody is suggesting that there is a trade-off between scrutiny in draft and scrutiny of a Bill brought before the House on Second Reading. The procedures for scrutiny in the House will continue. At the same time, if we get the draft right as a result of pre-legislative scrutiny, we can save the time of the House and hon. Members as well as of Ministers. In the previous Parliament, the International Criminal Court Bill went through the House more quickly than it might have done if it had not been scrutinised in draft first.

Scrutiny

45. **Fiona Mactaggart** (Slough): What plans he has to bring forward proposals to reform the way in which the House scrutinises the Executive and proposed legislation. [2626]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office (Mr. Stephen Twigg): Improvements have already been made. Not only is there a new forum in Westminster Hall, but the Standing Order changes agreed by the House on 5 July should make it easier for Select Committees to work together and with their counterparts in the Lords to scrutinise Government.

The Government have experimented with Second Reading Committees and Special Standing Committees and brought forward Bills for pre-legislative scrutiny, as my right hon. Friend the President of the Council said. We will continue to do so.

Fiona Mactaggart: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and welcome him to his new post. Over the past 24 hours, we have spoken a lot about pre-legislative scrutiny. It is my view that, in the debate yesterday, there was a certain amount of complacency about the great respect in which Select Committees are held. Our right hon. Friend the President of the Council has given an undertaking to arrange for an inquiry into Select Committee membership. Will he ensure that the Modernisation Committee follows that up with a good look at other ways to improve the powers of Select Committees, in order that they can more effectively scrutinise the Executive? Unless they have the power—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call the Minister.

Mr. Twigg: I thank my hon. Friend for her kind remarks in welcoming me to my post. My right hon. Friend the President of the Council made it clear yesterday that the methods for the appointment of Members to Select Committees would be at the top of the agenda of the new Modernisation Committee, which is convened tomorrow. That does not preclude our looking at broader issues about the powers and role of Select Committees. That will form part of the work of the Modernisation Committee, and be raised in broader debates involving other Committees.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (North-West Norfolk): Speaking as one who has been recently re-elected to the House, one of my observations is that, in the past four years, all too often Ministers have made statements on radio programmes or in arenas other than the House, whereas they should have come to the House to explain their actions to hon. Members. What will the Minister do to put that right?

Mr. Twigg: I welcome the hon. Gentleman back to the House. I believe that it is important that, whenever possible, statements be made in the Chamber. We shall do our best to ensure that that happens.

Scrutiny

46. **Helen Jackson** (Sheffield, Hillsborough): What proposals he has to enhance the scrutiny role of parliamentary committees. [2627]

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): I have already responded to recommendations of the Liaison Committee to give greater freedom to Select Committees to decide for themselves to appoint Sub-Committees or Joint Committees. There are further proposals in the reports of the Liaison Committee and of the Hansard Society on which I want to consult, such as the proposal for a weekly slot of a half hour after Question Time to consider topical reports. I have given the House an undertaking that, tomorrow, I shall ask the Modernisation Committee to review the process of nominations to Select Committees to ensure their independence. If we reach agreement, I would intend to report to the House in the autumn.

Helen Jackson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a tendency in the House for every hon. Member—100 per cent. of us—to mouth the platitude that it is absolutely crucial that we enhance Parliament's role of scrutinising the Executive? However, do we not also tend to vote to leave the House's procedures largely unchanged? Does he agree that keeping our procedures as they are will neither modernise Committees nor enhance their powers? Does he also agree that every hon. Member should be allocated work on a Committee to enhance their role as a Member of Parliament?

Mr. Cook: I very much welcome the momentum for reform that was gathered last night, and I hope that we shall be able to take that forward to achieve real reforms both in the ways in which Select Committees are set up and the ways in which they are able to exercise their powers of scrutiny.

My hon. Friend raised the possibility of all hon. Members being members of Select Committees. In the final analysis, it is for hon. Members themselves to decide whether they wish to serve. However, I would not resist the conclusion reached from yesterday's debate that the House might benefit from having larger numbers on Select Committees. It is an issue to which I would wish to return in the autumn.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (North-East Derbyshire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which affects the Leader of the House. Yesterday, he made a short statement on the arrangements that will be made in relation to membership of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee, saying that he would be asking the House to set aside part of Standing Order No. 121 so that those membership arrangements can be considered at shorter notice. As you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, although there are probably serious problems with the Northern Ireland peace process, the House has not yet been made aware of the names of members of the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee.

My point of order is to inquire whether the motion that the Leader of the House will be tabling for the House to consider on Thursday will be constructed in a manner that makes it possible to sort out the details of the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee, as we intend to sort out the details of the other two Select Committees. Do you, Mr. Speaker, have any means of influencing the situation to ensure that that Select Committee is sorted out before the House rises for the summer recess?

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his point of order. In the first instance, under Standing Order No. 152, the nomination of members of the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee is a matter for the Committee of Selection. As for the contents of the Leader of the House's proposed motion under Standing Order No. 121 and the notice required before the House may consider motions for the nomination of Select Committees, those are not matters for me. However, I am sure that those on the Government Front Bench will have heard the hon. Gentleman's point.

Jane Griffiths (Reading, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would welcome your help in setting the record straight. Last Tuesday, in an Adjournment debate that I raised about a school sports accident that happened to my constituent, I unwittingly misled the House. I said at the time that the teacher who started the race could not see what happened, but I have now seen clear evidence that that was not the case and that the teacher, Mr. Day, tried to cover up his own culpability by lying to my constituent.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady has put the matter on the record.

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for North-East Derbyshire (Mr. Barnes), let me assure the House that it is our intention on Thursday to bring before the House any nominations for whatever Committee that are cleared by the Committee of Selection.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

Considered in Committee [Progress, 11 July].

[SIR ALAN HASELHURST *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

INCORPORATION OF PROVISIONS OF THE TREATY OF NICE

Amendment proposed [11 July]: No. 40, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 1),.'—*[Mr. John Wilkinson.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Alan Haselhurst): I remind the Committee that we are discussing the following: Amendment: No. 41, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 2),'.

Amendment No. 42, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 3),'.

Amendment No. 43, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 4),'.

Amendment No. 44, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 5),'.

Amendment No. 45, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 6),'.

Amendment No. 46, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 7),'.

Amendment No. 47, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 8),'.

Amendment No. 48, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 9),'.

Amendment No. 53, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 15),'.

Amendment No. 78, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 47'.

Amendment No. 29, in page 1, line 12, after "occasion", insert—

'except for Article 3, paragraph 1(b) of the Protocol on the Enlargement of the European Union in so far as that relates to the appointment of a special representative in the area of common foreign and security policy'.

New clause 1—*Special representative in the area of common foreign and security policy—*

[Sir Alan Haselhurst]

'In relation to Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Treaty of Nice, amending Article 23(2) TEU, prior to a vote in the Council on the appointment of a special representative in the area of common foreign and security policy, Her Majesty's Government shall lay a report before Parliament setting out its preferred candidate for the post and shall lay a further report after the Council meeting if that candidate has not been adopted.'.

New clause 2—*International agreements under Article 24 TEU*—

'In relation to Article 1, paragraph 4 of the Treaty of Nice, amending Article 24 TEU, prior to casting a vote in the Council on any such international agreement, Her Majesty's Government shall lay before Parliament a report setting out the implications for the United Kingdom of such an agreement.'.

New clause 7—*Western European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*—

'This Act will not come into effect until Her Majesty's Government has laid before Parliament a report showing the implications for the Western European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, for the future functioning of these organisations, and for the United Kingdom's role therein, of Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Nice Treaty, revising Article 17 TEU, and Article 1, paragraph 5 of the Nice Treaty, revising Article 25 TEU.'.

New clause 8—*Adoption of decisions under Article 17, paragraph 1, TEU*—

'For the purpose of Article 17, paragraph 1 of the Treaty on European Union, as amended by Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Treaty of Nice, the constitutional requirement of the United Kingdom before any decision under that paragraph (common defence) may be adopted by the United Kingdom shall be that the decision shall have been approved by an Act of Parliament.'.

New clause 33—*Eurojust*—

'This Act shall not come into force until Her Majesty's Government has obtained, and laid before Parliament, legal advice from the Attorney General on the effect on the criminal and judicial processes in the United Kingdom of Article 1, paragraph 8 of the Nice Treaty, revising Article 31 TEU, as they relate to the provisions on Eurojust.'.

3.33 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stone): As usual, I declare an interest as mentioned in the Register of Members' Interests.

At the end the previous debate, I was speaking about the role of Mr. Solana and I said that before he was appointed, he campaigned against NATO for about seven years. I have to say that that did not fill me with a great deal of encouragement.

Article 23 of the treaty on European Union refers to the appointment of common foreign and security policy special representatives and provides for the extension of qualified majority voting when appointing a special representative, currently the said Javier Solana—who, by some pretty skilful manipulation, jumped from being Secretary-General of NATO to being in charge of the CFSP as the special representative, and has extraordinarily significant powers. I hope that his performance improves on the basis that I have just described. The same extension of qualified majority voting also applies when appointing a deputy. In my judgment, that will further reduce the accountability of the reaction force and reinforce its autonomy.

Article 24 raises a number of problems in relation to international agreements in the CFSP and the JHA—Justice and Home Affairs Committee—with qualified majority voting. In my judgment, the article is phrased in a most unsatisfactory fashion and, probably on purpose, retains veto powers, as I have explained, but not in respect of certain other articles which raise a number of questions that I shall not deal with now, but refer to the Minister in my written submissions to him. Perhaps he will deal with them in writing.

In October 1998, during an informal summit at Poertschach in Austria, the Prime Minister launched the ESDI in a speech of which no transcript is publicly available. No such policy was even hinted at in the strategic defence review published just three months earlier. Indeed, leaked Cabinet papers show that Ministers opposed the plan in 1997. There has been a massive U-turn. The Prime Minister decided at the Helsinki summit to forge ahead in defence by establishing what was then to be a 65,000-strong European defence corps. Apparently, it has now been trimmed to 60,000, as I shall point out in a moment.

Of course, the Prime Minister denied the obvious fact that we have created a European army. As I said in the previous sitting, that army is to be autonomous and subject to majority voting. It will have an international remit, rather than a merely European one. I asked the Prime Minister when he returned from the Helsinki summit what else the words "autonomous" and "international" meant, as used in the presidency conclusions that he signed.

Mr. John Bercow (Buckingham): My hon. Friend said that Ministers opposed the idea of a European army in 1997. Did not the Prime Minister also object to the proposal, and describe it as an "ill-judged transplant operation"?

Mr. Cash: Indeed, and that shows how ambiguous and deceitful the arrangement is. What its inspiration is, and what deals are being struck, are matters for conjecture. No doubt they will be revealed when the Cabinet papers are disclosed in due course, but the gravamen of my charge is that it will be far too late by then.

In March 1998, the Prime Minister issued an unequivocal pledge, on which he has now ratted. He said:

"Britain will never put at risk NATO, the foundation of our security. Britain and France, and many others, insist that there is no European Commission role in military matters. No country will ever yield up control of their own armed forces."

I believe that Britain is giving up that control.

As I predicted some time ago, the Western European Union was abolished earlier this year. By any sane measure, Europe is far from solving the problem of lack of co-ordination that hamstrung its policy and action in the Gulf, Bosnia and Kosovo. It was Germany's unilateral decision to recognise Croatia that contributed to the problems that beset Yugoslavia throughout the 1990s. The Foreign Secretary of the day, who is now my noble Friend Lord Hurd of Westwell, said originally that Britain would not recognise Croatia, but later told the House that we would. I remember that I challenged him about that. In statements made to me in private, I received good and authentic evidence that that reversal stemmed from a deal connected to Britain's opt-out from economic and monetary union.

Germany's Foreign Minister at the time was Mr. Genscher. He described the recognition of Croatia as

"the greatest victory of German foreign policy since 1945."

I do not consider that much of a victory.

Dr. Julian Lewis (New Forest, East): Was what happened in 1945 a victory for the Germans?

Mr. Cash: My father was killed in 1944, so I am more than happy to say that I believe that the war ended in victory for Britain.

The Franco-German summit contained declarations on the shared military intelligence satellite Syracuse 3, on a rapid deployment corps, and on heavy-lift capacity. I have already referred to the dismal spending levels that have been set, which demonstrate the lack of will to combine proposed functions with the resources that are claimed to be necessary. We are creating a serious foreign policy, diplomatic and military problem. Potential enemies are given a substantial advantage—which they will always exploit—when they see that policies on military capability are not backed up with resources.

Patrick Mercer (Newark): Does my hon. Friend agree that the European rapid reaction force will add not a single ounce to Europe's combat power? Not one extra gun, tank, bayonet, aircraft or ship will be added to the strength. The proposals deal with headquarters, communications and sappers only, not with anything directly involved in fighting.

Mr. Cash: I was going to come to that, but my hon. Friend won a great victory in Newark at the general election and has enormous knowledge of military matters, so I completely agree with what he says.

The rapid reaction force is a nightmare. It is to have a full-time military command structure. In the light of what my hon. Friend says, it is pretty astonishing that there will be additional staff to man the so-called capability when it is a phantom army.

3.45 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): My hon. Friend may have missed hearing the Minister for Europe say on television earlier today that the European Union had already brought to an end the cold war and ensured that there had been no war in western Europe since 1945. If it could do all that without an army, why does it conceivably need one now?

Mr. Cash: It is a case of a great deal of hot air. It is extremely difficult. We are moving from a cold war to a hot war, at any rate in so far as a vast amount of hot air is being generated. With rotation, the so-called military command structure is even more frightening. The amount of apparent capability supposedly generated will be as many as 240,000 troops, not the 60,000 that have been mentioned. The target date for readiness is 2003. So we have an exponential rise in expectations, a decreasing amount of money and resources to be made available, and no evidence that the force will be able to perform any useful function.

The United Kingdom will contribute 24,000 troops to the new force, who will come from the United Kingdom's NATO reaction force. Eighteen warships and a quarter of the Royal Air Force and the Army will be allocated to it. My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) is engaged in some rather important leadership business at the moment, but I wish that he were here today, because he has led the exposure in the House of Commons, the United States and elsewhere of this absolutely ridiculous situation. We remember only too well all the correspondence and articles in the newspapers demonstrating the incredible weakness of our capacity, whether one refers to our nuclear submarines or inadequate equipment and naval provision.

There is a range of reasons why we need to be deeply worried that, rather than concentrating on an effective force within the United Kingdom for the use of the Alliance, we are merging our thinking into a strategic black hole—a force that is incapable of performance and has not got the money to back it up. There will be a 100-strong military staff committee, which will effectively end NATO's monopoly. That is highly dangerous.

There are contradictions in control and command. If one looks at the nightmare of the legal framework that has been created, one wonders how on earth—as I wrote in a book called "Europe: The Crunch" about eight years ago—it will conceivably be possible to have any control and command in the middle of the night when something crops up. In the case of the enlarged Community, 27 countries with their military staff, generals and the rest of it will all be trying to work out what provisions apply, whether the force will operate under a degree of qualified majority voting or whether there is a direct control and command system. If I was a potential enemy—thank God, if I may say so, that I am exactly the opposite—I would say to myself, "Heavens above, we have really got these people where we want them because they will never be able to deliver any kind of strategic or tactical position." We know that not a single military unit is to be created.

On article 17 of the treaty on European Union, the current moves towards the rapid reaction force require no treaty modifications. They followed the summits at Feira, St. Malo and Cologne, but I believe that Maastricht and Amsterdam together provide a perfectly adequate treaty base, and that is where the problems lie. The declaration, next to the final act of the intergovernmental conference regarding European security and defence policy, makes that abundantly clear. As I have repeatedly argued, the issue of the rapid reaction force is entirely separate from that of Nice. Member states are forced to ride roughshod over their constitutional arrangements. In my judgment, they are forced to act anti-constitutionally.

With regard to article 25 of the treaty on European Union, the Political Committee introduced at Amsterdam with the stated purpose of monitoring international affairs is now renamed the Political and Security Committee. Its power is substantially increased as it takes on a number of strategic and management tasks relating to military operations. In fact, it is intended that it will direct Euro-soldiers in combat.

The declaration added to the end of the article is crucial because it basically states that the existing treaty base is enough to enable the European Union to launch military operations. That has to be taken in the context of the single autonomous structure in which NATO as a whole is not engaged. Indeed, the declaration refers to the lengthy presidency conclusions on military affairs which prove beyond the shadow of a doubt the reality of an

[Mr. Cash]

autonomous European army, drawing on national armies' personnel, with an independent control centre separate from NATO.

In conclusion, the lesson for this century is not that Europe is, or can in the foreseeable future ever be, the guarantor of Britain's security. The true guarantor of Britain's defence has, rather, lain in her close co-operation with the United States through NATO. As Churchill put it, the supreme fact of the 20th century was that Britain and America marched together. A common European defence would lead Britain to dissolve her national interests into those of others. As Churchill said, we should be associated but not absorbed. For that reason, we must resist common European defence and instead turn our attention to strengthening our own woefully underfunded armed forces.

Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I will be brief, and I will not follow the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) in his analysis of what happened at the various conferences that have set up this European defence arrangement, to use a neutral expression.

Some of us may not remember the Werner report in the 1970s which led to the exchange rate mechanism, which then led to the single currency. I suggest that whatever the defects of this arrangement are, its purpose is quite clear. It will take some time but, just as the Euro-area has a single currency, the purpose of this arrangement is eventually to create a European army. The attempts by the Euro-enthusiasts to mask this are not very different from those that have been made with regard to other steps towards integration.

One of the reasons why the population of Europe are so concerned about the European Union is that they have not been told that and are beginning to understand that the European elite has been pretending to them all along. The best course for the Euro-enthusiasts to take would be to admit these things. There is no shame in it—if that is what they want, they should say so. That would be a much better way of opening a clear and informed debate about the European Union and the direction in which it should go.

I should like to return to the more esoteric matters in these treaties. I apologise for doing this after the Minister for Europe wrote in a very interesting article in *The Independent* that language must be much clearer when considering these matters. I quite agree with him.

I am not questioning the selection of amendments, but I was surprised that we were to debate amendments to the treaty on European Union. The only amendments in the Nice treaty to the treaty on European Union are in article 1. Whereas the long title of the Bill refers to making

"provision consequential on the Treaty signed at Nice . . . amending the Treaty on European Union"—

that is stating merely what the Nice treaty did— clause 1, which incorporates the provisions of the treaty of Nice into UK law, refers to the treaties on European Communities and to articles 2 to 10 of the Nice treaty.

None of those articles refers directly to the treaty on European Union—only article 1 does so. I deduce from that—I am not questioning whether we should have a debate—that the treaty on European Union did not create rights and obligations for the purposes of the European Communities Act 1972 in the UK. Perhaps I should not try to make the Minister's speech for him; perhaps he will not say that.

Clause 1(1)(ii) refers to

"the other provisions of the Treaty so far as they relate to those Articles"—

articles 2 to 10, which relate to the treaties establishing the European Communities. There may be something in article 1, especially in relation to enhanced co-operation, that follows on from the treaty on European Communities, but perhaps that does not give rise to any rights and obligations on questions of defence under the European Communities Act 1972. It is right that such matters should be debated—although I am not questioning that.

We have a haphazard way in this House—these points have been made in the past—of debating and amending treaties. We cannot amend treaties, but we can pretend to do so only when their provisions affect internal law. I cannot remember what happened in the case of the treaty on European Union. Presumably, it was debated in this House under the Ponsonby rules, which are in some way supposed to ameliorate the effects of the royal prerogative, whereby the Crown does not need to debate such treaties in the House.

I have not looked it up, but I suppose that the treaty on European Union was debated as a treaty. I know that there was no legislation. Presumably, it was not needed because it was felt that the treaty did not affect internal law. I am not even sure whether it is a treaty in international law, but perhaps I will return to that. If it is, notice must be given under the Ponsonby rules and the House must debate it—although it cannot, of course, amend such treaties.

World Trade Organisation agreements and general agreements on tariffs and trade, which are so important but may not have a direct effect on internal law, are not amendable by the House either. Perhaps the Modernisation Committee, which is modernising everything, could look at that.

Mr. Cash: I am very interested in the right hon. Gentleman's line. In the United States, questions of treaties are dealt with by the Senate. We have just had some interesting debates on the power of this Parliament in respect of Select Committees, so perhaps there are some lessons in that.

4 pm

Denzil Davies: Indeed, although I believe that the United States has a fast-track system which it tries to apply to treaties such as the GATT. However, although I do not want to revisit yesterday's Select Committee debate, I have to point out a fundamental difference. The British Executive sit in the legislature, whereas the United States Executive do not. We do not have separation of powers, whereas the United States does.

Even though they may not change internal law, international treaties such as the GATT increasingly impinge. The forthcoming treaty on services, which is likely to be hugely controversial, will come before the House as a single document which there will be no opportunity to amend.

I make this point as an aside to the debate on so-called treaties. If we are concerned about democracy, or even if we are supposed to pretend that we are not worried about

the demonstrations in Genoa and Gothenburg, perhaps the Modernisation Committee should consider the matter and recommend that, in future, even if they do not have a direct effect on internal law, we should examine, debate and even attempt to amend the treaties that the international bureaucracy now tends to bring forth at a much faster rate than they were produced in the 18th and 19th centuries.

I see you looking at me, Sir Alan; perhaps you are wondering whether the right hon. Member for Llanelli is straying a little, even though, as I am sure you are aware, he never does. However, to return to the treaty on European Union, I am surprised that debate on it has been allowed. I see you frown, Sir Alan, but I should be interested to learn from the Minister—if he can tell us—which domestic rights and obligations are affected by the treaty on European Union. If none are affected, what on earth are we debating the treaty for? However, if we are debating it, presumably some rights and obligations are incorporated in English, British or United Kingdom law by the 1972 Act. The House should be told what the treaty on European Union puts into internal law.

I hope I do not stray too far, but I should like to say a word or two about treaties and the royal prerogative. The treaty on European Union is called a treaty, but it is not a treaty for the purposes of the Vienna convention definition, which states clearly that a treaty must be governed by international law. Well, perish the thought—the European treaties are not governed by international law.

If someone were to turn up at the European Court of Justice and say that one of the provisions of the European treaties was contrary to fundamental principles of international law, he would get short shrift from the Court. The Court might look at the principles of international law when interpreting the treaty, but the treaties we are debating are certainly not Vienna convention treaties. I do not know whether, ultimately, they come within the scope of the prerogative. The argument will probably lead me up a cul-de-sac.

Mr. Redwood: The right hon. Gentleman makes the interesting and, I fear, accurate comment that we are setting forth on a course that leads towards a European army that we will not directly control. Will he say how long he thinks it will be before a British soldier is sent into battle or a dangerous situation against the will of the British people and there is nothing that we can do about it?

Denzil Davies: I do not think that I can prophesy on that subject, even though I was a Labour party defence spokesman—perhaps ingloriously—in the 1980s. At least in the 1980s we knew that we had an enemy. These days, I listen to debates about defence and armaments and I wonder where the enemy is. I would not like to be a shadow defence spokesman these days, because that is a difficult job when there is no enemy. I might answer the right hon. Gentleman's question if he tells me who the enemy is. No doubt, the military bureaucracy has made attempts to find enemies everywhere.

Mr. Redwood: Let us suppose that the European rapid reaction force was sent to dangerous territory in the Balkans, and the British people were not happy about the side in the conflict on whose behalf we were engaged. Does the right hon. Gentleman think that that could happen against the will of the British people if we go along the course set out by the Government today?

Denzil Davies: While I agree with the right hon. Gentleman on many matters, I would be surprised if, at the end of the day, British forces, whatever the legal position on treaties, were sent into battle without a debate and a vote in the House. I would be worried if we were moving towards arrangements whereby that was likely to happen; I hope that we are not and that, whatever the position on legal sovereignty, the will of the House would allow or prevent such action.

Returning to my rather esoteric point—we are debating esoteric matters in these European treaties—it is not satisfactory to debate and amend treaties merely because they affect our internal law. We are now in a difficult area because we do not know how far internal law is affected by the treaty on European Union or what rights and obligations are being created. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will tell me. I know that he has sent me a few letters but, on this occasion, I should like a short, clear, pithy statement about the rights and obligations which, if we allow the measure to go through—

The Minister for Europe (Peter Hain) *indicated assent.*

Denzil Davies: I see that my hon. Friend is apprised of the point and is clearly able to give such a reply. Which rights and obligations are we incorporating in English law?

Mr. Michael Howard (Folkestone and Hythe): For the second time in a fortnight, I have the great good fortune to follow the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies), who represents my home town in Parliament, in a debate on the Bill. As usual, his speech was marked by intellectual rigour and distinction; its logic was compelling. I am sure that we all await with great anticipation the appropriately detailed reply that the Minister will doubtless give at the end of our debate.

I begin by congratulating the Minister on the speech, "Plain Speaking on Europe", that we understand he will give elsewhere later today and is directly relevant to the subjects that we are debating. I am not entirely sure whether I have the final version because my copy still includes the annotation from the now famous J. B.:

"would be cautious about criticising the BBC".

When the speech is made, it will be interesting to see whether the Minister has taken J. B.'s cautionary note to heart or whether it includes the criticism of the BBC that was in the draft. The Minister may wish to enlighten us about that during our debate; otherwise, we may have to wait.

The speech is excellent and I commend it to the Committee. In it, the Minister says:

"Despite having voted YES in the 1975 referendum for Britain to be in Europe, within minutes of my appointment last month I was dubbed a 'Eurosceptic'."

I welcome the Minister to the club. I, too, voted yes in the 1975 referendum, and the label has been applied to me. The Minister continues:

"Why should politicians be labelled either Eurosceptic or 'Europhile'? Like most people, I am neither. I am just as opposed to Euro phobia as I am to Euro zealotry."

[Mr. Michael Howard]

Again, I agree entirely.

Even more relevant to this afternoon's debate, the Minister says:

"In an era of destiny probably more important for Britain than at any time since we joined the European Common Market in the early 1970s, this is an appeal for plain speaking on Europe. No political spin. No media hype . . . No pejorative prejudices, just an honest straightforward discussion of difficult but momentous issues."

I am sure that we all agree with that.

When the Minister explained the speech on "Today" this morning, he said that it had been cleared by No. 10; I am sure that we were all gratified to hear that, but I wonder whether it is quite enough. It seems not so much that the speech should be cleared by No. 10 but that that address should be its primary, perhaps only, destination. No one is more guilty of the spin, hype and pejorative prejudice that have been introduced to the debate than the Prime Minister. Whenever an Opposition Member makes a point that is mildly critical of any developments that are directly relevant to those that we are debating, the right hon. Gentleman promptly accuses the person making it, from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition down, of wanting to leave the European Union altogether. That is his stock response to any criticism of any such development. I hope that the Minister's speech, which I warmly welcome, was cleared by No. 10 and was read with care by the Prime Minister. I hope also that it may influence his conduct on these matters henceforth.

Mr. Redwood: I am slightly worried in case my right hon. and learned Friend has been uncharacteristically over-generous to the Minister. I wonder whether the Minister is flying under false colours. He is a Minister who wishes to give away all the vetoes in the treaty. He is a Minister who wishes to scrap the pound. He wishes to increase the stranglehold of Brussels on many aspects of our life. How can he possibly say that he is anything other than a Euro-enthusiast?

Mr. Howard: Do we know what the Minister wishes? I am not entirely sure that we do, and I am not sure that we are entitled to draw the inferences that my right hon. Friend has drawn. We know that the Minister is speaking in favour of the treaty and of the Bill, which may not be entirely the same thing.

I return to what the Minister said when he intervened on my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) towards the end of last week's debate. What the Minister said comes near to the nub of the debate on these issues. He posed this question:

"If there is a crisis in the Balkans, for example, and the US is not willing to provide assistance and NATO is not willing to intervene, do we just turn our backs? Is there not a role for a European capability? Is it not the case that a European security and defence policy provides exactly that capability? What would the hon. Gentleman do?"—[*Official Report*, 11 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 889.]

The phrase used by the plain-speaking Minister in that question was a departure in the debate. He used the formulation

"If . . . the US is not willing to provide assistance and NATO is not willing to intervene".

The Prime Minister usually talks about a situation that will arise if NATO chooses not to be engaged. The Minister raises his hands as though there is no difference: these are matters not of semantics but of great importance. There is nothing in the agreements, in the presidency conclusions in that part of the Nice treaty that deals with these matters or in any of the documents to indicate that the European defence capability would come into play only if NATO chooses not to be engaged.

The phrase "NATO chooses not to be engaged" implies some NATO right to act before the European defence capability is engaged, and that is clearly not the case. For example, the words of the French chief of the defence staff are helpfully quoted on page 40 of the excellent Library document on these matters. In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph* on 28 March 2001, General Kelche said:

"There is no question of a right of first refusal. If the EU does its work properly, it will be able to start working on crises at a very early stage, well before the situation escalates. Where is the first refusal? NATO has nothing to do with this. At a certain stage the Europeans would decide to conduct a military operation. Either the Americans would come, or not. If they want to come, they will always be welcome. They are powerful. We recognise that there are things that we cannot do without them, today. Later, we must be able to act alone. Europe is an enormous economic power, but not yet a mature military power."

That is at the heart of the debate. I do not think that any hon. Member would demur from the proposition that European countries should do more on defence and co-operate more closely on defence issues. Nobody would deny that circumstances can indeed be easily identified, perhaps in the Balkans, in which the United States might say that it does not wish to become engaged, but that it has no objection whatever to European countries acting in co-operation to deal with the problem. I do not think that any reasonable person would object to that goal.

4.15 pm

Peter Hain: The right hon. and learned Gentleman agrees with my speech and therefore with the Government. I welcome him to the fold.

Mr. Howard: I am sorry to have to say so soon after mentioning the Minister's devotion to plain speaking that his remarks are completely at variance with the documents that the Government have signed. Everything that I have spoken about and described could and should be done within the framework of NATO. It would be perfectly possible and feasible for the United States to say "We have no wish to send American troops to deal with this problem in the Balkans, but if you Europeans want to go in and sort it out, fine: do so within the framework of NATO, using its planning procedures and assets. We will not come along, but there is absolutely no reason why this should not be done within NATO."

The mischief and danger to which we object is that, for the first time, as has been pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Stone, the Government have, in contradiction of their previous position, signed up to arrangements that ensure that such actions can be taken outside the framework of NATO.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The House will recognise that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is an exceptionally alert representative of a case. There is a difference, however, between the legal and political arguments. I do not believe that he has considered the political arguments. Has he reflected on

the position of European Union countries that are not members of NATO? Does not he recognise that when the Americans take the view that it is better for NATO not to be involved, whether it is because Texans object or whatever else, the wider European community needs a focus to enable it to carry through the policy of European countries? Under the agreement that was struck at Nice, the European Union now provides a forum in which that can happen.

Mr. Howard: Let me take the hon. Gentleman's two questions in turn. There is no difficulty about involving non-NATO members of the European Union. The easiest way of dealing with these matters would be for them to join NATO, but if they did not want to do so, resort could be made to Western European Union mechanisms, which have existed for a considerable time and which involve non-NATO members of the European Union in any actions that are desirable.

Non-NATO members of the EU are represented on the staff of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe at Mons, as General Ralston reminded those of us who were privileged to listen to him this morning at a meeting of the British-American parliamentary group—I shall return later to what he said—and there is no difficulty whatever about using the NATO planning processes for an operation in which non-NATO members of the EU could participate.

The hon. Gentleman's second question was about whether the United States might wish to participate, which brings us to the nub of the question. When all is said and done, there is only one situation in which the arrangements to which the Government have now agreed will become relevant. It is not a situation in which the United States does not wish to participate but is content for the European members of NATO to go ahead and do whatever they want to do; the only situation in which the arrangements become relevant is one in which the United States does not merely wish not to be engaged but is actually opposed to engagement.

The most remarkable fact, as I have previously pointed out in the House, is that recent history shows that it is not too difficult to identify when we have had differences with our EU partners about such matters. It is not all that long ago that the Belgians refused to sell us bullets that we needed to participate in the Gulf war. As far as I can recall, there has been only one occasion since the second world war when we have been at odds with the United States, and that was Suez. So the Government are, in effect, going to all these lengths to enable a British Government to mount another Suez operation. That is the bottom line. That is what it comes down to. That is the only situation in which these arrangements could become relevant.

Mr. Mark Hendrick (Preston): Given the attitude of European nations and, in particular, the UK, when the United States chooses to use forces in Panama or elsewhere, it would be inconceivable that the United States would wish to prohibit EU member states from carrying out operations against the likes of those whom we saw in Bosnia, where there was slaughter, mass killings and ethnic cleansing. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion that, in some way, the United States might oppose our taking action in Europe is like saying that we might oppose what has happened in, for example, Panama.

Mr. Howard: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood my point. I am inclined to agree with him. This is utterly fanciful. I do not think that, if a situation arose in the Balkans and the Europeans wanted to act without the involvement of the United States, the United States would be remotely likely to suggest—

Mr. Hendrick: That is a red herring.

Mr. Howard: It is not a red herring. It is the only situation in which the arrangement that the Government have signed up to would have any relevance or make sense. If the United States does not object to any European action, it can all take place within the framework of NATO. That is the point. The United States can say that we should use the NATO processes and assets—that it does not want to send American troops, but that everything can be done through NATO. That was the position of the previous and the present British Governments until agreement was reached at St. Malo, so let us not have any nonsense from Labour Members to the effect that the Opposition's position is in any way outlandish, ludicrous, unreasonable or Europhobic. It is precisely the position that the present British Government held after they took office and it changed only when the agreement was reached at St. Malo.

Dr. Julian Lewis: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that, last November, the then Chief of the Defence Staff, General Guthrie, was asked by a Conservative Defence spokesman why the European rapid reaction force was being created outside rather than inside NATO? He replied:

"I suppose it could have been done within the Nato framework and in some ways it would have been easier."

He went on to say that politicians had decided otherwise:

"It was decided by the EU Governments that this was the way it would be done."

Mr. Howard: I remember that telling answer, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of it. I was present at the meeting to which he refers.

I have some questions for the Minister for Europe. Why does not the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe have the right to attend meetings of the European Union military committee, as the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs suggested? It would be an important method of maintaining proper links between the EU and NATO. We have been told more than once, however, including by Foreign Office officials when giving evidence to the Select Committee, that the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe does not have the right to attend military committee meetings.

Roger Casale (Wimbledon): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman arguing that the United States Government should have a veto over Britain's national defence policy? If not, why does he argue that the Americans should have a brake on European defence co-operation?

Mr. Howard: That may be an example of the authentic voice behind the desire for European defence co-operation

[Mr. Howard]

outside NATO. We cannot have it both ways. I do not believe that there is any question of an American veto. We are an independent country, and we can make decisions on the disposition of our defence capability. We have decided that our principal alliance is NATO. That should continue, and we should do nothing to put it at risk. I therefore object to the current developments, which put the Alliance in direct peril.

Sir Peter Tapsell (Louth and Horncastle): The real danger of the arrangements is not that the Americans would veto a European operation, but that Europeans would go ahead with an operation that involved British troops and find, as so often happens in military operations, that things go wrong, troops are over-extended and at risk. At the critical moment when we needed heavy artillery and large tanks, we would not have the lift capacity to reinforce operations. We would be in a hopeless predicament if we went ahead with major operations anywhere without American support.

Mr. Howard: As usual, my hon. Friend has reached the heart of the matter. I agree with him.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I shall read out a sentence:

"The policy of the Union in accordance with this Article shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and shall respect the obligations of certain Member States, which see their common defence realised in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation".

That is from article 17 of the Nice treaty. As a distinguished lawyer, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain how his arguments fit the phrase "shall not prejudice"?

Mr. Howard: Those are empty words. One can say that an arrangement will not prejudice something, yet commit actions that clearly prejudice it.

Mr. Miller: Next time I speak to a lawyer, I shall remember that.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is being ridiculous. Aspects to which the Government have signed up will prejudice and imperil the NATO alliance.

4.30 pm

Mr. John Bercow: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to confirm that there has been no change in the military or strategic logic of the situation that could in any way justify the about-turn that the Prime Minister has performed? Does not my right hon. and learned Friend think it probable, in so far as he can penetrate the inner recesses of the Prime Minister's mind, that that change of heart has taken place on the cynical basis that it will be a sop to those in the European Union who think that he is dragging his feet on the euro?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. He makes an important point that is particularly relevant to our plain-speaking Minister, who I am sorry to see finds it so amusing. It is relevant for the following reason. There is no doubt that there has been a change of policy. We have examined the texts in the House on numerous occasions. We can look at what the Prime Minister said when he came back from Amsterdam in 1997. We then find that he agreed at St. Malo to something that he had criticised in absolutely stringent terms on his return from Amsterdam. There is no doubt at all that there has been a volte face—a complete change in policy.

According to the edicts of our plain-speaking Minister, the Prime Minister should have come to the House and said, "We have changed our position. We have reconsidered things. When I said what I did when I came back from Amsterdam, I was wrong. This is our new position, and these are the reasons for it." Of course, we have never heard any such explanation. Instead, we see convoluted attempts to pretend that there has been no change. I cannot believe that those attempts will find any favour with our plain-speaking Minister. Obviously, they do not match up at all with the speech that he is going to make later, so I expect that, when he comes to the Dispatch Box, he will at last provide us with an explanation of this change in the Government's position. "Yes," he will say, "we have changed our position, and these are our reasons for doing so." I look forward to that.

Let me return to my questions. So far, I have asked my first question, which was about the right of DSACEUR to attend meetings of the military committee.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howard: I shall give way to the hon. Lady, then I really must make some progress.

Ms Stuart: I genuinely hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will be able to help me or, if not, that the Minister will answer my question in the wind-up. As I understand it, the true relationship between NATO and the EU force can be assessed only in terms of practicalities. If we had access to annexe 7 and the weapons catalogue attached to the treaty of Nice, which I understand is not in the public domain, we could obtain a true indication of how the relationship would work in practice. Will either the right hon. and learned Gentleman or the Minister address that point?

Mr. Howard: I am not sure how to respond to the hon. Lady. I would certainly have no objection if the Minister were to respond to her question when he winds up the debate. I do not know to what extent the information to which she refers is secret or sensitive, and therefore ought not to be in the public domain, but whether or not it ought to be in the public domain, it cannot possibly be argued that we should maintain a Trappist silence on these matters simply because certain information relating to military equipment has not been made public. We have to comment, and use our judgment as representatives of those who have sent us here, on the information at our disposal. That is what I am trying to do.

I come to my second question to the Minister. We are constantly assured that it is everyone's intention that the NATO arrangements and the European Union arrangements should be linked at every point and be as close together as possible. Discordant French voices can occasionally be heard pointing out that that is not what has been agreed, but British Government spokesmen

constantly say, "No, they are to work hand in glove." If that is the case, will the Minister please explain why the chairman of the European military committee, General Haggland of Finland, and the chairman of the Political and Security Committee, Mr. Anders Bjurner of Sweden, come from non-NATO member states of the European Union? Is the Minister going to tell us that that is pure coincidence? Even a plain-speaking Minister might stretch the Committee's credulity just a little too far if he said that. I would like an answer to that question.

My third question is: why does the presidency report on the European security and defence policy make particular reference to encouraging the involvement of Russia, Ukraine and Canada in European Union-led operations? As the Committee will have observed, there is no mention of the United States. Perhaps there is an entirely innocent explanation for that omission. If so, no doubt our plain-speaking Minister will provide it.

Roger Casale: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howard: Yes, but probably for the last time. I must conclude.

Roger Casale: I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way a second time. I am listening closely to his argument, but I am still not sure what he is afraid of. Is he arguing that any and every example of European defence co-operation would necessarily undermine NATO, or that there might be a particular instance of European defence co-operation that would, in a given set of circumstances, undermine NATO? If it is the latter, it would be open to the Government not to co-operate—they surely would not—precisely because, in that given set of circumstances, NATO would be undermined.

Mr. Howard: My argument is that setting up separate military arrangements for the EU that duplicate existing arrangements in NATO is unnecessary and perilous not only for NATO, but for the transatlantic relationship, which has been such a powerful force for good in the world over at least the past 50 years.

This morning, some of us were privileged to listen to General Ralston, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. He explained very clearly how those dangers and difficulties could be mitigated. He explained how the planning processes could be carried out at his headquarters by those nations that are represented there, including the non-NATO members of the EU. He explained very clearly how those difficulties could be dealt with and overcome.

General Ralston said that he put such a proposal to his political masters and that it has not thus far found acceptance, although it has been on the table for many, many months. He said that he had hoped that it would find acceptance at the Foreign Ministers meeting last December, but it did not. He said that he had hoped that it would find acceptance at the Foreign Ministers meeting in May, but it did not. He said that he thought that the present state of affairs, and I quote him verbatim, is

"close to the edge of going too far".

He said that he is

"very worried about the prospects."

Those are not words to be taken lightly from SACEUR.

At the meeting, General Ralston was asked about intelligence arrangements. Of course, there are limits to what we can say in public about intelligence arrangements. We all understand that, but we all know that one of this country's greatest assets is the closeness of its intelligence relationship with the United States of America.

It does not require any disclosure of damaging information to express a concern that, in view of some of what is widely reported as having happened in recent years, the United States might be a little worried about continuing to share its intelligence with us if it thinks that that intelligence will automatically be passed to every EU member. We asked General Ralston what progress had been made in discussing intelligence sharing in the new world into which the Government are taking us. He said that, so far, there had been no such discussions. I am afraid that the concerns that many of us have been expressing, inside and outside the House, ever since St Malo are more and more justified with every step that is taken down this perilous road.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way for one second?

Mr. Howard: Yes, but it will be for the last time.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. and learned Friend may or may not know that immediately before the House rose for the general election a document was put before the European Scrutiny Committee. We did not have a chance to consider it properly, but it stipulated that a new European satellite surveillance system would be created, which was clearly intended to be in direct competition with the existing arrangements. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend would like to have a look at it later.

Mr. Howard: I shall. I did not know about the proposal; I hope that the Select Committee will consider it, and that the Minister will tell us something about it when he winds up the debate.

The present situation is fraught with danger, which is enhanced by the United Kingdom Government's tendency to pretend that nothing new has happened, that there has been no departure from previous policy and that nothing has changed. I hope that the plain-speaking Minister will come clean, and at least give us the Government's explanation of why they have changed their position and why we have embarked on such a perilous course.

Mr. Hendrick: I am surprised at the degree of what the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) described as hype and spin. It is supposed to be coming from this side of the House, but it is actually coming from the other side. It is as if the treaty represented the end of the world as we know it—as if it would lay the nation bare and make it defenceless and vulnerable to threats from around the globe. In fact we are talking about an ideal piece of co-operation, aimed at enhancing European security and making it less dependent on American involvement in European problems.

There also seems to be a sheer abhorrence of qualified majority voting. The hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) referred constantly to the appointment of Javier Solana,

[Mr. Hendrick]

whom he claimed to have been an opponent of NATO for seven years. For some strange reason, after being an opponent of NATO for seven years, Javier Solana was appointed Secretary-General of NATO. That would indeed seem a strange appointment. I should be interested to hear first what evidence the hon. Gentleman has to support his statement that Javier Solana was an opponent of NATO, and secondly what he did as Secretary-General that put us all at risk.

Mr. Cash: I can only refer the hon. Gentleman to an article that I contributed to *The Times*—I cannot remember the precise date, but it was several years ago—which followed a great deal of research into this question. At the time, a petition was presented to President Clinton by some 130 congressmen suggesting that Solana should not be given the post. Furthermore, I had discussions with our then Secretary of State for Defence, and with the Prime Minister by fax, during the weekend before the appointment. All this has quite an interesting little history, but I would be happy for the hon. Gentleman to read the article.

Mr. Hendrick: A petition from some American congressmen is hardly convincing evidence that Mr. Solana was not fit to be appointed Secretary-General. Nevertheless, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has his views.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that in some way Mr. Solana was not accountable, or would not be accountable under the new arrangements involving QMV, in respect of his appointment as head of CFSP and our foreign affairs spokesperson in Europe.

Mr. Cash: Not our spokesman.

Mr. Hendrick: Well, the European Union foreign affairs spokesperson. The hon. Gentleman suggested that he was not accountable, when in fact he can be called to the European Council of Ministers whenever it so wishes.

4.45 pm

There is further opposition to QMV in the light of the experience with Jacques Santer. As we discussed in a previous debate, his appointment was supported unanimously at the Council of Ministers and he was a disastrous head of the European Commission. He presided over chaos in the European Union and, like his colleagues, was persuaded to resign and stand down. Had unanimity not been used at that time, we would have had a different head of the European Commission: one appointed by a majority of Ministers, one who would have been the highest common denominator and a good head of the European Commission, rather than the lowest common denominator, which Mr. Santer turned out to be.

On decision making through QMV, the Opposition talk about the development of a European superstate and some cumbersome, lumbering superstructure, but qualified majority voting is the very mechanism that will maintain flexibility within the European Union, streamline decision making, and allow a majority of member states that wish to pursue a particular line not to be held up by tiddler nations that may wish to block everything. It is a recipe for flexibility at a time when unanimity is clearly outdated. Opposition Members' comments therefore surprise me.

What also surprises me is the number of contradictions that we hear from Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Stone, who unfortunately is not with us at the moment, referred to the Prime Minister mentioning 65,000 troops in a speech. Then he said that the figure was reduced to 60,000. Now he asserts that it may be anything up to 240,000. The hon. Member for Newark (Patrick Mercer) said that there was no commitment, no weaponry, no personnel—it was a phantom army. Which is the truth? Is it a phantom army? Will it be a European army of 60,000 or 240,000 troops?

Patrick Mercer: The truth is that none of the British troops is dedicated to the task in hand. They are all double or triple-hatted at a time when our defences are already horribly overstretched. No combat power is being added; there are merely staff officers.

Mr. Hendrick: That proves my point. It is not a European army, as the Opposition put it. It is not a standing army. No troops are permanently engaged in a particular task. An army will be assembled with the consent of nation states when the need arises. We did not have a force ready and willing to move in when the trouble started in Bosnia, which led to hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Mr. Mark Francois (Rayleigh): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why, if it is not meant to be a European army, the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, who presumably should know something about all this, said that it would be a European army?

Mr. Hendrick: I will quote from the treaty. It explicitly states:

"This does not involve the creation of a European Army. The commitment of national resources by Member States to such operations will be based on their sovereign decisions."

What Mr. Prodi said may have been lost in translation.

Denzil Davies: I tend to agree with my hon. Friend. It is not a European army, but would he like it to become a European army?

Mr. Hendrick: Personally, I would not. There is a role for a European force that can act—again I quote from the treaty—on

"humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking".

That is where it differs from, for example, United Nations forces. Often—one or two hon. Members have alluded to it—forces go in to keep the peace, but are not given instructions or the ability to make the peace. They are used in a purely defensive role. We saw, however, how such an arrangement failed in our early attempt in Bosnia, and we would certainly not like a repetition of that. I believe that the treaty and the proposed forces would preclude the possibility of a repetition.

Mr. Howard: Could the hon. Gentleman perhaps give us an example of an operation that could not be described

as peace making? Does he recall that the Suez operation, for example, was described as peace making? It was embarked upon, so we were told, to separate the combatants of the time, the Israelis and the Egyptians. Indeed, the world wars were described as peace making. Can he therefore give us an example of an operation that would be outside the definition of peace making?

Mr. Hendrick: The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned the Suez crisis, during which I was but a twinkle in my mother's eye. Indeed, my father just missed being called up for it. As I was not around at the time of that conflict, I cannot speak about it from personal experience. However, I believe that there is an element of peace making in most conflicts. The problems arise when, for example, troops in blue berets are sent into a situation but are given little direction by the United Nations Security Council on how to engage the opposition and on whether they can effectively conduct offensive operations to force those who are causing the conflict to retreat and cease their action. That type of arrangement is different from the one being proposed.

We have to address the issue of establishing a peacemaking force. We would have liked to have such a force in Bosnia, but we did not have the capability to deploy one. We should be working towards establishing that capability, without having to rely totally on the Americans.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman is digging himself into a very deep hole. Is he suggesting that if the European army had been available at the outbreak of hostilities in Bosnia, the right thing to do would have been to send our troops and other troops into that very tense situation, to try to fight to a conclusion that might have produced a transitory peace, without American air cover and American heavy lift? I think that he would endanger our soldiers greatly with such a proposal.

Mr. Hendrick: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I am not saying that we should have done that. I am saying that it would have been useful to have that option at the time. Moreover, what would have happened if the Americans had not become so involved in that conflict? We would not have had anywhere near the capability necessary to bring about peace. I was in Washington when the Serbs were beginning to lose the war in Bosnia and the Croatian troops were moving forward. I was fed information to the effect that many of the events of that time were occurring because Germany was secretly arming the Serbs, with America providing some of the resources for that armament. Bosnia is a perfect example of how we might in future use the proposed capability.

I was surprised to hear the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe suggest that the United States should have a veto over European operations in Europe. That suggestion is preposterous; it is a little like the European Union objecting to the use of American forces in Panama. Such a veto is simply inconceivable and does not bear thinking about. It is also quite strange to cite a veto as a spanner in the works of implementing and operating the Nice treaty.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman persists in misrepresenting the point that I was making. It is precisely because I do not think that there is any realistic prospect of an American veto of the type to which he referred that I think that the arrangements are completely unnecessary. The only situation in which we need to have arrangements outside the NATO framework is one in which we fear an American veto. I do not fear an American veto, which is why I say that the arrangements should take place within NATO.

Mr. Hendrick: The Government do not fear an American veto, but we must provide for circumstances in which some European states, particularly those in the European Union, wish to take action but the Americans, who are undoubtedly the most influential member of NATO, do not. That provision is outlined in the treaty. If we do not need it but it is there anyway, I do not know why the Opposition are opposed to it.

Roger Casale: Like my hon. Friend I was not around at the time of the Suez crisis—apparently, unlike many Opposition Members—but I am sure that my hon. Friend knows his history. Does he share my sense of irony at the mention of the Suez crisis by the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), as the conclusion that the Conservative party under Harold Macmillan drew from the failure of Suez was that Britain could not act alone in the world? It therefore changed its policy on Europe and that led directly to Britain's first application, under a Conservative Prime Minister, to join the European Community.

Mr. Hendrick: I agree with my hon. Friend, whose recollection of history is certainly better than mine.

I now turn to the idea of NATO choosing not to be engaged and the areas in which NATO may take action. The right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe quoted a French general. Perhaps that was the only example that he could come up with of an issue on which the French and every other member state that signed up to the treaty were at some variance. Throughout the passage of the International Criminal Court Bill, senior British military personnel said that they felt uneasy about it. They are entitled to their opinions, but at the end of the day the decisions are made by politicians with the advice of generals, but not necessarily with their agreement.

Mr. Howard: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way yet again. Does he really suppose that the person whom he describes rather dismissively as a French general and who is in fact the chief of the French defence staff would utter opinions on this topic without the approval and authority of the French Government whom he serves? I was not referring to some French general, but to the chief of the French defence staff.

Mr. Hendrick: When I hear the same statement from the French Government, it will have some credibility. In the same way, when British leaders of the armed forces express concerns about the operation of the International Criminal Court Bill we should take them seriously, but we should not take their words as being the words of the Government.

The world is moving on and the solutions for the 20th century are not solutions for the 21st century. China will continue to become even more dominant, and the US

[Mr. Hendrick]

will be seeking to gain advantage through the national missile defence system. Europe should rightly have a defence capability, but not an army.

4.58 pm

Mr. Andrew Rosindell (Romford): Thank you, Sir Alan, for calling me to make my maiden speech in this crucial debate concerning the future direction of Britain's relationship with the European Union. For decades, this place, the mother of Parliaments, has seen its powers eroded. The treaty that we are debating today would carry that process further. I believe that it is the duty of every hon. Member to ensure that the House continues its proud traditions and ways. No move to sideline or undermine it should be countenanced. The House must remain sovereign.

5 pm

My journey to Parliament has been long and eventful. I held my first elected position in 1990, when I became a councillor in the Chase Cross ward of the London borough of Havering. I secured a Conservative gain from the Liberal Democrat party. The Conservative share of the vote was 21 per cent., and in 1998 I increased that to 88 per cent., making Chase Cross the safest Conservative ward in Greater London. It is appropriate to thank those colleagues alongside whom I served on Havering council for their support and encouragement over the past 11 years.

Some of my other forays into electoral politics have been less successful, although no less rewarding. In my first parliamentary campaign in 1992, I contested the constituency of Glasgow, Provan. Despite a 0.1 per cent. swing in my favour, I secured the lowest share of the vote of any Conservative candidate in Great Britain. In 1997, I fought the Thurrock constituency, which is slightly closer to home. A Labour majority there of 1,000 turned into one of 17,000.

At the last election, I am pleased to have fared rather better. A 9.2 per cent. swing in my favour meant that my result in Romford on 7 June represented the largest swing back to the Conservatives, and it was achieved with the party's 11th highest share of the vote.

For me, there can be no greater privilege and honour than to be elected to serve as the Member of Parliament for my home town of Romford. I should like to pay tribute to those who have preceded me. First and foremost, I thank Sir Michael Neubert, who served my constituency faithfully and assiduously between 1974 and 1997. The advice and friendship that I have received from Sir Michael and Lady Neubert over 20 years has been invaluable. Along with all the people of Romford, I owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

I shall always remember Sir Michael for the robust support that he gave to Oldchurch hospital, and for the enormous amount of work he did to help people throughout my constituency. I joined the Conservative party at the age of 14. I never dreamed, as I campaigned for Sir Michael's re-election, that one day I might succeed him as the next Conservative Member of Parliament for Romford.

This speech would not be complete without some mention of Sir Nicholas Bonsor, who represented the Upminster constituency from 1983 to 1997. The Ardleigh Green and Nelmes areas of that constituency are now included in Romford. Sir Michael Neubert and Sir Nicholas Bonsor served the people of my constituency well for a long time. Speaking as a resident of Havering, I place on record my heartfelt thanks to them.

I should also like to thank my immediate predecessor, Mrs. Eileen Gordon, who served my constituency in the previous Parliament. She will be remembered for her commitment to campaigning for improved health services in Havering.

Many friends, organisations and colleagues, as well as my mother and father in particular, have contributed to my being able to stand before the House today. I also extend a special thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Mr. Cash), who provided me with many formative political experiences, including the directorship of Europe's pre-eminent public policy think tank, the European Foundation.

I have also to thank the former Member for Ilford, North, Vivien Bendall, for whom I worked for more than 10 years as a parliamentary researcher. No less deserving of thanks are my fellow members of the International Young Democrat Union, of which I am proud to be chairman, not least because the chairman of the union's parent body, the International Democrat Union, is my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), the Leader of the Opposition. My work in the IYDU has taken me to almost every country in Europe and to every continent and has been invaluable in helping me build knowledge of international affairs, especially those of Europe.

I also express my immense gratitude to Baroness Thatcher. Her leadership and courage as Prime Minister were my rallying call to the Conservative cause. During her visit to Romford two days prior to the general election—the last of her campaign tour—she rightly received a rapturous reception.

Lastly in this section of my speech, I want to challenge the reports found in the popular press that Spike, my Staffordshire bull terrier, was the real victor of Romford. While I freely admit, Sir Alan, that Spike was a prominent member of my campaign team and that his dogged determination to demonstrate the bulldog spirit proved popular in my constituency, may I reassure you that Spike has no immediate plans to take his seat on these Benches?

I would now like to describe the historic market town of Romford—a place that I am proud to call my birthplace, my home and my constituency. Although it falls within the boundaries of Greater London, being situated in the London borough of Havering, Romford is by its history and geography very much part of the county of Essex. Many families moved to the town from east London in the aftermath of the second world war, and to this day Romford retains close ties with the areas from which they originated. The regular commuter trains passing through the town long ago replaced the horse-drawn carriages for which Romford was for centuries a main stopping-off point.

Romford is today a major office and retail centre for Essex and north-east London and boasts one of the largest and best open-air markets in the country—a market now in its eighth century and very much the beating heart of the town. More than a century after the market first began to trade, the church of St. Edward the Confessor was built in the centre of the market. That is where the present

church building stands today, with its imposing spire towering high above the commercial centre. St. Edward's has a special meaning to me, being the church in which I was christened and confirmed, and a little further along the road in the high street is where I spent my early years on Sundays at the Salvation Army citadel.

King Edward the Confessor is the first notable person to have had a connection with Romford, occupying the royal palace at Havering-Atte-Bower, a picturesque village steeped in history situated at the most northerly tip of my constituency. High above the town of Romford, Havering-Atte-Bower overlooks Essex to the east, the River Thames and Kent to the south and Dagenham and London to the west. To the south of Havering village lie the suburbs of Chase Cross, Rise Park, Mawneys and Collier Row, which at one time housed the agricultural suppliers of vegetables and dairy produce and, as the community of north Romford, is now the home to more than a third of my constituents.

Rush Green, the place of my birth, lies to the west of the constituency, along with the London road, the home of Romford's famous greyhound stadium, and the Brooklands area, once the home of Romford football club. I hope that one day in the not-too-distant future Romford will again proudly compete with the greatest clubs in our national game. Today, Romford FC has a Member of Parliament who will fight its corner.

Marshall's Park, where I have lived all my life, lies just north of the town centre. It is also home to my school, which has the same name. Nearby is the garden suburb of Gidea Park, an estate designed by famous architects from the early 20th century. Squirrels Heath and Heath Park comprise the area of the town that borders Hornchurch, a small part of which—Ardleigh Green and Nelmes—falls within the boundaries of the Romford constituency.

The people who live in these areas are deeply patriotic. Last year, for example, when the local Labour council refused to fly the Union flag from the town hall, virtually all the market traders displayed the flag on their stalls in protest. With my support, their successful protest became a symbol of Romford's determination not to turn its back on a sense of national pride. It is that same sense of determination that I bring with me to Parliament.

I want to outline some of the issues that I will emphasise and campaign on during my time in Parliament—issues that were brought up time and again by the voters of Romford during my campaign. We live in the most free and stable democracy in the world, yet our freedom and our democracy are challenged by a relentless slide into a European political union.

The task of redefining Britain's relationship with Europe and thereby re-establishing self-government for our nation is the most fundamental question of our time. Over the past 30 years, successive British Governments have subjected their citizens to a form of higher law, a law determined not simply beyond our shores but beyond our democratic ability to decide. The betrayal of our historic institutions and processes can and must stop. In particular, we must never give away control of our currency.

The treaty of Nice is no exception to the continuing demise of our nation's ability to govern itself. To ratify this treaty would mean yet another attack on our democracy and on our freedom as a nation. The proposed loss of a further 43 vetoes is evidence of that.

I am very enthusiastic about trading links formed and greater co-operation championed with the countries of eastern Europe. My international work on behalf of the Conservative party has brought me into close contact with so many eastern European countries. I know that they want a dynamic, free-trading relationship with Britain and, indeed, the rest of Europe. However, I am concerned that the treaty will do more to damage than to strengthen their economies. It makes no sense, for example, that a treaty proclaiming to be about enlargement to the east fails to make a single provision for reforming the common agricultural policy when eastern European economies are predominantly agricultural. It is clear that this treaty is about deepening as well as enlarging the European Union. However, Europe needs an open, flexible and outward-looking relationship, not ever deeper centralisation of power.

One of the other things that motivated me and, I am sure, many others, to enter politics is the desire to reverse a shameful paradox. Those who have contributed most to our society—the elderly—are among its poorest and most badly treated members. After they have spent their lives working, caring and even fighting for our country, far too many pensioners suffer the daily indignities of low incomes, substandard accommodation and hospital waiting lists. The closure of old people's homes is becoming an all-too-regular occurrence, with several in my borough threatened. I condemn Havering's Labour administration for this heartless and short-sighted policy. Taken together with Labour's shameful disregard and failure to deliver on the health service, with particular reference to Oldchurch hospital in my constituency, it is our old folk who have suffered most.

I also want to help to reinject substance back into what it means to be British. I do not mean a Britishness narrowly defined, but one wide enough to encompass all the people of this great nation. I have arrived in this place because of my beliefs: a belief in our nation and a belief in freedom. With the continued advice and friendship of so many who have helped me during the 35 years of my life, I look forward to serving Romford, Parliament and my country.

5.15 pm

James Purnell (Stalybridge and Hyde): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Rosindell). A couple of my hon. Friends have mistaken me for him in the Corridors, but I can tell that we shall probably not agree on a huge amount over the next few years. However, I pay tribute to him on his maiden speech for his humour, his conviction in his views and his obvious pride in his birth place and the town that he represents. I am sure that hon. Members will join me in wishing him the best for a successful parliamentary career.

I am extremely grateful to you, Sir Alan, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech in this debate on Europe. I should like to start by saying a few thank yous: first, to members of the Stalybridge and Hyde Labour party for selecting me as their candidate, and, secondly, to the voters of Stalybridge and Hyde for returning me to Parliament; but most of all, on behalf of both of those groups, I thank Tom Pendry for his service to the constituency over 30 years.

It is common and traditional for Members in my position to pay tribute to their predecessors as good constituency MPs, but I doubt that many have had part

[James Purnell]

of their constituency named after their predecessor. Tom Pendry square in Stalybridge will stand as a reminder of the exceptional work that he did for his constituents, who are now my constituents, and in particular of the leading role that he played in attracting £30 million of investment to the town to bring it back to life.

Members on both sides of the House will remember Tom not just for his humour and love of the good life but for his time as a Whip and as an Under-Secretary of State in the Northern Ireland Office. They will remember him for his dedication to issues associated with sport and tourism and for his participation in debates in the House, but in Stalybridge and Hyde, Tom will be remembered as a friend, an ally and a fighter.

Members will also remember that before coming to the House Tom was the colonial boxing champion, so, at least until the last general election campaign, he could lay claim to having the most famous right hook in the Chamber. Now that that title has passed on, I must report that Tom has also been overshadowed locally by Ricky Hatton from my constituency, who last week successfully defended his light-welterweight world title for the first time. I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating him and in passing on our best wishes to Tom for an active and successful future.

Other than Tom, Stalybridge and Hyde is probably best remembered politically as the venue for Hugh Gaitskell's speech immediately after the 1952 Labour party conference at which Herbert Morrison and Hugh Dalton were voted off the national executive. Last weekend, I was speaking to Councillor Jim Wainwright, who picked Gaitskell up from the station that day. He told me that on the way to the conference he asked Gaitskell what he was going to speak about. Gaitskell replied that he was going to launch a counter-attack against the Bevanites and, in effect, accuse up to a sixth of them of being communist fellow travellers.

Councillor Wainwright stopped the car, turned to Gaitskell and told him in language that I could not possibly repeat in the House that he might as well get straight back on the train and go back to Leeds. Apparently the only way that Gaitskell could persuade Councillor Wainwright to drive on was by saying that he had already released his remarks to the press, so he might as well go ahead and make them. I am afraid that spin was alive even then.

I hope that I shall receive a milder reception this afternoon than Gaitskell received that day. In his diaries, he speaks of the speech being, for him, "unusually violent". He adds:

"At the time, most of my friends were horrified. They thought I would lose a great deal of support."

Most of the Labour party hated it, and hundreds of resolutions were sent in criticising him.

I hope also that my party will remember the lessons of those events. It is vital that in our second term we find a way to allow debate, discussion and even criticism within our party. However, there should be no place in our party for talk of counter-insurrections or coups; nor should we ever forget the importance of the unity of purpose that got us where we are today.

Apparently, after making his speech Gaitskell offered to return to my constituency later to make amends. The offer was politely refused, but if he were to return today he would barely recognise Stalybridge and Hyde. At the peak, there were more than 50 mills in my constituency; today, there are only two. More than a third of the population worked in those mills; today, barely a handful do. Most of the rest of the work force were employed in manufacturing in famous factories throughout the north-west; today, almost all of those factories have gone. The last to go was Gallagher's, which closed in 1997; I think that more than a 1,000 jobs were lost in the chase for Government subsidies in Northern Ireland.

My constituency has known hard times and unemployment, but one thing that Gaitskell would find has not changed since his day is the people of Stalybridge and Hyde. They continue to pride themselves on being blunt, straightforward even; and they pride themselves on their self-reliance and hard work. The people of Stalybridge and Hyde, Dukinfield, Mossley and Longdendale refused to lie down and suffer the closures. They were determined to fight back, community by community, village by village, street by street, family by family, to overcome the closures and to attract new companies and jobs. I am delighted to be able to say that they succeeded. Stalybridge and Hyde are now thriving towns. At barely 3 per cent., the unemployment rate is less than the national average. Firms in my constituency export chemicals, plastics and industrial machinery all over the world. I am extremely proud of the fact that my constituency has one of the highest rates of manufacturing employment in the north-west.

If there is one image I should like to leave hon. Members with this afternoon, it is not of our beautiful countryside, although I believe that Werneth Low, the Longdendale valley and the hills around Mossley rival anywhere in the country; it is the people of Stalybridge and Hyde that I want the House to remember. Jay McLeod, a vicar in Micklehurst, is breathing new life into his community and using basketball to give young people an alternative to crime. The teachers in the sure start project in Hattersley are working to give the children of that neglected council estate at least the chance of an equal start in life. Barry Cooke, the retiring head teacher of Hyde technology school, showed by turning that school around that no matter the deprivation facing the local community, it is still possible to have high expectations of every child and match the results achieved in the rest of the country.

That is why I am so proud to represent Stalybridge and Hyde. The people of my constituency have shown that the best way to respond to change is not to suffer it, nor to resist it, but to welcome it and be in its vanguard so that we can shape it to our ends. We believe that every individual should have the chance to fulfil himself, but people can do so only through an active and enabling state. Those are the people for whom I will fight in my time in Parliament. I will fight for better public services and higher pay. Most of all, I will fight, fight and fight again so that Stalybridge and Hyde is given its fair share of resources, not out of pity or because of the problems we face but as a reward for our role as pioneers of change in the vanguard of Government policy.

I am especially pleased to speak in today's debate on Europe. The most famous of Gaitskell's other speeches was the last he made before his tragically early death. At the Labour party conference he spoke of his fear that going into Europe would mean the end of 1,000 years of history. I can tell from this afternoon's debate that that

view still has some supporters among Opposition Members, but during my time here I want to argue that it has been conclusively disproved. To people of my generation, the idea that Britain's interests are fundamentally opposed to Europe's is fanciful. The idea that Germany and France should be considered our enemies strikes them as beyond belief.

I am not unlike many members of my generation in having spent a lot of my life in Europe. When I was two, I moved with my parents to France, where I went to school. As the cliché goes, some of my best friends are French. That has never made me any less patriotic or less proud to be British, but it has made be proud to be European. I am proud that we have lived in peace on this continent for nearly 60 years, and proud that, in the treaty that we are debating, we have the opportunity to let in the states of eastern Europe and lift the iron curtain that descended on our continent after the second world war. Most of all, I am proud that on this continent we have the opportunity to build a society that can stand as an alternative role model to American capitalism, an alternative voice in diplomatic debates and an alternative source of power.

I remember going to Berlin the week that the wall came down. I have one burning memory from that trip of going to a church in east Berlin, which had been a centre of reform and resistance to the East German Government. I walked into the church where, all over the walls, people had pinned up bits of paper—poems, essays and letters—about their hopes for their new country. They were clear that they wanted to be free of authoritarian rule, but they were crystal clear that the acceptance of markets did not mean the acceptance of squalid public services, environmental damage and alienated communities. That is the challenge to which my generation must respond. We must live up to the hopes and aspirations expressed in that church, and build a Europe that is as dedicated to equality as it is to efficiency; a Europe that tries to build competitive markets, but also has successful public services and a fair welfare state to ensure that our prosperity is fairly distributed.

Those are my politics. An activist in my constituency bet me that I would not use the word "socialist" tonight. Well, I just have, although personally I have never been afraid to call myself a socialist. Members who know what I was doing before I came to the House will probably not be surprised if I do not plan to incur the wrath of the Whips regularly. Having said that, I make no apology for tempering my discipline with a dose of idealism. I believe in a politics of hope, courage and opportunity. My Government have a historic chance to show that courage to transform our public services and our relationship with Europe. I thank the voters of Stalybridge and Hyde for giving me a chance to play a part along the way.

Patsy Calton (Cheadle): I should like to congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (James Purnell). It is rare to hear such a human and humane speech in this place. His modesty was most pleasing and his reflective speech, which was delivered with humour, was very welcome.

I am grateful for the opportunity to make my maiden speech in this debate. As may be expected, Liberal Democrat Members support the speedy ratification of the treaty of Nice. Without its reforms, it is difficult to see how a union of 28 states can come to an efficient and effective agreement about matters that will affect my constituents.

I have the honour to represent the constituency of Cheadle, where I have lived and brought up my family for the past 27 years. It is in the nature of things that I have replaced Mr. Stephen Day, my predecessor, who represented the area for 14 years. I did not always agree with him, but I found him to be pleasant and civilised on the occasions we met. I know that he worked for his constituents, especially with regard to the Barlow Clowes collapse. They have told me how much they appreciated the compensation that they gained.

5.30 pm

The Cheadle constituency is not quite the same in terms of area or population as it once was when my late friend Dr. Michael Winstanley was its representative. However, what he said about the constituency in his maiden speech in 1966 is just as true today:

"It is an area which in many ways reflects the country as a whole."—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1966; Vol. 728, c. 657.]

Cheadle, which is regarded overall as a prosperous constituency, has suburbs, Manchester city estates and rich residential areas. It has greenbelt areas side by side with light and heavy industry. Incomes range from very high to very low.

Cheadle is a beautiful constituency throughout the year, with tree-lined roads and excellent parks. Bruntwood park holds the prestigious green flag award. Bramall Hall is one of the foremost tourist attractions of the north-west and, indeed, of the country. My constituency has riverside and country walks with views over the Peak district.

Perhaps just as important, we have a wealth of voluntary organisations and faith groups that all contribute to the well-being of the area. I expect that the recent census will demonstrate a significant increase in the ethnic and faith minority population. It is important for us to recognise and meet their wish to play a full part in the life of the wider community.

Nowadays, Cheadle is a constituency that is overburdened with road traffic and suffering from a lack of regular, reliable public transport. It has the questionable distinction of having had a third of a road built by 1995—the central section of the Manchester airport eastern link road. However, the road failed to link the developing Manchester airport with anything. Indeed, the third of the MAELR that has been built serves simply to funnel in traffic through the villages of the constituency, with Woodford, Bramhall and Heald Green being particularly badly affected. They have traffic levels above those that normally trigger a determination in marginal constituencies to build bypasses.

My constituents and I eagerly awaited the detailed proposals of the south-east Manchester multi-modal study—SEMMMS. I understand that it will tell us that the planners of 70 years ago were correct in their assumption that the entire road network needed to be built. The developing Manchester airport has no good transport links to the south-east, and my constituency suffers from car and freight traffic accessing the airport and the motorway network. My constituents' problems are compounded by the lack of regular or, in some parts, any good quality public transport. This is particularly hard on low-income families, those living in rural areas and an increasingly elderly population.

[Patsy Calton]

My predecessor brought to the attention of the House the plight of the people of Chesters Croft, a small, idyllic hamlet made up of permanent mobile homes. At the public inquiry into the MAELR 10 years ago, those concerned were led to believe that they would be compensated for noise nuisance in a comparable way to other home owners. Over the past 10 years, there has been an abortive change in the law but still no compensation for my increasingly elderly constituents. They have a moral right to have their case considered and dealt with expeditiously. They believe that they may be forced to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights.

Unfairness is the theme of my speech. Cheadle is one of the three and a half constituencies that make up the local government area of Stockport metropolitan borough council. My hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Stunell), with whom I share a boundary, is also a councillor in Stockport. Until recently, I was the deputy leader of Stockport council and its chair of social services.

The problem that I wish to speak of is the unfairness of the Government grant and European funding system. A number of metropolitan authorities are in the same position. Every pensioner, every school child and every person on a low income in my constituency is affected every day by the blunt instrument of European and local government finance and the even blunter instrument that is the council tax.

Stockport is the lowest spending metropolitan borough per head and yet we have a gap of £23 million between standard spending assessment levels and what we must spend to keep our education and social services spending near the average. Students at the Kingsway school in my constituency have funding of almost £1,000 a head less than students who attend a school with a similar catchment area that is located little more than a mile away in a neighbouring authority area. It is possible that the school where I am a governor, Bramhall high school, which has an excellent academic record, has the lowest per pupil spend in the country, despite the fact that a significant number of its students come from very low-income families.

On the assumption that house prices in Stockport have increased at roughly the same rate as those in the region as a whole, Stockport's grant loss since 1990 has been estimated as 16.8 per cent., or some £4.5 million. That loss has occurred because there has been no revaluation. Data losses have amounted to £4 million this year, including £1 million on the area cost adjustment. In terms of that adjustment, it must be right for areas that have to pay salaries that are above the norm to be compensated, but such compensation should be based on actual and not finger-in-the-air costs.

The waste disposal levy applied in Greater Manchester is apportioned on the council tax base and not in respect of tonnage. To put it crudely, the more that my constituents recycle while Manchester fails to do so, the more that they pay. Many of them are avid recyclers, so I am sure that they are happy that they are doing the right thing by the planet, but I am equally certain that they would be furious to know that they are paying more than they should, to make up for the less environmentally friendly habits of neighbouring authorities in Greater Manchester.

Stockport metropolitan borough council is on a crusade to improve its services. It wishes to demonstrate that it can meet challenging improvement targets. The interests of consumers and citizens are at the heart of its vision to put people first, but the unfairness in the system of allocating grants from central Government and from Europe is making it extremely difficult to deliver the improvements. To put it bluntly, the grant is too low and the council tax is too high in my constituency. The averages of whole wards and boroughs that are used in formulae for national and European funding do not recognise extremes of wealth or poverty.

The level of need that is acknowledged by social services in my constituency and in Stockport metropolitan borough as a whole far exceeds the funding allocated under the Government formula. Our schools produce excellent results on a shoestring. The majority of my constituents already pay more in income taxes than people in most other places. It should not be necessary for people on low incomes to pay extra for their council tax because Government and European grant aid is unfairly distributed. Those on low incomes should be remembered first by a Government who put social inclusion high on their agenda.

I am grateful to the House for its attention. The Liberal Democrats do not regard the agreements reached at Nice as perfect or as the final word on the reform of European Union structures or policies. There is an agenda for reform in Europe which Britain can lead. We believe that the Government have a duty to galvanise debate among the citizens of the country.

Peter Hain: I welcome the hon. Member for Cheadle (Patsy Calton) to the House. I am certain that she will be a formidable fighter for Cheadle. I remember from my youth that the area has a long Liberal tradition. One of the Members of Parliament for Cheadle to whom she referred, Dr. Michael Winstanley, was extremely well known. I am sure that it is a great honour for her to follow in his footsteps and in those of the other predecessors whom she mentioned. She spoke about the unfairness and blunt instruments of European Union and local authority finance. I might add that those matters are not entirely the responsibility of a Foreign Office Minister, but I am nevertheless sure that the Government will take note of her concerns and seek to redress them as she continues to speak for her constituents.

I hope that you, Sir Michael, will not mind if I express condolences to those on the Opposition Front Bench who, to a man and woman, backed the losing candidate in the Conservative leadership election, with the right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) coming top, the hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) second, and the right hon. Member for Kensington and Chelsea (Mr. Portillo) third. Long may the saga continue.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Michael Lord): Order. I would rather the Minister did not give way on that point. We are getting far off the track.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Sir Michael. My intervention concerns a defence matter, which is the issue that we are debating.

The Second Deputy Chairman: It is entirely up to the Minister whether he chooses to give way, but we are moving well away from the subject.

Peter Hain: I shall happily give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

The hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Rosindell) spoke confidently. I am sure that the town of Romford will be proud that one of its sons has spoken so strongly and movingly about his constituency. He engagingly gave us an electoral tour de force, taking in Glasgow, Provan, where he succeeded in getting the lowest Tory vote in the country, and going right the way through to his present constituency and home town of Romford, where his party saw its largest swing. He spoke about the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) having provided him with many formative political experiences, which will have given him a unique insight into the world. I am sure that he will benefit from that. At that point perhaps I should give way to the hon. Member for Stone.

Mr. Cash: Further to the Minister's earlier comments, the shadow Minister for Defence is one of the final two in the ballot for the leadership of the Conservative party and I have no doubt that he wishes he was here in order to demolish the Minister's arguments.

Peter Hain: If and when the hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green wins the leadership of the Conservative party, as the hon. Gentleman, who is a fervent fan, wishes, he will see his arguments on this issue, as on many others, demolished day after day in the House, and we look forward to that.

I thank the hon. Member for Romford for paying tribute to his immediate predecessor, Eileen Gordon, who was indeed, as he said, a campaigner for the NHS.

I have rarely seen a new Member speak with such confidence and poise in a maiden speech as my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (James Purnell). He spoke almost without a note in the best traditions of the House, exemplified by the more senior right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). He appropriately paid tribute to his predecessor, Tom Pendry, and his boxing prowess, which seems to be catching these days. He spoke poignantly about Hugh Gaitskell's speech and displaying unity of purpose, and promised to fight, fight and fight again for his constituents. I was pleased that he called himself a socialist in his maiden speech, which, as a Labour Minister, I am also proud to do.

I do not want to detain the House too long because there are many issues to cover before 10 o'clock. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) required me to seek enlightenment from officials—I always have to do so when he speaks—on a series of points about the treaty and the question of rights and obligations under the EU treaties that need to be given effect in UK law. The amendments to the EU treaty made by the treaty of Nice are, as he says, set out in article 1. They are not referred to in clause 1 as they do not give rise to community rights and obligations. As my right hon. Friend says, they amount to rights and obligations in international law. They are intergovernmental rather than Community in nature.

5.45 pm

Clause 1 refers not only to provisions in the Nice treaty that do not amend the Community treaties but to matters with which they deal, including amendments to the treaty on European Union. The provisions relate to matters covered by the Community—for example, the amendments to the provisions on enhanced co-operation. They are subject to the Ponsonby rule; accordingly, an explanatory memorandum has been provided to Parliament. The submission of the treaty to Parliament as a Command Paper and the debates on the Bill cover the requirement to give Parliament an opportunity to debate treaties before their ratification.

I do not want to be uncharitable to the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe, but his congratulations on my excellent speech make me wonder whether I should have got J. B. to redraft it or give me further advice. Whoever J. B. may be, he is an estimable member of the Foreign Office staff. My full speech is available on www.fco. gov.uk., but I do not believe that J. B.'s comments are on the Foreign Office website for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to inspect.

If I have time, I shall be happy to deal with the points made by the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe in more detail, but they were Exoceted by my hon. Friends the Members for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) and for Preston (Mr. Hendrick). His speech bore little resemblance to the reality of the common security and defence policy in the European Union or the Bill.

The comments of the hon. Member for Stone on Javier Solana were badly informed and misdirected. Javier Solana is a respected representative of the EU. On the EU's behalf, he played an important role, which was welcomed by the Israelis, Palestinians and Americans, in the middle east peace process and in many other areas, not least the Balkans. The hon. Gentleman should inform himself better.

The first group of amendments deals with the second and third pillars of the Maastricht treaty, or the treaty on European Union. They are: foreign affairs, defence, justice and home affairs. There is much confusion about defence and the Nice treaty; that was evident from the debates this afternoon and last week. Much misinformation has been circulated. As my hon. Friend the Member for Preston said, a great deal of rubbish is talked. Some of it has been talked in large doses by Conservative Members. Let me set out the position once more in plain, ministerial English.

The arrangements for the European security and defence policy are not in the Nice treaty. A declaration that is attached to the treaty makes it clear that it does not need to be effected for defence arrangements that have been agreed by EU member states to become operational.

Mr. Cash: The Minister will remember that I made that precise point. The treaty basis is in the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties. One of the problems with our debates is that we cannot specifically discuss the declaration.

Peter Hain: I shall continue to explain the position. I clearly need to do that for the hon. Gentleman.

Before doing that, I shall respond to the points made by the hon. Members for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) about Turkey. They search in vain for a false alibi from the USA when they oppose the modest EU initiative on developing a capability for peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention.

[Peter Hain]

Turkey has supported the development of the European security and defence policy. At the NATO ministerial meeting in December 2000, Turkey and other allies reaffirmed NATO's readiness to support ESDP and EU operations. Turkey also supported that policy at NATO's Foreign Ministers' meeting in Budapest two months ago in May. With other NATO allies, Turkey reaffirmed its commitment to a genuine strategic partnership between NATO and the EU on crisis management.

Of course, Turkey has concerns about the policy, but the European Union's openness to the involvement of non-EU European NATO members such as Turkey is an important step towards addressing those concerns, some of which are legitimate. We shall continue to engage with Turkey to demonstrate that developing a strong EU-NATO relationship will strengthen the alliance and ensure that Turkish security interests are fully respected.

The hon. Members for West Suffolk and for Stone asked about references to the Western European Union being removed from the treaty. The relationship with WEU has changed since the Maastricht treaty was agreed, and the deletion of references to WEU simply reflects reality. The hon. Member for West Suffolk will note that the reference in paragraph 4 of article 17 has been retained because it refers to political frameworks in which WEU is still involved, as opposed to operational issues in which it is not.

The other new element in the treaty is a reference to the new Political and Security Committee, which is already up and running and to which the Council will now be able to delegate the running of a crisis management operation on instructions from capitals. I say to the hon. Member for West Suffolk that that does not—to use his term—duplicate NATO structures at all; the contrary is the case.

It is hard to imagine from all the hot air that has been spoken that there is not an article somewhere in the treaty setting up a permanent Euro-army under the control of foreign generals who will frog-march our armed forces into campaigns of which neither we nor NATO want to be part. That is absolutely not the case. As my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Dr. Palmer) so convincingly argued, the European security and defence policy is about improving the military capabilities of European nations to conduct certain EU-led military operations—humanitarian, peacekeeping, crisis management—where NATO chooses not to be engaged. That answers virtually all the points made by the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe was also correct about the lessons of the Balkans. To be fair, Conservative Members have referred to that matter as well. The Balkans provide many insights into why this capability is needed.

Mr. Howard: Will the Minister indicate a single reference in any of the texts to the phrase, "where NATO chooses not to be engaged"?

Peter Hain: That runs right through the whole initiative. It is what the initiative is all about. I shall quote from the text in a minute. It is repeatedly made absolutely clear that this initiative is complementary to, and welcomed by, NATO.

Mr. Cash: Will the Minister give way?

Peter Hain: No, I need to make some progress.

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Peter Hain: Right hon. and hon. Members have made long contributions and I need an opportunity to answer them briefly.

I have some more plain speaking for the Conservative party: NATO is and will remain the cornerstone of Europe's collective defence. That is a fact. NATO is and will remain our first choice for managing crises: that is also a fact—more plain speaking. However hard Conservative Members scan the newspapers for sceptical quotes, the fact remains that NATO has long wanted Europe to take more responsibility and to improve its capability. That is what we are now doing, and NATO as a whole strongly supports it. The right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) made some very telling points on that matter in last week's debate.

For the avoidance of doubt, let me quote again—for Opposition Members such as the hon. Member for Stone who do not seem to want to hear it—what the European Council agreed at Nice, not in the treaty, but in the report on European security and defence policy that was approved by all the Heads of State and Government at Nice:

"This does not involve the establishment of a European army. The commitment of national resources by Member States to such operations will be based on their sovereign decisions. As regards the Member States concerned, NATO remains the basis of the collective defence of its members . . . The development of the ESDP will contribute to the vitality of a renewed transatlantic link. This development will also lead to a genuine strategic partnership between the EU and NATO in the management of crises, with due regard for the two organisations' decision-making autonomy."

It is important to place that quote on record, because one would not have imagined that to be true from the comments bearing no resemblance to reality that have sallied forth from the Opposition.

Mr. Cash: The Minister has to answer just two simple questions. In this context, what does "autonomous" mean? It is clearly stated in the declarations and conclusions to which the Minister has referred, as well as in previous treaties. Secondly, why did Romano Prodi say that it did not matter whether we called it Margaret or Mary-Anne, it would still be a European army? Will the Minister answer those two simple questions now?

Peter Hain: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has exhaustively answered these questions in long debates on the matter. I read the text of treaties and of statements agreed at the inter-governmental conference, rather than random comments made by this or that European leadership figure.

The hon. Member for West Suffolk asked about parliamentary scrutiny of European security and defence policy initiatives. Of course we want to involve Parliament, and I will reflect on his arguments to see in what way they can sensibly be addressed.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about article 7 and the sanctions clause. The article was amended to introduce an early-warning mechanism. Surely it makes sense to establish that there is a risk of a breach of fundamental rights. This will give other member states the opportunity to make recommendations and, one would hope, avoid any breaches occurring.

The hon. Gentleman also asked how we would assess whether a breach had occurred. That would be established by the European Council after it had considered the observations of the member state concerned.

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Peter Hain: Finally, the rights that we are talking about are those in article 6.1 of the treaty on European Union—the Maastricht treaty, as amended by the Amsterdam treaty. The charter of fundamental rights has no legal status and is not referred to in article 6.1. The hon. Member for West Suffolk need, therefore, have no worries on that count.

Mr. Howard: Will the Minister give way?

Peter Hain: I was trying to answer the point raised by the hon. Member for West Suffolk, but of course I will give way.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way at last. If he is serious about wanting to provide opportunities for Members to scrutinise the Bill, will he now answer the simple question that he said he would answer five minutes ago? Will he identify where in any of the texts to be agreed there is any reference to NATO's choosing not to be engaged—the phrase used by the Minister in his speech—before the European Union becomes engaged? Where in the texts does that language appear?

Peter Hain: I have answered this point, and it has been repeatedly answered in the House. So long as the right hon. and learned Gentleman chooses not to study the record of the debates in the House, I cannot help him further.

The hon. Member for West Suffolk asked about an update on Eurojust. The Tampere European Council in October 1999 agreed to set up Eurojust to improve co-operation between national prosecutors, aiding national criminal investigations into serious organised crime. Organised crime stopped respecting national boundaries long ago. We strongly support Eurojust and the benefits that it will bring in tackling organised crime more effectively. Improving judicial co-operation across the European Union will also help to ensure that serious organised crime is properly investigated and prosecuted.

Eurojust will not involve, as the hon. Member for West Suffolk implied, interference by the EU in national investigations and prosecutions. It will not mean an end to British legal traditions. It will not be a body that investigates and prosecutes in its own right. It will not involve a centralised European public prosecutor. Investigations will continue to be conducted by national authorities. The role of Eurojust will be to aid cross-border investigations by ensuring the co-operation of national authorities. Eurojust is designed to crack down on international organised crime, to help to put an end to the misery caused by traffickers in drugs and human beings and to bring money launderers to book. I hope that we all support that.

6 pm

I should answer several other points that were raised by the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe. He asked why a person from a non-member of NATO—a Finn—is at the head of the European military committee. General Haggland was elected because of his extensive military experience and his competence. Simply put, he was the best person for the job. The right hon. and learned Gentleman also asked why the presidency report mentions co-operation with Russia, Ukraine and Canada, but not the United States. That represents recognition of the fact that the countries mentioned might want to join EU-led operations. Were the United States involved, an operation would of course effectively be a NATO operation.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked about the practical arrangements between the EU and NATO. As I have said before, the EU will not set up rival military structures to duplicate what already exists. The EU will use existing operational planning staff from NATO for EU operations using NATO assets. In addition, the NATO North Atlantic Council and the new EU Political and Security Committee will meet regularly to discuss co-operation and are already doing so. Four groups have been formed to consider detailed areas of co-operation and work is continuing to ensure EU access to NATO assets in an agreed fashion.

The Government reject all the amendments and I commend the Government's position to the Committee.

Mr. Richard Spring (West Suffolk): There is much to discuss further this evening, and although I thank the Minister for responding to the points that I made, I must tell him that we want to examine his responses with some care before returning to them.

We have heard excellent speeches from a number of new Members. First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Rosindell), who discussed the snakes and ladders of political life in terms of majorities in local government, parliamentary elections and the recent and most impressive swing in his constituency. He spoke with affection of his predecessors, who overlapped in his constituency: Sir Michael Neubert and Sir Nicholas Bonsor, who were held in high regard in this place, and his immediate predecessor, Eileen Gordon, who spoke with great conviction on health matters.

My hon. Friend referred to the bulldog spirit, and I hope and believe that he will show that spirit in his membership of the House of Commons. He described his constituency with great affection and talked about flying the Union flag. Romford clearly has an articulate Member of Parliament who will fly the flag for the constituency in the years to come.

I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (James Purnell). I fought the neighbouring seat of Ashton-under-Lyne some years ago, so I know the area to which he referred. I also pay tribute to Tom Pendry, who was a friend of mine. He was highly regarded in the House and he had a particular knowledge of sport, so the whole Committee will be pleased at the hon. Gentleman's comments about Tom.

[Mr. Richard Spring]

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Gaitskell's links to the constituency and the change in the area's economic base. I certainly know of that from my own experience there—the number of mills has changed tremendously—but he also referred to the new businesses that are transforming the economy. He made a remark that struck me. In discussing his ideals, he used the word "socialism". He sits as a Government Member, so I very much hope that he will be able to sustain those ideals in this place in the years to come.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cheadle (Patsy Calton) for her kind words about her predecessor, Stephen Day, with whom I shared an office when I first became a Member of Parliament. She described the great diversity of the constituency, which contains both affluent and poorer areas, and the congestion problems at Manchester airport, which affect her constituency. She showed clear affection for and knowledge of her area, and she is a fluent and competent speaker. I hope that she will make many more contributions in the House as Member for Cheadle.

We have heard much about parliamentary accountability; no matter how one considers the role for the European rapid reaction force arising from the Nice treaty, we must consider pressing new clause 7 to a Division. We want to highlight the implications for the Western European Union, NATO and the future organisations as well as the UK's role therein. We believe that what was agreed at Nice poses serious threats to NATO, which is the organisation that has secured our peace and stability for more than 50 years. We tamper with it at our peril.

A number of excellent speeches have been made, but I must allude to the brilliantly incisive contribution of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). The fact of the matter is that what was achieved at Nice has nothing to do with enhanced defence capability or burden sharing or co-operation on defence procurement. It is about politics—the politics of the integration process of the European Union.

Mr. Cash: I had wanted to press my amendment to a Division, because the matters that we have discussed are fundamental to the peace and security not only of the United Kingdom, but of Europe as a whole. Furthermore, for the reasons that I have given, which were elaborated on by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), we have effectively dealt with the Minister's arguments, and I have absolutely no doubt that we shall continue to do so during our proceedings. However, although I do not want to avoid a Division, we have practical problems this evening to do with the result of the leadership election, which means that people are scattered in various places. No doubt some are rather happier than others.

It is sensible and practical to deal with these matters when we debate clause stand part so that we can tackle the Minister's arguments in one fell swoop. I shall not press the matter to a Division now, and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Cash: I beg to move amendment No. 49, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 11),'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Amendment No. 50, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 12),'.

Amendment No. 51, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 13),'.

Amendment No. 52, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 14),'.

Amendment No. 234, in page 1, line 9, after "(i)", insert—

'Article 1 (other than paragraph 11, sub-paragraphs (b) and (c))'.

Amendment No. 56, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2 paragraph 1'.

New clause 9—*Enhanced cooperation (No. 1)*—

'Her Majesty's Government shall lay before Parliament a report showing the implication for the United Kingdom of Article 2, paragraph 1 of the Nice Treaty, amending Article 11 TEC, incorporating the effects of related Articles on enhanced co-operation in the TEC and TEU, including Article 1, paragraph 11 of the Nice Treaty, revising Article 43 TEU.'.

New clause 10—*Enhanced cooperation (No. 2)*—

'The Government shall not take steps to participate in any proposals agreed under Article 1, paragraph 11 of the Nice Treaty, revising Article 43 TEU, or related Articles in the Nice Treaty on enhanced co-operation in the TEC and TEU, including Article 2, paragraph 1 amending Article 11 TEC, without first having obtained the approval of each House of Parliament by resolution.'.

And the following amendment thereto: (a), in line 1, leave out "take steps to".

Mr. Cash: Enhanced co-operation, otherwise known as flexibility, is an important and fateful ingredient in the development of European Union politics. As with so many of these issues, it is a matter of lego-political power play and, as I said earlier and on Second Reading, it cannot be separated from qualified majority voting. Unfortunately, that is the mechanism whereby the eight member states that congregate at the centre of the proposed EU in relation to the functions arrogated to them will themselves operate in the framework of a QMV system. Therefore, as with economic and monetary union and the arrangements that led me to oppose the Maastricht treaty with such vigour, the locomotives are parallel to one another.

The arrangement is as simple as this: the creation of an acquis communautaire in a legal framework will be sought and the process of enhanced co-operation or flexibility will work in that framework. In the example of monetary union, the centre point is created and a eurozone established. Then all the others are effectively dragged along with it. An example of that is the creation of the coins and notes. Thereafter everybody is conditioned to the idea. Those who are reluctant and are found to be outside the system are then, by a gravitational process, drawn into having to comply with the arrangements.

I believe that the third protocol to the Maastricht treaty provided that no member state should prevent the others from going ahead. For practical purposes, that is reflected by the removal of what is known as the emergency brake. I am interested to know whether the distinguished right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) intends to speak, because I wish that this were not such an incredibly complex question—one that is given to lawyers and others to play around with. I refer to the question of enhanced co-operation, which constitutes a mixture of the use of law and the deepest and most sophisticated form of power politics that I have witnessed in all my dealings with the European Community and the European Union.

I believe that many people are being gravely misled. A number of my colleagues, including the shadow Foreign Secretary, are being misled into believing that the notion of flexibility is somehow a good one. As I pointed out in a pamphlet that I wrote about a year ago—it was called "Associated But Not Absorbed", and called for an associated European area—the trend that has been established has done enormous damage to the democracy of other member states, especially in central and eastern Europe. Those states are being drawn into the acquis communautaire, while knowing all about the politics of it.

As I said in an earlier speech on the Bill, the centre of gravity—indeed, I now go further and say "the domination of the entire European Union"—will be created by Germany's having a preponderant influence. That will be the case not just because of qualified majority voting—the countries dependent on Germany politically and economically will inevitably, in the real world, vote with her—but because the concept of flexibility is a driving force, a rocket thrust, in that direction.

Enhanced co-operation stems, in fact, from the Amsterdam treaty. It is no excuse saying that it was not used on that occasion, because it is really a fancy new name for a two-speed Europe. Jacques Chirac summarised the proposal neatly:

> "A certain number of countries will have to get together to show the others the way."

A sub-set of member states that wishes to proceed with further integration and to create an inner core will be allowed to do so.

An obscure but very interesting paper was produced by Michael Mertes, who became Chancellor Kohl's chief policy adviser. He and I have had many discussions about these questions. The paper, written in 1988 or 1989, created a template for the idea of an inner and outer core of Europe. I pay tribute to Mr. Mertes and also to a gentleman by the name of Mr. Prill, who wrote the paper with him.

6.15 pm

The plan was a "concentric circles" plan, transparently intended to produce the kind of Europe that the flexibility arrangement in the Nice treaty actually represents. Hon. Members must grasp exactly what is going on, and not be taken in by a lot of the Euro-propaganda. The facts are all set out. At least those concerned had the honesty to do that, although many of their articles and papers appear in rather obscure journals. The other countries will be relegated to an outer core, and reverse integration is ruled out, because reversing the process would mean passing amendments that have themselves been described, effectively, as ruled out because this, like economic and monetary union, is regarded as an irreversible process. We are increasingly being locked in.

Let me say this to Labour Members, with great respect. If they do not like aspects of these treaties, and if they do not want to be taken on a long train journey leading, in my view, to increasing chaos and uncertainty, they ought to speak out. They spoke out yesterday; I think they should speak out against this as well, because it will have serious consequences for many of the policies that they hold dear.

Flexibility is the antithesis of what some so-called Eurosceptics hoped it would come to mean. In an Adjournment debate on the subject that I initiated as long ago as—I think—1995, I explained the dangers of what I described as a Heath Robinson system. I said that disconnected parts were being put together in a single system, which would create chaotic arrangements. I believe that we are heading for an increasingly dangerous and tense European Union.

What should happen, of course, is this: individual nation states should be enabled to make their own decisions, but to work in co-operation rather than being put in the compression chamber of the acquis communautaire, as is now being proposed. Like subsidiarity, this whole process will promote ever deeper political centralisation. It will do nothing for diversity and decentralisation—although many claim that it might—because, like subsidiarity, it is a con trick. Individual nation states will possess no emergency brake or veto to prevent other member states from going ahead with further integration.

I look forward to the remarks that I trust will be made, in due course, by my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring). My hon. Friend's shoulders are now heaving in a Heath-like fashion. He knows perfectly well that the removal of the emergency brake presents something of a problem for those who have previously advocated the notion of flexibility—a problem that will not disappear simply because we wish things were otherwise.

For the first time, it has been clearly stated that the whole purpose of enhanced co-operation is to reinforce the process of integration. That is an entirely new mission statement. Article 1 itself talks of ever closer union, and so forth. The minimum number of participants is eight, regardless of enlargement. The process will depend on eight member states making decisions relating to a range of policies and functions. The potential for chaos must be obvious to anyone. If there are 27 members in an enlarged Community and eight are driving the system, how on earth will it be possible—I return for a moment to our debate on defence and foreign policy—to secure the degree of consistency that is claimed for the proposed, and proclaimed, European political union? It is inherent in the arrangements that they will not achieve that objective: they will defeat the object of their own exercise, and at the same time create chaos. I fear for the European Community, or Union, for reasons like that.

Mr. Hendrick: Can the hon. Gentleman tell me how eight member states wishing to co-operate in dealing with, say, drugs and cross-border crime might affect the rest of the European Union if it did not wish to participate? The example is particularly pertinent. Clearly, if the case

[Mr. Hendrick]

involved the single market, the single market would be distorted, but a minimum of eight states are taking action that does not affect any other member states in the European Union.

Mr. Cash: I dealt with the single market in the context of enlargement in a previous debate and I do not think that you, Sir Michael, would want me to go back over that. The real point is that the potential for chaotic policy making, with 27 member states all having different ideas as to the direction in which to go but knowing that inner-core policy is being directed by eight member states, must be obvious to anyone. I do not need to repeat myself: the permutations are horrific.

Some say that they welcome the move because it will destroy the European Union. I want a renegotiated Union with reduced functions in all areas of European government, which can be achieved without withdrawal if the Government are prepared to listen. The corollary is that the movement in the other direction, which is embedded in the proposals for enhanced co-operation, will produce a completely unworkable situation. If the whole European Union implodes as a result of the mistakes that are being made, I will accuse the Government—much as I like the Minister. The danger is that the move will cause serious damage and difficulty for the United Kingdom. We are embarked on a policy that is bound to cause chaos and damage to the British national interest.

It is outrageous that we should be faced with these proposals. I am fascinated to know what the practical arguments are on which the Government seem to depend. I would like to know the philosophy that lies behind their decision to go along this route, because they could have vetoed the arrangements. They could even have stuck with Amsterdam, for heaven's sake, although I would have rejected that, too. In the blue paper that I wrote in response to the then Government's White Paper on the subject, I cut at the roots of the arguments, as I have sought to do for many years. There are some distinguished but misguided colleagues on the Conservative Benches who believe that variable geometry is the right way to go.

As I pointed out in the pamphlet "Associated But Not Absorbed", it would be fine if flexibility were dissociated from the acquis communautaire, but once one assumes that the acquis communautaire will bite on the whole system, one is trapped. Indeed, that very White Paper—produced by the then Foreign Secretary, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, and the Minister with responsibility for Europe—said that we must not be trapped into a two-speed Europe. That is exactly what this move has led to. The Government have fallen for it hook, line and sinker. I am deeply concerned about it for all those reasons.

If we think of the range of matters covered in the vast corpus of law that is being created—the treaties, the European Union single institutional framework within which the British parliamentary system and the voters, the people who matter, are being subsumed—it is enough to cause anyone sleepless nights. If the Government are going to say that they are going into a federal system, get on with it and say it. All the halfway-house proceeding by stealth is creating more and more uncertainty. For heaven's sake, let the Government come out of the closet and say, "We want a federal Europe." *[Interruption.]* The Minister shakes his head, but the ingredients have developed since 1970.

The Minister opposed such developments at the time; I am sure of it because of our discussions in the past. Indeed, I confess to having voted yes in 1975, but I did so on the basis of what was then on offer. The problem was and remains that each treaty is a separate, cumulative series of laws. Enactment of the treaties via Bills such as this one serves to implement the arrangements in our domestic law. One was entitled to say as the thing developed, "I think that this is acceptable." To the chagrin of many of my Eurosceptic friends, I did accept, on the balance of judgment but with warnings, the Single European Act and the qualified majority voting that went with it.

I know that the Minister will be good enough to respond to my amendment No. 233, which deals with child abduction. I may or may not press that to a Division in due course. It will depend on the response that he gives, but I am interested in the effect that all these arrangements will have on the voters: my constituents and the constituents whom we represent in the House. They should not be put in the position the arrangements will put them in.

Enhanced co-operation covers such a vast range. For example, it will lead to some difficult questions in the run-up to 2004. A White Paper will be published in the next couple of days. I dare say the Minister has a copy already. It will contain, no doubt, a lot of hogwash about European government and European governance. In the past 18 months, I have asked the Prime Minister three times on the Floor of the House to answer a simple question: will he give the British people, in this Parliament, a White Paper to explain the constitutional and political implications of the issues involved: not only the single currency, but the whole European issue. As a new clause in my name underlines, such a response should not be confined to the single currency alone.

There are serious questions that the Government have to grapple with. As we move towards European government, I would like a straight answer from the Minister. He has the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane), his bag carrier, next to him at the moment, and I understand that he must have a little word with him, but at the same time, would he be kind enough to answer this question? I would like to engage the attention of the Minister for a brief second: will the arrangements for enhanced co-operation be employed, or could they be employed—that is the operative word—to move us towards a European constitution? There are many reasons why I object to enhanced co-operation, but if the centre of gravity, which is the European constitution, is to be obtained by movement through these provisions, and the Government say that they do not want a European constitution, I would like them to answer that question clearly.

Enhanced co-operation is said not to undermine the single market. I am not sure what that means. Perhaps the Minister will be good enough to explain. Nor is it supposed to undermine economic and social cohesion. The arrangements for so-called social cohesion offer a blank cheque book. As the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) pointed out only yesterday, whether the Government run out of money for public

expenditure in the last two years of this Parliament will have a lot to do with what the arrangements for social cohesion, and the charter of rights to go with it, will cost. The blank cheque that those arrangements represent will cause very great difficulty for the Government in achieving their objectives.

6.30 pm

It is said that the policy on enhanced co-operation must not violate the obligations, rights and competencies of member states that are not participants in it. In the previous debate, we had a dissertation on the issue of the neutral countries. However, one can appreciate the chaos that the arrangements are bound to create. The arrangements also have to respect the acquis communautaire, particularly in relation to Schengen. Nevertheless, clause 1 is described as a "last resort" clause to be used only when it is not possible to achieve integration by using "traditional" methods. As those traditional methods are to try to get everyone to agree to arrangements that they do not want, the arrangements are, in fact, "don't want" arrangements.

The euro itself is not part of enhanced co-operation. As I said, however, that pass was sold by John Major and the previous Government, who said that they would not prevent other members from going ahead with it. It was thus just a bit of waffle by the previous Government.

Fundamentally, the problem with enhanced co-operation is similar to the one that we have with economic and monetary union. Although we have an opt-out, we are still subject to European economic government. The British Government wish to join economic and monetary union one day, despite the fact that, as I said in my general election address, that will take us into the exchange rate mechanism for two years.

I wish that the official Opposition had made that point during the general election campaign. However, for reasons that completely escape me—such as the fact that we had signed up to EMU by accepting the Maastricht criteria—we did not do so. Some Opposition Members may therefore have felt that it was not advantageous to raise that issue. Some of them may also have discovered that that fact did not help them today.

In operating many macro-economic rules, the Chancellor of the Exchequer acts as if he were already a member of EMU. The same will happen with policies under enhanced co-operation. We would all be bound within that general legal framework. National Governments who are constrained by sceptical electorates—those of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom, not to mention all the others who are fed up with being driven by their elites and blackmailed into accepting money in return for the subordination of their democratic arrangements—will rue the day when the truth finally emerges.

One could say much more on the subject, but I shall conclude—[Hon. Members: "Hear, hear."] I am delighted that Labour Members have been such an attentive audience. The matters that we are discussing are important, and they are set out in the treaties. They are extremely dangerous to the future of this country. They are also very dangerous to the European Union. I look forward with interest to hearing the Minister's reply.

Anne Picking (East Lothian): Thank you, Sir Michael, for calling me to make my speech during our consideration of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Enhanced co-operation between European countries is absolutely essential if there is to be a truly flexible European Union. I have become aware of some of those issues because of my membership of the Labour party's policy commission "Britain in the World". Being a pro-European myself, I cannot see how the amendments proposed by the Tories would do anything but restrict the Government's ability to negotiate. To exclude and not include seems quite daft.

My predecessor in the House was John Home Robertson, a diligent and hard-working Member who will continue to represent the people of East Lothian in the Scottish Parliament. He was first elected to the House in 1978, after the unexpected and untimely death of Professor John P. Mackintosh. He was also elected during a period, unlike now, when the then Labour Government had had difficulty holding marginal or even safe seats at by-elections. John served his constituency well, especially during the miners strike, when he raised more issues than most hon. Members.

As a Member of this place, it will be a great pleasure to work closely with John Home Robertson, a Member of the Scottish Parliament, and with Provost Pat O'Brien and the Labour-controlled East Lothian council. That combination will ensure that the people of East Lothian continue to receive the high standard of representation that they enjoy and expect from the Labour party.

I have already mentioned John P. Mackintosh, whose achievements in life as a professor of politics and campaigner for a Scottish Parliament are very well known. Perhaps less well known is that he twice gained the constituency from the Conservative party, and that on the second such occasion the defeated Tory Member was none other than the right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram). Suffice it to say that, like many other invaders in history, and similar to his bid for leadership of the Tory party, his sojourn to East Lothian was brief.

East Lothian is a stunningly beautiful part of Scotland. It is situated east of Edinburgh, north of the Lammermuir hills and adjacent to the Firth of Forth and North sea. It is therefore a community with natural boundaries. Talking about the Firth of Forth, I was fortunate enough to be brought up on the north side of the Forth, with a majestic view to the south. I now represent and bide in a constituency on the south side of the Forth with a monumental view to the north. All that—and now I discover that occasionally in this place I have yet another view, of the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth), albeit not so prepossessing.

East Lothian did have, and still does have, its troublesome times. Located where it is, so close to the English border, it was inevitable that it would become a route for, and battleground between, the military forces of Scotland and England. Many famous battles were fought on East Lothian soil. Mary Queen of Scots lost her cause in Scotland, at Carberry hill, in 1567. In the following century, at the battle of Dunbar, Oliver Cromwell's new model army decisively defeated Scottish forces sympathetic to the monarchy. The battle of Prestonpans was memorable, when Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobites were victorious against the Government forces led by

[Anne Picking]

General Johnnie Cope. Thankfully, the Government forces were much more successful in securing a victory on 7 June 2001 than they were in 1745.

Speaking of battles and Government forces, in the general election campaign I was lucky enough to be supported by the Deputy Prime Minister. He was due to visit Prestonpans Labour club. The night before the auspicious visit, I was decorating the club and blowing up balloons, as one does, when the news came in that my right hon. Friend had an altercation with one of the British electorate, so I had no idea what to expect. We did not know what type of reception he would receive, whether it would be hostile or supportive. In the event, it was massive. It was a media circus. It was like a night at the Oscars, cameras and flashlights everywhere.

My right hon. Friend received a hero's welcome. The majority of constituents made measured comments about the incident, such as:

"It's terrible that politicians and their staff should be attacked and abused in such a way."

There were also, however, more down-to-earth, frank and forthright quotes from some of the locals. Margaret Jones, from Dunbar, said:

"We breed men not mice in the Labour Party".

Sandra Stalker, from Port Seton, felt that my right hon. Friend

"didn't hit him hard enough".

The history of East Lothian has not been one only of battles and wars. One of the less well known incidents occurred at Tranent, in 1797, when miners and their families, led by the redoubtable Jackie Crookston, beating her drum, were mercilessly crushed and massacred by troops when they objected to the unfair imposition of military service.

Although there have been revolutions as well in East Lothian, they have been relatively peaceful ones. Coal, the fuel of industrialisation, was mined in East Lothian from at least the 13th century. The conditions were extremely cruel, and for those people serfdom was not abolished until 1799. For many years later, until well into the 19th century, large numbers of women and girls—some as young as six—were forced to work in the mines. Indeed, a parliamentary commission reported in 1842 that conditions in East Lothian were

"worse than anywhere else in Great Britain".

Things did improve thanks to the work of the miners themselves, their unions and the Labour party, but sadly there are no mines left in East Lothian. History, heritage, the legacy of human pain, suffering, hard work, pride and even death over the centuries was callously decimated by the Conservative party, without an ounce of compassion.

I felt that I could not or should not make my maiden speech without mentioning my maiden name and paying tribute to my family, some of whom are here today. I was born Anne Moffat of the famous dynasty of Moffats who are steeped in the history of the Scottish miners trade union movement and who hailed from Fife and East Lothian. It is fitting that a Fifer is representing the good people of East Lothian.

Before I had the honour of being elected to the House, I was a nurse in the national health service and was privileged to be elected national president of the UK's largest trade union, UNISON. The NHS is a unique and wonderful British institution; it is also at a crossroads. To hear the contenders for the Tory crown of thorns is to listen and marvel. They criticise the state of the health service, but how do they think it got to that position? I worked in the unfashionable mental health services, as successive Tory Governments ripped the heart out of the service by deep cuts in spending and pernicious neglect. There is no doubt that this Government's prescription of massive extra funding is the way forward.

The NHS plan agreed last year sets the right path for investment and reform. I have seen the Government's proposals for the next 10 years and I utterly refute the suggestion that they represent a privatisation agenda. Everything now being proposed was in that plan and the service bought into it. I have to be honest and say that I do not believe that in an ideal world the PFI would be the way to build hospitals. It is a fact, however, that the investment programme is based on harnessing private capital for public good. The question is whether the price is too high.

Nevertheless, I welcome the new pilot schemes which are designed to enable ancillary staff to remain part of the NHS team. Securing this change will make a major difference to staff attitudes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health shares my view that the support and commitment of the staff in the health service who subscribe to the unfashionable belief in the public service ethos are crucial to the success of the Government's plans.

I lived and worked in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s. It was a time of mass riots, hunger strikes and the killing of innocents. Bombs, bullets and mindless violence were an accepted part of everyone's life. I nursed, and I saw at first hand the sheer devastation. A return to those days for the good people of Northern Ireland would be a travesty. They are the warmest, kindest people one could ever hope to meet. I wish my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Prime Minister—and, indeed, all those who are part of the process—all the very best in their endeavours to maintain peace.

Before I conclude, it would be appropriate for me to mention that East Lothian crossed a threshold on 7 June by electing its first ever woman MP. Women in East Lothian have come a long way since they worked in the mines and led riots and I am very proud to have this honour bestowed upon me.

6.45 pm

Dr. Andrew Murrison (Westbury): I congratulate the hon. Member for East Lothian (Anne Picking) on delivering an excellent maiden speech, full of eloquence and obvious feeling for her constituency. She and I have in common a background in health and constituencies with strong martial traditions. I am hugely privileged to represent the Wiltshire county constituency of Westbury.

As hon. Members might expect, Europe features prominently among the concerns of my constituents. In particular, the prospect of an autonomous European military capability that was championed by the Prime Minister at St. Malo and fleshed out at Nice is viewed with unease. The threat that the proposed Euro force might pose to one of the most successful post-war organisations, NATO, and to our symbiotic relationship with the United States has surely not been adequately

explored. Still less light has been shed on the intended geographic scope of the initiative, or indeed on the arrangements for parliamentary scrutiny of the European security and defence policy en bloc.

I am sure that hon. Members are looking forward to the end of term and to the opportunity of taking a summer break during the recess. The Prime Minister's announcement that he intends to flout tradition and spend at least some of his vacation in Britain is really welcome. Our benighted tourist industry in the south-west has been badly affected by foot and mouth and it needs all the support it can get. I genuinely hope that the right hon. Gentleman will bear Wiltshire in mind when drawing up his holiday plans—as a tourist he can be sure of a warm welcome.

The "Anglo Saxon Chronicle" records that in 878, at a high point near Edington in my constituency, King Alfred finally defeated the Danes and in so doing founded the kingdom of Wessex. Therefore, I have a legitimate claim that my constituency is the crucible of England, and in representing this giant among parliamentary divisions I am more honoured than I can possibly express.

My constituency straddles much of the territory that lies between Bath and Salisbury. It is an area of handsome small towns, attractive villages and deep verdant countryside. To the north lie the thriving county town of Trowbridge and the outrageously beautiful small town of Bradford-on-Avon. Nestling under the escarpment of Salisbury plain is the ancient settlement of Westbury with its famous chalk white horse. Further south still lie the attractive market and garrison town of Warminster and the undiscovered little gem of Mere, close to the border with Dorset. It is truly a diverse constituency. Indeed, to misquote Dr Samuel Johnson, when a man is tired of Westbury he is tired of life, for there is in Westbury all that life can afford.

West Wiltshire's very obvious physical charm conceals real problems that I suggest would match those faced by the constituencies of many Labour Members. Hon. Members should never for a moment suppose that the English shire counties are untroubled by relative poverty, for that is not so. My constituents have all been victims in one way or another of changes to the formula used in the standard spending assessment. Wiltshire's schoolchildren, road users and social services are suffering badly. Please may we now have fair funding for Wiltshire?

It is most agreeable to have another doctor in the House. The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor) and I well understand the importance to our patients and our constituents of health care delivered close to home. One of the salient features of the NHS in west Wiltshire is the presence of four excellent community hospitals, but recent bed closures have resulted in considerable hardship, particularly among my elderly constituents. The villains are not just politicians, but those who advise them—health service planners and those in health professions, with their ingrained centralist tendencies. In designing secondary, intermediate and primary health care we must listen to what the paymasters—our constituents—want and be less driven by the needs and aspirations of the medical establishment.

My predecessor was David Faber. As the grandson of Harold Macmillan, he had an impossible act to follow. Nevertheless, he developed a high reputation in this place and in Westbury. His departure is a loss to the House and his cerebral contribution to culture, media and sport will, I think, be especially missed.

Not so keenly missed was our predecessor, the colourful Sir Mannaseh Lopes, Baronet. Sir Mannaseh was convicted in 1819 at Exeter assizes for distributing £2,000 in brown paper envelopes while out canvassing. Shortly after his release from jail, this 19th century political comeback kid resurfaced as the Member of Parliament for Westbury, but he proved unpopular with the upright citizens of the town. Somewhat ironically, in 1826 he was replaced by Sir Robert Peel, founder inter alia of the Metropolitan police force.

Last week, two soldiers lost their lives in a Challenger 2 tank in my constituency. It was a dreadful reminder of the hazards faced by our service men in both peace and war, and of the debt of gratitude that we owe our armed forces.

When I left the medical branch of the Royal Navy in October last year, I was likened by one of my more thoughtful colleagues to a rat leaving a sinking ship. The analogy was a little unkind, but the point was well made. Our armed forces are in a truly parlous state that contrasts sharply with that enjoyed by many of our allies.

There are 29 anaesthetists on the books, and there should be 120. There are eight orthopaedic surgeons, and there should be 28. There are three casualty doctors, and there should be 23. It is ironic that one of the least moribund specialties in the defence medical services is pathology. It is small wonder that nearly 10 per cent. of the Army is currently medically downgraded. Nearly one soldier in 10 is not fighting fit.

What is surprising is the remedy—the closure of the Royal hospital, Haslar, which serves many of my constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) has fought a tireless campaign against the closure, and I pay tribute to his sterling work.

If the closure of our last military hospital were not bad enough, we are now faced with the removal of the royal defence medical college from its location near Portsmouth to a new centre for defence medicine in Birmingham.

Birmingham is a truly wonderful city, but most people join the defence medical service to serve the front line—which is billeted in Hampshire and Wiltshire, not in the middle of Birmingham. It is little wonder that esprit de corps and retention are at an all-time low.

Military medicine, European or otherwise, is an integral part of the defence effort, yet we are allowing the already fibrillating heart of Britain's defence medical services to drift irrevocably towards asystole. If we allow that to happen, our ability to prosecute even the sort of conflict in which NATO, according to many Labour Members, might reasonably be involved—but not directly—will be severely limited. If I may issue a cry from the heart: may we please think again?

Denzil Davies: We have just heard two excellent maiden speeches. They, and the other such speeches that we have heard, caused me to cast my mind back to my own halting and nervous first contribution. I made my maiden speech in the early hours of the morning some time in June 1970, when not many hon. Members were around to hear it. By contrast, the hon. Member for Westbury (Dr. Murrison) and my hon. Friend the Member

[Denzil Davies]

for East Lothian (Anne Picking), and others, have spoken with a fluency that fills me with admiration. The hon. Member for Westbury mentioned his predecessor, David Faber. Many Labour Members may not have known Mr. Faber as well as the hon. Gentleman, although I do not mean that as a criticism, but we all knew John Home Robertson, the predecessor of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian.

I mentioned earlier that I was the Labour party's defence spokesman in the 1980s. It was an exciting time both for the party and for defence spokesmen. Many members of our armed forces were stationed in Wiltshire, and I remember visiting the county. I was struck by the remark by the hon. Member for Westbury that not all parts of Wiltshire are as affluent as people—especially people from the Celtic fringes—tend to believe. Even in the 1980s, parts of the hon. Gentleman's constituency were notably less affluent than some expected.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian mentioned John Home Robertson, who was known, liked and admired by all hon. Members. She also mentioned Mr. John P. Mackintosh, about whom I have mixed feelings. I admired him greatly as a constitutional expert and writer of well-known and excellent books, but I was a junior Treasury Minister between 1975 and 1979, in a Government which, between 1977 and 1979, had no majority. Trying to see a Finance Bill through Standing Committee without a majority is quite an experience, and not one through which I should like to put today's Ministers.

Such an experience hones one's advocacy skills. If one wanted John P. Mackintosh's vote, one had to be pretty skilful. He and his friend Mr. Brian Walden used to go about together sometimes, and they were quite likely to end up in a different Lobby from other Labour Members when a Division was called. However, Mr. Mackintosh was a distinguished Member of Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian also mentioned the Jacobites. I was 15 years old when, as a grammar school pupil in Wales, I had to study the Jacobite rebellion for the old O-level exam. I pity our history teacher now, as it must have been an impossible task to explain the reasons for that rebellion to 15-year-old boys in west Wales. I congratulate my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Westbury on their excellent maiden speeches.

I turn now to enhanced co-operation. Everyone is in favour of better co-operation—even the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash), in certain areas at least. It is an important matter, and is addressed by amendment No. 56 in particular, which deals with article 2 of the treaty.

It appears to me that, if Britain entered an enhanced co-operation arrangement with eight, nine or 10 states, our democracy would be diminished. Such arrangements cannot be changed. I have read the articles, and I believe that it would not be possible to withdraw from enhanced co-operation arrangements without securing a qualified majority.

Mr. Cash: The acquis communautaire means that the arrangements would not prejudice the assumption that all member states must accept the pre-existing legal framework. That framework would not be altered.

Denzil Davies: The hon. Gentleman probably understands these matters better than some other hon. Members, although I am not sure that I understand that explanation completely. I suspect that it would not be possible simply to withdraw from an arrangement without securing some kind of qualified majority, which would take the matter out of Britain's democratic and political grasp.

For example, no party could enter a general election saying that it would pull out of an enhanced co-operation agreement on agriculture, just as no party now can say that it wants to come out of the common agricultural policy. Since about 1979, all parties—without telling the public—have wanted to leave the CAP, but that is impossible because all other member states would have to agree.

Enhanced co-operation, like qualified majority voting, would represent another diminution of our democracy. Choice at the polls would also be diminished, as the number of areas that could not be changed by the normal democratic processes of the nation state grew.

Mr. Hendrick: Why does my right hon. Friend feel that it would be necessary to withdraw from an agreement? One enters an agreement with a view to carrying on that agreement.

7 pm

Denzil Davies: Circumstances change. I well remember the arguments for the common agricultural policy during the debate on the European Communities Act 1972. One of the reasonable arguments made was that Europe needed a common agricultural policy to protect its food production so that it would always have a supply within that tariff area. Many people accepted that argument. Well, the world has changed; there is no shortage of food. It is perfectly possible now to import food at much lower prices from other parts of the world. I should think that many people, whether they are Euro-enthusiasts, Eurosceptics or whatever, would argue that the CAP has outlived its purpose and should be changed. So my hon. Friend should not believe that once one has entered into an enhanced co-operation agreement, it is right and good for all time. There is no democratic mechanism as far as I can see for the nation state to withdraw from such an agreement without the agreement of all the other EU members. That diminishes our democracy, and it is one of the real problems of the EU. That democracy is not really replaced, unless we go to a fully federal state, by any of the new arrangements. To that extent, the new arrangements are anti-democratic for the nation state.

I do not know whether the British Government wish to enter into enhanced co-operation on taxation, but I believe that it will happen. This week I had sent to me a paper dated 1 June 2001, produced by Mr. Bernhard Zepter, the Deputy Secretary-General of the European Commission, on tax policy in the European Union. I do not think that the hon. Member for Stone has received it yet, so I think I am a step ahead of him. I suspect that it will be in the next edition of "European Forum" now that I have mentioned it on the Floor of the House.

The paper is called "Tax policy in the European Union—Priorities for the years ahead." It was sent by Mr. Zepter to Mr. Javier Solana. Unlike the hon. Member for Stone, who seems to dislike the gentleman, I have nothing against Mr. Solana. Mr. Solana describes himself as as a secretary-general but also as a high representative.

May I make a slight plea to the Minister for Europe, the Minister for plain speaking, who is represented by an equally plain speaker in the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane)? I can see that my hon. Friend assents to that. Could they please stop calling themselves high representatives? It has a Gilbertian ring about it. They have been doing it certainly since I have been involved. I think that it goes back to the European Coal and Steel Community. No doubt it is a diplomatic phrase that keeps the diplomatic corps happy.

Mr. Cash: In the operas to which the right hon. Gentleman is referring, it was the lord high executioner.

Denzil Davies: I did not like to digress, Sir Michael, or you might have said that I was out of order.

"Secretary-General" I do not mind. "Secretary" would be all right, but everyone is a secretary-general these days. But not "high representative" please. If we are getting rid of flummery and diplomatic language and adopting plain speaking, let us drop these rather silly titles. That is a small and perhaps frivolous point.

I refer the Committee to paragraph 4.4 of the document. I accept that Foreign Office Ministers have not seen it, at least for the purposes of this debate. It relates to enhanced co-operation in the field of taxation. The paper is about taxation and ways of getting round the veto. It is not put in such plain language, but in effect it tells the high representative how the Commission would like to find ways to get round the veto on taxation, especially direct taxation, because the Commission rightly believes that it hampers the development of the internal market. I believe that it affects the euro as well.

Many ideas are put forward in the document, including something called soft legislation, which is not in fact legislation but guidelines. We will leave that for another occasion. One area that the Commissioners hit on—they are very clever, these people—was enhanced co-operation. I shall quote paragraph 4.4, as probably no one else but me has a copy. The Deputy Secretary-General writes:

"The possibilities introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty and developed by the Nice Treaty for closer co-operation between sub-groups of like-minded Member States could also be envisaged in certain cases. In particular, this could be used in tax policy areas where, even in the long term, decisions in the Council are taken by unanimity. . . . The decision at Nice will enable the Commission to propose to the Council that as small a group as eight Member States may co-operate more closely, after approval within the Council by qualified majority."

That does not give the steps correctly. The eight member states obviously have to get together first. Then, as new article 11 states, the eight member states tell the Commission, the Commission puts a proposal back to the eight member states and they pass it by qualified majority.

The document continues:

"However, in line with the principles agreed at Nice, this approach"—

enhanced co-operation in both direct and indirect taxation—

"must not, among other things, undermine the Internal Market".

Clearly, it would not undermine the internal market. In the view of the Commission, it could probably be said to enhance the internal market if eight, nine or 10 states harmonised their tax rates or certainly their tax structures, gradually moving towards harmonisation of rates, as is happening with VAT.

The document also says that the arrangement must not "constitute a barrier to or a discrimination of trade".

Well, it would not in taxation cases. It says that the arrangement must not

"distort the conditions of competition".

I should not have thought it would; again, it could be argued by the proponents that it would enhance co-operation, given that different tax rates and structures distort competition. Similarly, the arrangement must not

"affect the competences, rights and obligations of the non-participating Member States."

It would not do that either.

It is clearly the view of the Commission that the ideas in the document are a pretty good wheeze to get round the awful veto by member states of changes in direct or indirect taxation. This interesting document continues:

"In the field of direct taxation, co-operation between Member States has been organised mainly through bilateral tax treaties."

That is correct. There are not only international tax treaties; I believe that certain countries within the EU have their own tax treaties, mainly to regulate cross-border transactions. The document continues:

"The enhanced co-operation could be targeted so as to produce such benefits for the participating countries"—

this comes back to a point that was buried in the speech of the hon. Member for Stone—

"that non-participants"—

this is the sting in the tail—

"would be motivated to become involved."

Of course they would be, if eight, nine or 10 states decided to enter into enhanced co-operation on direct or indirect taxation. The document goes on to deal with indirect taxation. VAT is already practically harmonised, so there is not much room for enhanced co-operation there.

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman has legal qualifications that far exceed mine. Article 44 says:

"Member States which do not participate in such cooperation shall not impede the implementation thereof by the participating Member States."

Therefore, the same principle applies in the second paragraph of article 44 as applied to economic and monetary union. So the gravitational pull is exactly as the right hon. Gentleman has described it.

Denzil Davies: That is the object of the arrangements. I should not have thought that non-participating states would wish to interfere and impede. They could not do so, anyway.

On indirect taxation, the document states:

"the possibility of enhanced co-operation could provide a way forward in the area of environmental and energy taxation. A majority of Member States have indicated their strong desire to make progress in this area"—

presumably in relation to enhanced co-operation. Perhaps the Under-Secretary will tell us in his winding-up speech whether the British Government are included in that majority in relation to indirect taxation. I hope that we will be told at the end of this debate, in the interests of plain speaking and transparency.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): My right hon. Friend seems to be saying that what we are talking about

[Mr. Michael Connarty]

is a ruse to get round something that is currently protected by unanimity. What evidence can he give us that there could be a change in taxation policy by a group of countries that did not require unanimous support from the rest of the European Union? I have seen nothing in the treaty saying that.

Denzil Davies: I have the best evidence in the world. The Deputy Secretary-General of the European Commission does not write frivolous letters to a so-called high representative. These people are top cats.

Mr. Connarty: The speculation or writings of a member of the Commission do not constitute a treaty or a change in the law. I am asking for a specific reference to a change in the law that would allow unanimity to be knocked aside by this arrangement for co-operation.

Denzil Davies: I am giving my hon. Friend a specific reference, although I am sure that he will get a better answer from the hon. Member for Stone. The answer is quite simple—enhanced co-operation is allowed in all the areas covered by these treaties.

We do not have much time. The Commission has been pretty fast—this document, its priority for the future, was produced on 1 June. It is addressed specifically to outflanking the veto.

Mr. Hendrick: Why are these matters of such concern to my right hon. Friend? Clearly, the terms are not binding on member states that do not wish to take part in enhanced co-operation. If a member state chooses to set an income tax rate of 15 per cent. and other member states wish to follow suit, why is that of such concern to my right hon. Friend? It will not be binding on this nation state to co-operate in that fashion.

Denzil Davies: I never said that it would be, but I think that it is. My hon. Friend should not dismiss enhanced co-operation so lightly. It enables a group of states to move ahead, and we must address ourselves to the effect that that would have on other states outside. The Deputy Secretary-General of the Commission makes the point clearly that if benefits were produced for participating countries, non-participants would be motivated to become involved.

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman is, as ever, plumbing the depths of the matter. The concentric circles plan, which applies across the board to all areas affected by enhanced co-operation, is the master strategy for this purpose. I refer the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Hendrick) to article 44 on page 14 of the treaty of Nice:

"Unanimity shall be constituted by only those Council members concerned."

Therefore, by definition, the others are excluded. It continues:

"Such acts and decisions shall not form part of the Union acquis."

There are hidden traps in that statement as well, because of course the acquis applies to all the other states.

7.15 pm

Denzil Davies: The hon. Gentleman speaks about traps. However, on my hon. Friend's point, let us suppose that Germany, France, Italy, Spain and four other countries decide to harmonise their direct taxation and rates, starting by harmonising structures. In fact, let us suppose that they start harmonising corporation tax, which is of great importance and concern to British companies trading in Europe. Is my hon. Friend saying that we can forget about that? Is he saying that Britain would not be under any pressure to join? Of course Britain would be under commercial and economic pressure to join those eight countries.

Mr. Hendrick: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Denzil Davies: In a moment. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers said that they fought a great battle in Nice and preserved the veto on taxation. I am not sure how much of a battle there was, frankly. Clearly, Ministers were fighting some battle and were determined to assure us of it. I suspect that there was not much of a battle in Nice about taxation. I also suspect that quite a few member states, including France and Germany, would not be unhappy about moving towards some kind of harmonisation of direct taxation.

Mr. Hendrick: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Denzil Davies: I will give way to my hon. Friend in a moment; I will try to develop my argument first. Many states may wish to harmonise corporation tax and its structures and then move to harmonising rates, in order, as they see it, to foster and enhance the single market.

I also believe that the movement towards enhanced co-operation in taxation will come partly—perhaps mainly—because of the real problems of the euro. I do not want to introduce the euro to this debate, but there is something fundamentally wrong with it at the moment. Whenever it falls, we are told that it is because of this poor fellow who is the governor of the European central bank, who has been much maligned, or that it is to do with American corporations bringing money back from America. All sorts of different reasons are given and when they are dispelled, others must be found for why the euro is not looking the dollar in the eye. The euro will not look the dollar in the eye until the split between monetary and fiscal policy in the euro area is repaired. That can be achieved only with more rules on expenditure and a move towards the harmonisation and unification of taxation. It makes no sense to have a currency to which certain elements of fiscal policy relate, just as deficit spending and borrowing relate to some extent. The other area of fiscal policy—taxation—is completely outside the ambit of the euro area and the euro. Therefore, I have no doubt that pressure will be brought to bear. European Ministers have said so, and I think that they are right.

Mr. Hendrick: I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way again. He talks about members co-operating and says that they will take advantage of any benefits from such co-operation. Is that not the case with the euro? The eurozone has been created; the euro exists. Member states joined the euro with the view that it would benefit their economy and nation. What is wrong with that? We can choose whether to join or not but we are under no pressure

to do so. It will be a decision of this nation state. Whether member states wish to co-operate in other areas is a matter for them.

Denzil Davies: We are not, as my hon. Friend seems to think, living in a totally isolated world. The very existence of the euro puts pressure on us to decide whether to join. At the end of the day, the decision will, of course, be taken by the British people and the House, but the economic pressures are considerable and they have been for some time. The Government have tried to resist those pressures as much as they can because they want to ensure that the conditions, whatever we may say about them, are fulfilled.

Mr. Chris Bryant (Rhondda): As far as I can see, my right hon. Friend's argument leads him down anti-democratic byways. He seems to be arguing that because the euro might be of benefit to others and that that somehow creates a gravitational pull in any of the areas of enhanced co-operation to which reference has been made, we should therefore exercise a veto over what others do. That seems to be fundamentally anti-democratic.

Denzil Davies: I was not even arguing that. I was merely explaining, as does the gentlemen who wrote the paper on future priorities in taxation, that it will be possible for certain countries to get together and create a euro-area in taxation. The point that I was then trying to make—my hon. Friends do not seem to believe it—is that the pressures on a British Government as a result of the market and of commerce to join such a euro-area of enhanced co-operation in taxation will be considerable. That is the only point that I am trying to make. If my hon. Friends do not believe that, it is a matter for them. The Commission has spotted—it will have thought about it beforehand—a way of outflanking the national veto on taxation.

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman might even have said that the Commission plotted—rather than spotted—to achieve these objectives. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Bryant) should remember that we are debating a treaty, which is therefore dealt with in this country by royal prerogative. Our system is to implement the treaty by enacting a Bill, but that means that we, as a Parliament, endorse these wide-ranging arrangements, which have consequences for the electors. That is what is undemocratic. Proceedings on the Bill are guillotined and the public are unaware of what is going on.

Denzil Davies: The point that I am making is that enhanced co-operation is not trivial, affecting only a few areas. Although Ministers have said that the giving up of a veto, which is, in effect, what we are doing, is just a technical matter, it is certainly not in relation to enhanced co-operation. The matter is central. Pressure on member states such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain from the Commission will be greater and greater. This is the first shot.

Mr. Hendrick: Will my right hon. Friend consider the example of Ireland? Ireland took part in a regime of corporation tax which resulted in a lower rate than in many other European member states. The Commission accepts that tax competition is healthy and allows it throughout Europe. Lower taxes in Britain than in some of those taking part in my right hon. Friend's so-called enhanced co-operation on taxation would be to our benefit. Why is there pressure for us to join if we can have lower taxes?

Denzil Davies: My hon. Friend mentions the low rates of corporation tax in Ireland, which would have had beneficial effects on the Irish economy. However, when is tax competition harmful tax competition? That would be a good essay for the hon. Member for Stone.

Mr. Cash: I have done it already.

Denzil Davies: The hon. Gentleman has written about that already. Perhaps he has written a book on the subject—I do not know. The question of when tax competition becomes harmful is entirely subjective.

Mr. Hendrick: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Denzil Davies: I have given way often to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he has some very good points to make and perhaps he will make them later.

Tax competition of the kind that we have seen in the Irish Republic is frowned on. If there is a transitional period, which I think there will be when the Irish lower rate runs out, it will not occur again. The less euro-enthusiasts say about Ireland, the better. The Irish people, who as far as Prodi is concerned are all stupid, are not stupid, and I suspect that they are spotting what is happening. That is one reason—not the only reason—why they voted as they did on the treaty of Nice.

We are not discussing trivial matters. I can understand why France and Germany might want to keep to an inner core of a Europe of six, seven or eight. They do not want to lose that central or federalising impetus, which they felt they had when there were fewer countries, when the Poles and the unhistorical nations of Europe, as Marx described them, enter the European Union. I can understand them wanting to maintain a core, but that core must involve taxation, which is central to economic and monetary union, economic policy and the currency. The pressures will be considerable.

I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who will undoubtedly convey this faithfully to my hon. Friend the Minister for Europe when he returns from making the speech to which he referred, to assure us—we have an assurance on the veto—that the Government will never consider entering into an enhanced co-operation agreement in respect of direct or indirect taxation. In the interests of plain speaking, we must be sure that our veto will not be outflanked by the nefarious wheezes dreamed up by those clever people in the Commission.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (North-East Fife): As the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) said, we have had the benefit of some cracking maiden speeches. In particular, I should like to mention the two that have been made in this part of the debate.

The hon. Member for Westbury (Dr. Murrison) made a speech that one could describe as of a fairly traditional nature. He will clearly be an effective advocate for his constituency. He brought a smile and a certain ironic

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

recollection to some of us when he talked about brown envelopes. They have featured in recent political history; let us all hope that they do not do so again.

The hon. Gentleman made several cogent and effective points on defence medical services. I have taken an interest in that area in the past, and just as the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) threatens everyone that he will send them a copy of a pamphlet, I shall send the hon. Member for Westbury a copy of a document that I was able to produce along with some others. He will find that it is of some interest on the issue of defence medical services. As someone with direct experience, he will clearly be able to give us an inside view of many of the problems that attach to the present standard of provision of medical care for our armed services. I am sure that the House will be the better for that.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Anne Picking) has left her place. It would be fair to say that hers was a non-traditional maiden speech. However, if she is a scion of the Moffat family of Fife, that is hardly surprising. She made some witty observations and spoke with real affection about her constituency. I shall hold her to account to a certain extent because she now represents several members of my family and I want to ensure that they receive the proper standard of representation to which they are entitled.

The hon. Lady referred with affection, which we all share, to her predecessor, John Home Robertson. Under the conventions of the House, I was never able to call him my hon. Friend, but he was and remains a very good friend of mine. He was, of course, one of those who championed the cause of home rule for Scotland with great effectiveness. It is right that he is now a Member of the Scottish Parliament.

John Home Robertson's predecessor was John Mackintosh, to whom the right hon. Member for Llanelli also referred. John Mackintosh was a great champion of the cause of home rule. He may have been difficult in proceedings on the Finance Bill, but he was a very strong pro-European. There are those who would think that his legacy is best remembered not by the definitive book that he wrote on Cabinet Government, but by his tireless advocacy of the cause of Britain's membership of what was then the European Community.

7.30 pm

My text is taken from the Conservative party manifesto in the last election, wherein it is said:

"we are willing to support the principle of 'reinforced co-operation' in Europe".

I imagine that the hon. Member for Stone had some sort of derogation, or perhaps he claimed that, for reasons of national policy, in Stone he did not have to adhere to that statement, but that is the position of the Conservative party. We also have the authority of the shadow Foreign Secretary, who is not with us this evening, who last year said:

"we should not, in principle, exclude others from proceeding with schemes of closer integration which we would not wish to join ourselves."—[*Official Report*, 15 June 2000; Vol. 351, c. 1145.]

Mr. Cash: I am doubly grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, first, for drawing attention to that provision, which I put on the front page of the blue paper which I wrote in response to the White Paper produced by the then Foreign Secretary, because I thought that those words amounted to an act of appeasement. Secondly, on the question of my election address, I can assure him that I stated emphatically that we should renegotiate the treaties—indeed, I went further and said that if the other countries did not listen we would have to steer our own course.

Mr. Campbell: I am doubly glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman, who has effectively attacked his own party. However, I do not want to intrude on private grief: these matters are ones that the Conservatives will have to resolve themselves, and whoever emerges through the pall of white smoke to become the leader of the party will have to deal with them.

Let me say a word or two about enhanced co-operation. The Nice treaty endeavours to free up procedures first established at Amsterdam. It is worth reminding ourselves why some EU members felt that a mechanism for enhanced co-operation was necessary. To a large extent, it was the result of the attitude adopted by, among other countries, the UK under the Conservative Government. Their attitude was interpreted, rightly or wrongly, as one of wanting to act as a brake on the pace of further integration and they were considered likely to use the veto if any question of integration were to arise. Those apprehensions were justified to some extent when the profligate use of the veto in a misguided attempt to get the beef ban lifted exposed the inadequacy of such an approach. Many member states came to believe that enhanced co-operation was necessary if the EU was to make progress.

It is true that the Amsterdam procedures, which were pretty cautious, have never been tested. It is worth reminding the hon. Member for Stone, who has moved his physical position in the Chamber albeit not his political position, of the existing requirements. They were that enhanced co-operation should not affect the acquis communautaire, nor the interests of participating states; it should be used only as a last resort; it must be within the limits of EU competence; and it should not distort competition between member states. That was established at Amsterdam. The Nice treaty would add to that the requirement that enhanced co-operation should respect the single institutional framework and that it should not undermine the internal market or economic and social cohesion, nor prejudice the provisions of the protocol integrating the Schengen acquis into the EU framework, nor affect the competencies, rights and obligations of non-participating states. It strikes me that when that set of criteria is made to form the basis, the test, the context against which we test enhanced co-operation, the anxiety expressed by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the Committee is not justified.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli, when referring to a document prepared by a member of the Commission, said that it represented an effort to outflank. He might have used the words "stealth" or "ruse"—both were certainly offered to him during an intervention. I understand his position to be that, if within the EU a group of countries came together and agreed a common position on taxation—whether income tax or corporate taxation—the UK would have to take some account of that in its own taxation policy. I think that the right hon.

Gentleman is right about that, but the UK's position would be the same if it was outside the EU—an EU in which several countries determined that in respect of, for example, corporate taxation, they would on a co-operative basis, operate a regime that was common to those countries in a combined effort to attract external investment. The consequences are the same whether we are inside the EU where enhanced co-operation produces the results he says are possible, or outside the EU where several countries have decided to combine.

Denzil Davies: If we were outside the EU, we would be outside the Euro-taxation area. In theory, after the treaty is accepted, it will be possible for 14 countries to accede to enhanced co-operation on taxation and the United Kingdom's veto will be of no avail. Without enhanced co-operation, if 14 countries declare their determination to harmonise taxes, the United Kingdom would in theory—it might be difficult to exercise in practice—have a veto that would stop that happening. In future, we could not stop 14 of 15 countries harmonising their taxation regimes.

Mr. Campbell: No more than we could stop 14 of 15 countries harmonising their taxation regimes if there were no European Union. Sometimes, I get concerned: once upon a time people looked for reds under the beds, now it appears that they are anxious about finding tax inspectors wearing European colours.

Mr. Cash: I say this with great respect—as the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, I have in the past agreed with several points that he has made on the treaty—but the fact is that he is missing the point. In the current context, we are dealing with a legal framework. It is not simply a question of people wanting to co-operate with each other; we are talking about a single institutional structure, as I am sure he is aware. He should reflect on the comment he has just made. It is not merely a question of people deciding that they might come together; it is all part of the drift towards one single framework and one autonomous structure. I am sure he understands that.

Mr. Campbell: I do not accept that. I pray in aid not a member of the Commission but Mr. Bolkestein, who is the Commissioner with responsibility for taxation. During the general election campaign, he made it perfectly clear that as far as he is concerned there is no question of harmonisation of either income tax or corporate taxation. The hon. Member for Stone says that, by virtue of enhanced co-operation, circumstances will be created in which the UK gives up its veto—but that applies to every other country that is currently in the same position as the UK. The suggestion that we are dealing with a matter of stealth, foolishness or deception does not stand up.

Mr. Cash: It is a matter of gravitational pull.

Mr. Campbell: We should be far more concerned with the terms of the treaty than with some illusion of gravitational pull.

For the reasons that I have given, I regret to say that I cannot support the amendment.

Mr. Connarty: I, too, commend those who have made maiden speeches in this part of today's debate. The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Anne Picking) was exactly in the tradition that I expected from a member of Abe Moffat's family—Abe was a famous miners' leader from Fife—although she also paid all the normal courtesies to her constituency and the Members of Parliament who represented it formerly.

To the hon. Member for Westbury (Dr. Murrison) I confess that my only connection with Wiltshire is that of having been on the parliamentary armed forces scheme with the other Wiltshire MP, the hon. Member for North Wiltshire (Mr. Gray). We went to Northern Ireland with the combined battalion that contains the old Wiltshire Regiment, whose members were most hospitable. I am sure that we shall learn more about the medical side of the Army from the hon. Member for Westbury. He painted such a wonderful picture of his constituency that I was going to find out where it was and book a few days' holiday there. I wish him well in the House.

I must be starved of the experience of listening to the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) rail against the European Union. We have served on the European Scrutiny Committee together, and I have had the joy, pleasure and great entertainment of going round applicant countries with him, hearing him rail against the EU saying, "Don't do it." It is like going round with a Free Kirk minister who says, "You're doomed, you're all doomed." It is a joy to realise that he is still on the same theme and I look forward to the next few years on the European Scrutiny Committee with him, hearing him go on about his one theme which, basically, is that it is all a conspiracy.

I thought to myself, "What is that about? Is it against co-operation?" My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies), who in some ways spoke in support of the hon. Member for Stone, said that no one was against co-operation, which was a good thing. So, was the hon. Member for Stone against integration? All that co-operation is plainly laid out in paragraph 11 of article 1, which the amendments aim to remove and which reinforces the process of integration. However, the hon. Gentleman told us that he was against fragmentation. I just do not understand; he is against integration and fragmentation. I realise from one or two of his interventions that he thinks there is a conspiracy; that is what it is all about.

Mr. Cash: I am always grateful for the opportunity to spar with the hon. Gentleman, as we have often done in debate for many years. The real problem is that I am against political union, and I am particularly against political union that is going to implode, which is bad for everybody, including those who are in favour of it. That is my simple answer.

Mr. Connarty: The Wee Free minister image comes to mind again; we are all doomed because the Union is going to implode. However, I do not see any evidence of implosion; I do not think that other EU members do either. In fact, they see prosperity brought about by co-operation, which is what those provisions in the Nice treaty are about. The amendments are designed to remove paragraphs 11 to 15 of article 1 from the provisions incorporated under clause 1 and to remove paragraph 1 of article 2, which is the framework that provides a belt and braces safeguard for those who may be concerned that some co-operation is unnecessary in small groups and can be achieved across the EU.

[Mr. Connarty]

In fact, as has been pointed out, the amendments would remove the ability of any group of eight countries or more to co-operate on any issue, to analyse, structure and put together the mechanisms for co-operation on areas such as those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mr. Hendrick), including drugs and crime. Clearly, if enhanced economic mechanisms are involved, that may well be welcomed by a number of member states. If the treaty becomes workable and is appropriately structured so as not to cause the great chaos and problems that certain states may have feared and which may have caused them not to join the original eight, they can join later at any time under article 1, paragraph 12. A state can therefore join if it sees that the treaty is working.

What is wrong with that? If, at the end of the day, the United Kingdom sees 14 member states put together an enhanced commercial arrangement but stays outside, that is entirely its decision; no one will force or drag it in. As we have seen with the hon. Member for Stone, nothing seems to be a sufficiently strong magnet to draw him to join what he sees as a political conspiracy. Something similar applies to countries: if a country does not want to join, it is not required to do so. Paragraph 12, which would be removed by the amendment, says that enhanced co-operation will be undertaken

"only as a last resort"

after it has been decided, following the normal procedures adopted by the EU's full membership, that it would take too long to set in train arrangements acceptable to a country wanting to make progress on any issues.

That will have to be tested. Is enhanced co-operation a last resort? It is not a first resort; the provision is not saying that, as from day one, everyone will go off, get into little groups of eight countries and get on with their own little schemes. It will be subject to great consideration.

Mr. Cash: To reply briefly to the hon. Gentleman, the example that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) has already given about tax regimes is extremely apposite. An enhancement of so-called single market arrangements for tax under the enhanced co-operation provisions, which will create a congregation of tax regimes, is bound to have an adverse impact on those countries in the single market that do not have the advantages, or disadvantages, of other tax regimes. The fact is, enhanced co-operation will have an impact, which is why so many of us object to it.

7.45 pm

Mr. Connarty: I shall talk a little later about article 2, paragraph 1 which, of course, would be removed by the amendments. When arrangements are considered by the Council following a recommendation by the Commission, qualified majority voting by the full Council will clearly be required. A majority on the Council must therefore consider the arrangements necessary before a group can go ahead. We in the UK should not be afraid of that. If we stopped being frightened of the EU—this Government are probably not as frightened of it as the previous one—and took a lead, we might find that some arrangements are to our advantage.

Denzil Davies: My hon. Friend mentioned that those arrangements can be carried out only as a last resort. That is correct—it is what the treaty says—but if the UK is to maintain its veto and announce that it is maintaining its veto on direct taxation changes, the case rapidly becomes one of last resort for other member states. Because there are vetoes on taxation changes, the Commission has produced a paper and sent it to the Council. The situation with taxation is getting close to last resort, which is why enhanced co-operation between as many countries as possible is desirable.

Mr. Connarty: I think that my right hon. Friend is wrong. He mentioned direct taxation; perhaps he meant indirect taxation. There are serious discussions about indirect taxation, but I have not heard of any attempt to harmonise direct taxation across the EU. If he can give me examples other than a paper from the Commission which may or may not turn into something useful for the discussion, I would accept his point. However, I have not heard of any treaty or Act relating to the EU that says that we would not be able to use our veto on direct taxation.

Denzil Davies: I was referring to direct taxation. The so-called "paper" is a legal document that was sent by the Commission to the Council of Ministers and Mr. Solana. It is not just a paper, but a proposal on taxation for the next few years. My hon. Friend may agree with its proposals, but he should not denigrate an extremely important document that has to be addressed by the members of the Council because it has been sent to their higher representatives.

Mr. Connarty: I take my right hon. Friend's point. I am sure that when I read the document I will treat it more seriously than I have just done. I hope that we can agree to differ; the case has not been proven by my right hon. Friend's speech or intervention.

Article 1, paragraph 13, which would be removed by the amendments, is not binding on any group other than those who wish to be involved. Under paragraph 13, it is clear that no cost arising from co-operation will be borne by any countries other than those who participate, which seems like a good deal. If someone wants to go ahead, look at certain topics, work out a structure and demonstrate the advantages of a scheme that others may wish to join, that seems sensible. Paragraph 14, which would also be removed by the amendments, makes it clear that everything should be consistent with EU policy. The intervention of my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli comes in here: is there any capacity to do something that would be contrary to the many provisions listed in the treaty, including the fundamental conditions of entry to the EU? There will be quite a substantial debate on that.

Amendment No. 56 would remove article 2, paragraph 1, which says that, to commence co-operation, the Commission has to submit the matter for discussion to the European Parliament which, clearly, would air many questions and problems and would possibly suggest other routes. The matter would then have to go to the Council and would have to be approved by QMV, which seems sensible. In some policy areas it is necessary to have the assent of the European Parliament before matters can proceed. I happen to have some faith in the double belt and braces approach.

The proposals in the new clauses are typical of an Opposition who have nothing to say about the substance. The proposals are obstructive.

Mr. Cash *rose—*

Mr. Connarty: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is a signatory to the new clauses. If they were agreed to, a report would have to be placed before Parliament. That would relate to anything that was ever done about the effects of co-operation and does not relate to anything that I have ever seen during the nine years that I have been in the House of Commons. No attempt has been made to assess the result of a proposed policy, but it is then demanded that an affirmative resolution should be passed by both Houses. We are faced with obstructive nonsense that adds nothing to the debate and therefore should be rejected. In the same way, the conspiracy theories of the hon. Member for Stone should be rejected. We are faced with attempts to obstruct the process of sensible co-operation between nation states that want to build an economic and political union of which we want to be part.

Mr. Spring: The hon. Gentleman is expressing a fascinating view of what Parliament is for. Is he saying that Parliament should not consider something as important as the issue before us? If he thinks that parliamentary scrutiny and consideration are somehow obstruction, that says something about an attitude of mind that explains precisely why the EU is so rapidly disconnecting with the peoples of Europe.

Mr. Connarty: The idea that the EU is disconnecting with the peoples of Europe is not borne out by any of the surveys. I believe that the EU is becoming more and more embedded in the processes whereby we make our wealth and people get their work. I believe also that it is an area in which we might learn some lessons on social, employment and other relationships that were not enhanced by the previous Government, of which the hon. Gentleman was probably a member.

The hon. Gentleman's ignorance is compounded by the fact that he makes a point and then turns to talk to a Member who is sitting behind him; that tells us much about his attitude to Parliament. My simple point is that the new clauses are obstructive. They have nothing to do with anything that the last Government ever used. No reports were made on speculative legislation that might relate to the EU and might be determined by resolutions of the House of Commons, although Labour Members asked for that on several occasions.

Mr. Hendrick: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the recommendations of the Conservative party are implemented, and other EU member states implemented them as well, in the sense that individual nation state Parliaments could amend treaties, there would be potential in an enlarged European Union of 28 member states to have 28 different versions of a treaty, none of which would be workable and none of which could be resolved? Is it not better to have a treaty that has been negotiated and can be passed by Parliament?

Mr. Connarty: I think that the issue is more serious than that. It is not about a treaty. The new clauses provide that the Government

> "shall lay before Parliament a report showing the implication . . . incorporating the effects of related Articles on enhanced co-operation".

In other words, if any other eight countries wished to have an enhanced co-operation treaty, the UK Government would have to bring forward an analysis of the effects on the UK, a debate and then a vote. It would be ludicrous to debate decisions by other countries that were designed to be co-operative for the benefit of those other countries. It would be nonsensical to discuss motions of that nature, which would be trivia.

Mr. Spring: I am grateful again to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. The entire point is that the veto was given up on this issue. The issue would never have arisen had the veto been maintained. The responsibility of this Parliament is to try to preserve the national interest on behalf of the people of the United Kingdom. I am horrified that the hon. Gentleman does not understand that.

Mr. Connarty: That false horror is not too difficult to see through. The Opposition are trying to score points when they have nothing of substance to say. I am happy to reject the amendments and new clauses. I hope that the House of Commons will see through the obsession of the hon. Member for Stone. I know that he holds his view with great sincerity, but it is an obsession. We are faced with the paucity of the Opposition's proposals.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman skips over the fact that there are new arrangements for voting powers. We have the double majority voting in the European Parliament. For reasons that I cannot go into now but which I dealt with when discussing a previous group of amendments, the arrangements will have a serious adverse impact on the influence of the United Kingdom in matters affecting European law and politics. The bottom line is that it is absurd for the hon. Gentleman to talk about people being obsessive or having conspiracy theories. We are demonstrating that the effects of the treaty that the Government have brought before the House of Commons must be exposed. The hon. Gentleman seems to object to the democratic process. It is weird. In addition, a guillotine motion has been opposed so that we cannot discuss matters in the depth that is required.

Mr. Connarty: I am not debating the guillotine motion. I sat through the hon. Gentleman's contribution to the debate, I listened to earlier contributions and I am making a contribution. I am rejecting his analysis, his conspiracy theories and his worries. We are dealing with essential parts of the framework that is required to allow the EU to go forward. We should not hold back and be the last in line. If others think that they can take us forward in different areas of policy, or if the UK thinks that it can take others forward, that should be allowed through co-operation. If that is attractive to others, they can join in. There is no compulsion. The clauses are excellent and should not be removed from the treaty.

Mr. Hendrick: The improved procedures for enhanced co-operation will do a great deal to oil the wheels of the

[Mr. Hendrick]

European Union. It is essential that an enlarged EU should have such flexible procedures in place. Member states that wish to co-operate more closely on specific projects will benefit greatly from the proposals. It is bizarre that some Members feel that it is all right for an individual nation state to move in a particular policy direction, but view as a threat or as objectionable a group of member states wishing to move in the same direction together.

The treaty does much to kill the notion that we are developing a European superstate—a lumbering superstate. Member states may wish to co-operate on different issues and different topics, for which the treaty provides a great deal of flexibility. The treaty also kills the idea of a core set of nation states, because any eight of a possible 28 EU member states could take action on any specific project. The notion of a conspiracy involving France, Germany and Italy in every enhanced co-operation agreement has also been killed.

The process could be used in the fight against organised crime, including drugs, which is an international industry or business. Crime is an international business. An excellent mechanism is being proposed to allow EU members collectively to take action and to co-operate. Europol shares information on crime, including drug trafficking. An enhanced co-operation agreement would be able to use Europol to share information and to take action against drugs and other forms of cross-border crime.

Bob Spink (Castle Point): I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument carefully, and I think that he is becoming slightly confused. Is he arguing that individual nation states are unable to co-operate on these important matters without the treaty, and therefore that the treaty is unnecessary?

Mr. Hendrick: I am saying that the mechanisms will make any such co-operation more effective. If two countries wish to co-operate on an individual project, they will be free to do so. When eight or more member states wish to contribute on an important issue, the proposed mechanism will be extremely useful. Co-operative action should not prejudice the fight against crime and drugs in non-participating countries.

A number of hon. Members have threatened us with the spectre of the treaty acting as a back-door mechanism for killing the veto on taxation or on energy taxes in particular. In fact, the changes affect only the countries that want to participate and will have no other effect on other countries, except indirectly, that want to alter their policies as a result of the co-operation that is taking place. There is nothing to be frightened of. I must re-emphasise the fact that non-participating countries are under no obligation to become involved.

8 pm

The hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash), who unfortunately is not in the Chamber, said that, with the exception of child abduction, he opposed extensions of qualified majority voting. He also opposes the treaty's new mechanisms for enhanced co-operation. I have a simple question: how can the 28-member European Union that we envisage make decisions if we do not use QMV in more instances and do not introduce a mechanism of enhanced co-operation? Without those changes, the European Union would be unworkable and it would be impossible to make decisions: refusal to accept them would cause a sclerosis, would make the European Union inoperable and would be a recipe for disaster. That is why Labour Members and some hon. Members from other parties will support the treaty.

The mechanisms proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) to enable this Parliament to amend the treaty would also be a recipe for disaster. If each of the 28 national Parliaments—assuming that we achieve an enlarged European Union—could amend the treaty, we would end up with 28 different versions that could not be resolved into a single treaty. The Opposition have sought to achieve such a recipe for disaster by tabling their amendments, which aim to throw a spanner in the works of the European Union so that member states feel that it is better to give up their membership rather than continue down our current route.

We have also heard the old chestnut that the treaty is all about Germany and is a German conspiracy. Under the procedures agreed at Nice the UK now has 29 votes in the Council of Ministers; Germany has the same number, although it has a population of 82 million compared with our population of only 57 million. At least 258 votes in favour would be needed for the adoption of a Council agreement, so the fact that Germany has only 28 votes demonstrates the ridiculousness of the argument that the treaty is about Germany taking over Europe.

We know that a minimum of eight states will be involved. If eight states want to proceed with an agreement or project, who are we to stop them? If we want to go ahead on a project with seven other members of the European Union, why should other member states prevent us from doing so? Opposition Members spoke of spin and hype, and the hon. Member for Stone used words such as "unworkable", "implosion", "damage", "difficulty", "chaos" and "outrageous". All those words are obviously meant to scare the British public and to frighten them away from a measure that is modest, workable and likely to bring great benefit to members of the European Union.

I also find it strange that Opposition Members argue that a single member state should be able to do as it wishes, but that a number of member states should not be allowed to get together and reach an agreement through enhanced co-operation. That argument seems very strange and anti-democratic, as the Governments of those member states were elected by their people. If they want to act through enhanced co-operation, they should be free to do so.

We have a recipe for flexibility and a European Union that works. I believe that the amendments should be rejected on that basis.

Mr. Spring: First, I want to pay tribute to two hon. Members who made their maiden speeches today. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Anne Picking) generously paid tribute to her predecessor, John Home Robertson, whom we all remember as a formidable parliamentary champion of Scotland and home rule. She spoke about the many battles in her constituency and recalled the Deputy Prime Minister's visit on the day after the famous punch. She also spoke about her career as a nurse; she was,

of course, president of Unison. In addition, she praised the people of Northern Ireland; all hon. Members would join her in doing that. I congratulate her on her speech and wish her well in her parliamentary career, in which I am sure she will make many more speeches. She is the first woman MP for East Lothian, which is another basis for congratulations.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Dr. Murrison). I thank him for his kind tribute to David Faber, who made an important contribution in the House in many aspects of parliamentary life. He expressed doubts—I think that they are widely shared not only this country, but in many parts of the European Union—about the wisdom and development of a future European army. He spoke about the beauty of his constituency. His desire to do so is understandable, as it is one of the most beautiful parts of England. He welcomed the Prime Minister's decision to spend some of the summer in England. I hope that he is right and that the Prime Minister will visit Westbury as part of his holiday. Finally, he spoke about defence medical services with considerable knowledge. I am sure that, after making such a competent maiden speech, he will make such first-rate contributions while representing his constituents in this House. I applaud him and the hon. Member for East Lothian for their speeches.

The amendments apply to general provisions on enhanced co-operation and to specific provisions on the Community pillar. We are also considering two new clauses tabled by Opposition Front Benchers. One of them concerns effective enhanced co-operation in the UK, while the other relates to UK participation in any enhanced co-operation measure.

Conservative Front Benchers take a relaxed approach to the principle of enhanced co-operation—the procedure under which groups of countries can integrate more closely if they wish to do so without taking everyone with them. Indeed, we called for a flexible Europe well in advance of the Government. As my right hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary observed in his speech in Berlin in June, we believe that the way forward for Europe is the gradual development of a Europe of interlocking and overlapping groupings and relationships, and of nations combining in different combinations and purposes to different extents: a multi-system Europe. Europe has already edged in that direction with the Maastricht opt-outs, Schengen and the single currency.

I fully appreciate that some of my hon. Friends may fear that such opt-outs have a tendency to be given up and that enhanced co-operation will therefore drive forward uniform integration, but there is nothing inevitable about opt-outs being given up. The Danish people showed that in their single currency referendum, and I trust that the British people will continue to share that attitude to the single currency.

In a European Union—especially a substantially enlarged one—where the needs and wishes of member states differ, the development of a more flexible, multi-system Union is natural. We should respect the desire of other countries to integrate more closely in certain areas, just as they should respect our desire not to do so if we so choose. Without such mutual respect, the logical consequence will be endless tension, as different countries try to pull everyone else in different directions.

Foreign Office Ministers had appeared to be extremely sceptical of flexibility, fearing that Britain would be left behind, kept out of the guard's van, missing the boat, and all the other mixed metaphors that tend to be used in this context. The notions of an inner circle and an outer tier, of concentric rings and of first and second-class members belong to yesterday. Some may fear that accepting enhanced co-operation for ever condemns Britain to being on the edge, excluded from this elusive heart of Europe. But that misses the point. As *The Economist* said,

"The old argument of the Foreign Office that flexibility is to be resisted because it will lose Britain influence—'a place at the top table'—is no longer convincing."

That old argument continues to be used, however. Ministers doubted the need for any substantial change at all at the IGC.

The White Paper of February 2000 on the IGC said:

"Some member states have suggested that, in an enlarged EU, there will be more occasions where a core of Member States want to move ahead with an activity, whilst others stay out. They argue that the procedures currently in the Treaty are too difficult to use and should be changed. In particular some feel that the emergency brake should be removed. The Government feels that a stronger case will have to be made in order to justify changing procedures that were agreed only in 1997 and which have not yet been put to the test, or indeed used at all. The conditions governing the use of closer co-operation were intended to ensure that too much flexibility did not undermine the Single Market, or could not be used against the interests of a minority of Member States. Those remain important objectives."

At that time, the then Foreign Secretary said:

"The flexibility that other member states propose means the enhanced co-operation of a tighter group. We agreed to such a model at Amsterdam. It has never been used. It is hard to understand why a provision that has not been used already needs amendment."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 2000; Vol. 344, c. 780.]

As late as October last year he said:

"We are happy to discuss options for change. But we remain cautious about any substantial change to the political and legal safeguards introduced at Amsterdam . . . If we alter the current safeguards too much, the danger is that closer co-operation will become the norm rather than the exception. That could damage both the coherence of the Union and send the wrong signal to the new Member States. We do not want them to appear second-class members before they even join."

One can only imagine the surprise of Foreign Office Ministers when the Prime Minister announced in his Warsaw speech that he was now going to support the principle of enhanced co-operation. He said:

"Efficient decision making in an enlarged Union will also mean enhanced co-operation."

He also said:

"I have no problem with greater flexibility or groups of member states going forward together. But that must not lead to a hard core; a Europe in which some member states create their own set of shared policies and institutions from which others are in practice excluded. Such groups must at every stage be open to others who wish to join."

He went on to say:

"That is why enhanced co-operation must not be used to undermine the single market or other common policies. In particular, we must not invite new members to come into the European Union and then consign them to second-class membership."

It seems that later that year the Government showed as much pathetic lack of leadership on that issue as they have on all the other issues surrounding the Nice treaty. Having been told by the Prime Minister to support the principle of enhanced co-operation, Ministers not only cast aside

[Mr. Spring]

all their previous reservations but, in their haste to agree to anything put before them, signed away essential safeguards as well. It is the usual story.

It would be interesting to hear from the Minister where, if anywhere, the Government stand on the matter. Do Foreign Office Ministers still have their previous reservations about the concept of enhanced co-operation, or do they share the Prime Minister's seeming enthusiasm? Did they reverse direction out of principle, or in order to get through the negotiations? Perhaps we shall have an answer from the plain-speaking Minister.

The Opposition have been willing to support some changes to make the enhanced co-operation procedure easier to use—for example, a reduction in the number of states that want to be involved in a measure before it can go ahead from a majority to eight. That makes sense in an enlarged Europe of 27 or 28 countries: but at Nice the Government went much further. They abolished the national veto, the so-called emergency brake, in two of the three pillars. A right of reference to the European Council remained, but not a veto. In the case of the first pillar, that is covered by amendment No. 56.

8.15 pm

Under the existing provisions of article 11.2 of the European Community treaty, a member state can declare that

"for important and stated reasons of national policy"

it will oppose the granting of authorisation by QMV. The matter may then be referred to the European Council for a decision by unanimity. Under Nice, that unanimity provision is abolished.

The extent of the ministerial U-turn on the issue is illustrated by what was said at the time of the Amsterdam treaty. The then Minister with responsibility for Europe, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), said that

"critically, although flexibility proposals can be agreed by majority voting, the Government ensured in the Amsterdam negotiations that the clauses will be subject to the emergency brake—the veto mechanism—that allows any member state that opposes a specific flexibility proposal to veto it by bringing it back to the Council."—[*Official Report*, 15 January 1998; Vol. 304, c. 543.]

Yet that so-called "critical" safeguard, which the Government apparently single-handedly secured at Amsterdam, was jettisoned at the very next IGC—so much for consistency, and for what? What did the Government receive in return for that major concession, and for sacrificing a huge negotiating counter should any country wish to use those procedures in future? Did they even ask for anything in giving up the veto on enhanced co-operation?

We have grave concerns. We have always made it clear that we would expect to use the veto only sparingly where our national interests were genuinely challenged, but it is absolutely right that we should have preserved that right to veto. It remains an essential safeguard and the Government should not be signing it away. It means that in future Governments will be unable to block integration by others even if our interests were being damaged.

Issues also arise under the remaining pillar—common foreign and security policy. The Government have made clear their view that the emergency brake veto remains in place for this pillar. In so far as the existing article 23(2) provides for that, the Government may be correct in that interpretation, but the House of Commons Library—I hope that the Minister will take this on board—points to what it describes as an ambiguity, in that articles 43 to 45 do not provide for an emergency brake. Perhaps the Minister will clarify that point today.

Furthermore, other changes to enhanced co-operation measures were agreed at Nice about which we also have concerns. For example, article 43 of the European Union treaty, as amended by paragraph 11 of article 1 of the Nice treaty, sets out a new condition of such co-operation, namely that it must be aimed at

"reinforcing the process of integration".

In addition, measures must not affect the "competencies, rights and obligations" of member states not participating in them, rather than

"competencies, rights, obligations and interests",

as at present. That is an important point. Again, perhaps the Minister will explain why those changes were made, the basis of the changes and what the advantage to Britain was in giving way in that respect.

Surely it is time for a proper and considered debate on enhanced co-operation as EU enlargement occurs. Policies on the central issue should be determined according to the requirements of a modern, enlarged Europe, not those of Ministers who seek seemingly cost-free concessions during late-night haggling at Nice for no apparent advantage.

New clause 9 would provide for such a debate, and I hope that hon. Members accept our genuine anxiety about the need for it. New clause 10 would provide for additional safeguards should Britain wish to participate in measures that were agreed under enhanced co-operation procedures. We have given up the veto on that crucial issue, and it is important to gain some clarification. I therefore look forward to hearing the Minister's opinion of our balanced new clauses. I commend them to the House.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Denis MacShane): We have had an enjoyable debate, which was enhanced by two remarkable maiden speeches. I believe that the 2001 intake will prove one of the strongest additions to Parliament for several decades. I suspect that the new Members in question have long, strong parliamentary careers ahead and a chance to contribute to our national life. The maiden speeches that were made this evening prove that assertion.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Anne Picking) made a remarkable and polished maiden speech. Like her, I was a former trade union president, but I did not manage quite the same turn of phrase. She paid tribute to her two predecessors, whose membership of the House totalled more than 30 years. I recall John P. Mackintosh speaking on the radio when I was a young man. He was articulate and had a great command of ideas. He was followed by John Home Robertson, whom I was proud to call a personal friend. We went skiing—that great and noble parliamentary sport—together, and I invite my hon. Friend to take her place in the parliamentary ski team. Scots are always much better at the sport than those who live south of the border. My hon. Friend referred to the centrality of public service. I believe that all Labour Members would agree with her about that.

The hon. Member for Westbury (Dr. Murrison) also made a strong maiden speech. He referred to a predecessor with a Spanish-sounding name, who represented the constituency at the end of the 19th century and came to a sticky end. Those who know their Trollope remember Mr. Ortiz, the Conservative Member of Parliament who came to a terrible end. Perhaps bearing a Spanish name does not enhance a Conservative career. Given that all the shadow spokespeople for Foreign Affairs supported the loser in tonight's great election, I look forward to a freshening up of the Front Bench for future Foreign Affairs debate.

Mr. Spring: Was that the Prime Minister's view when he sacked all the Foreign Office Ministers before the hon. Gentleman arrived on the Front Bench? The Minister for Europe has returned to glory, but perhaps the sackings summed up the Prime Minister's view of the Ministers who served the Foreign Office in the last Parliament.

Mr. MacShane: I am glad that my hon. Friend effected his recycling policy when he changed from being Minister for Energy to Minister for Europe. I should prefer to dwell on the Prime Minister's appointments than on his dismissals.

We have held a good debate. I believe that the enhanced co-operation provisions of the Nice treaty strongly contribute to promoting British and European interests in the next stage of constructing the European Union.

The EU's ability to develop and change—its flexibility—has made it a success throughout the years. That flexibility is tested every time more member states join. In a European Union that stretches from Lisbon to Tallinn, it will be increasingly difficult to get agreement to move ahead on all subjects with all member states unless we have flexibility.

Flexibility in the EU has been called many names. For example, it has been described as differentiated integration, which sounds like the Eurobabble that my hon. Friend the Minister for Europe denounced in a speech outside the House in past few minutes. It has also been called variable geometry. I believe that that phrase was first used by the former Prime Minister, John Major.

The treaties have settled on the term "enhanced co-operation". Perhaps that is inelegant, but it neatly encapsulates the wish behind the provisions. In plain English, it means that the EU member states do not have to do everything together. It allows smaller groups of member states to take action together on subjects that the EU treaties cover without requiring every other member state to join in.

Mr. Cash: Perhaps another way of putting it is: all the member states cannot avoid being affected by the actions of those who decide to go ahead.

Mr. MacShane: That was close to being a triple negative. The other day, the hon. Gentleman called not only for enhanced co-operation but for the abolition of the veto on family law. He did that with great passion, and I believe that he was right. Perhaps enhanced co-operation could be used to effect what the hon. Gentleman wishes.

The provisions for enhanced co-operation already exist; they were introduced in the Amsterdam treaty. However, they have never been used. The Nice treaty makes them easier to use for those who want to do that while strengthening the safeguards for those who do not. That is a sensible move to prepare for the enlarged European Union that we want, and we welcome it.

However, the Bill is not about building a two-speed Europe, or a hard core of states that prevent others from joining in. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in his speech in Warsaw last year:

> "Enhanced co-operation is an instrument to strengthen the Union from within, not an instrument of exclusion."

The safeguards that we built in at Nice will prevent that. Those provisions are important. Enhanced co-operation must be a last resort, not the rule. As many member states as possible will be encouraged to join in. Those that want to join an existing enhanced co-operation action later should be given every opportunity to do so.

Enhanced co-operation may not harm the rights of those that do not participate. Actions under enhanced co-operation will not form part of the acquis or basic rules of the EU, so neither existing nor new member states will be required to take part.

It was right to strengthen the safeguards. It was also right to amend the procedures, as we did at Nice, so that, provided the safeguards are respected, no single state can veto a proposal for enhanced co-operation. The so-called emergency brake has gone.

The Opposition have made much of this change, but we are clear that it is not reasonable in an enlarged EU for one member state to hold up those wishing to proceed with enhanced co-operation, provided that the rigorous conditions have been met. Therefore, while we have rightly removed the veto on enhanced co-operation for action in the community field, we have built in a further safeguard: the right of appeal to the European Council. Any member state that strongly objects to a proposal for enhanced co-operation can make its case to the elected Heads of State and Governments in the European Council, and if the Council so decides, the proposal will not go forward. There will still be a veto on proposals for enhanced co-operation under the common foreign and security policy pillar, because decisions are taken on a basis of unanimity in that area.

The Opposition cannot have it all ways. They cannot be in favour of more flexibility in Europe, as they said that they were in their manifesto, while demanding that the emergency brake be retained.

8.30 pm

Mr. Cash: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. MacShane: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I am just coming to the end of my remarks.

Mr. Cash: They were a bit short.

Mr. MacShane: Well, I am trying not to follow the hon. Gentleman's example in these debates.

[Mr. MacShane]

The Opposition cannot support the principle of enhanced co-operation—

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mrs. Heal. In relation to the programme motion, it is pretty monstrous of the Minister to allege that somehow or other we are stringing things out when the Government are stringing us up.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sylvia Heal): That is entirely the Minister's responsibility.

Mr. MacShane: The thought of stringing up any Member in this debate might appeal to some but not to me. I am a pacifist kind of person. I shall make these remarks as short as possible, to leave more time for the hon. Gentleman to contribute to the next section of the debate. I would not deprive the House of that pleasure.

Mr. Spring: As the Minister is making his remarks so brief, I am sure he will not mind if I intervene on him. It is a little unclear to me what point he is making. He said that there was never any difficulty and, in practice, nothing happened on enhanced co-operation after Amsterdam. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom Government were willing to give up the veto based on the theoretical idea that, somehow, a member state would hold up that process. There has been no evidence of that happening so far, yet our national interests, which are obviously vital, have been given up. Some very confused thinking is coming from the Minister, in relation to practice and to theory. Will he clarify the Government's thinking on this matter?

Mr. MacShane: It is very clear that we are preparing for an enlarged EU. We want the great democracies of Europe to come home to join the European Union. Since the treaty of Nice, the Conservatives have said consistently that they wish to oppose that process. That is the huge difference between many Opposition Members and Members on this side of the House—and, I suspect, the man who emerged as winner of the poll whose result has just been announced. I hope that the House as a whole will now revert to where I think British interests lie, and call for the enlargement of the European Union, rather than seeking to put barriers in the path of that process, as some Opposition Members are doing.

Mr. Spring: I do not understand the Minister's difficulty in answering the question. Enlargement is one issue; enhanced co-operation is another, separate issue dealing with a more limited group of countries, which in no way impairs enlargement. I would like an explanation of the Government's thinking. I have not received one so far, and I am disappointed in the Minister. Will he please explain what has happened since Amsterdam to make the Government change their mind in this way?

Mr. MacShane: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the safeguards on enhanced co-operation have now been built more strongly into the Nice treaty by the reference to the Council, constituted by the elected Governments responsible to this and the other Parliaments of the European Union. The basic principle remains: one cannot support the principle of enhanced co-operation, as the Conservative party did in its manifesto, while demanding that the Nice provisions that will allow it to work be struck down. Unlike the Opposition, on their showing today, we see enhanced co-operation as an opportunity, not a threat.

There are a number of scenarios in which Britain might want actively to join in areas of enhanced co-operation, and it is right that I should put those to the House. In the community pillar, for example, the UK might want to join an initiative on scientific research while some other member states might not, or to participate in an initiative to improve transport links between the UK and neighbouring member states.

In the common foreign and security pillar, the UK might want to join other interested member states in implementing a common EU policy in Africa, such as managing election monitors. In justice and home affairs, it is possible to imagine the UK joining a group of member states to agree tough action on an issue that directly affected only a small group of countries, such as drug trafficking across the North sea. All in all, the improved enhanced co-operation arrangements are a valuable feature of the treaty. We strongly support them and, for that reason, we reject the amendments tabled on these issues.

Mr. Cash: By making such a brief and ineffective speech, the Minister has opened up an opportunity, which I shall not miss, to give a proper explanation of the implications of enhanced co-operation. I can do so in a manner that will undoubtedly illuminate the Government as well as, I hope, people outside who are interested in learning more about its operation.

We have already discussed the fact that enhanced co-operation can be undertaken only as a last resort when no further progress can be made in the Council of Ministers under the existing rules. Thus it can be seen from the provisions that countries with misgivings, such as the United Kingdom, apparently had the satisfaction of having many of their demands met. That is easier said than done.

The question is, who decides whether the provisions are satisfied or not? We see that, in the voting rules, enhanced co-operation in all areas can be decided with a qualified majority in the Council of Ministers. That means 62 of 87 votes at present, or 169 of 237 votes from 2005, or 258 of 345 in an EU of 27 countries. In an enlarged EU, the 13 smallest countries could be voted down by the 14 largest. In theory, the 14 largest countries could also introduce enhanced co-operation between themselves, or between eight of them, an arrangement with which 13 other countries would not be happy.

Conversely, three large countries, including Germany, could prevent enhanced co-operation, which might be desired by 24 other member states. Now that we have got down to a proper analysis of what is going on, hon. Members are perhaps beginning to see what a mess all this is. I shall continue until I finish explaining to the Committee for the record exactly what it is all about.

The qualified majority itself decides what is possible. The blocking minority can prevent the decision. If the opponents do not have a blocking minority of 26 of 87 votes, or the corresponding number after 2005, enhanced co-operation can be established. It may be

possible to avert clear breaches of the agreed conditions with the aid of the Court of Justice, but as we all know, the Court of Justice, with its judicial activism, has been the most powerful engine of integration. It considers its task and its objective to be extending European integration, not bringing it to an end.

I move to a question that I regard as of great importance: the weakening of the small countries' negotiating position. There is something pretty disgusting about the manner in which people pontificate about this European Union as if it benefits everybody in equal measure. Let us cut the cackle and get down to the facts. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Hendrick) to laugh, but does he think it a good thing to bulldoze and blackmail the smaller countries?

Mr. Hendrick: I thank the hon. Gentleman for inviting me to intervene. The debate is about countries that want to get on with it, not bulldozing or blackmailing. Those who do not want to get involved can stay out. I would be grateful if he said what enhanced co-operation is about, instead of making up his own fiction.

Mr. Cash: I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman would include as a little bit of fiction the vote by the Irish in their recent referendum. Ireland is a small country, which is one reason why its people took such exception to being bulldozed. That was a main argument made by the no campaign and it is proof of what I am saying. The same goes for the Danes.

If we are to start trotting out remarks on what happens when the Danes hold a referendum, I should say that I was in Denmark when they voted on the Maastricht treaty. I campaigned for and with the Danish people with their consent, and enthusiastic consent at that. The bottom line is that we won that debate. And what happened afterwards? The Konrad Adenauer Siftung, in its journal "German Comments", said in an editorial—I paraphrase, but this is what it came down to—"Something very dangerous is going on in Europe today. Elections are being used as a means of protest. This must be stopped."

That is the kind of language that we are hearing. That is the kind of blackmailing and bulldozing that I am talking about. The British people must be told about it, and this forum—this House of Commons—gives me an opportunity to explain it.

There is a gentleman across the way who is shaking his head. I do not know his constituency, but if he wants to shake his head, let him rise to his feet and dispute what I have just said—or does he not have the nerve to do so?

Mr. Bryant: I thank the hon. Gentleman for enticing me to my feet, but his argument is completely fallacious. He seems to be saying that the people of Ireland should be allowed to make a decision on behalf of the whole of the rest of the European Union, which is fundamentally anti-democratic. A similar point was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies).

It is all important that, in any consideration of the use of enhanced co-operation, we take account of the views of smaller member states that might indeed constitute eight states wanting to co-operate. It would be profoundly anti-democratic of us to decide that we should be able to create a veto to prevent them from doing so.

Mr. Cash: Let me quote from the no campaign literature, which represents the successful side in the debate in Ireland.

"Very Basic Facts on the Nice Treaty.

1. Nice is about shifting power in the EU from the Small States to the Big States. 2. Nice divides Europe into first-class and second-class Members, breaking up the EU partnership of legal equals. It provides the necessary legal path to making possible German Chancellor Schröder's plan to turn the EU Commission into a European Government, with harmonised company taxes . . . ".

I pay tribute to the perception of my right hon. Friend—in this case—the Member for Llanelli, who, in a brilliant speech, exposed exactly how enhanced co-operation would achieve that objective.

The campaign literature continues:

" . . . an end to the basis of our 'Celtic Tiger' economy—and a Constitution that would give the EU Court the final say on our human rights. 3. Nice is about abolishing the national veto in 30 areas and centralising more power in Brussels. It trebles the votes of the Big States in making EU laws"—

Mr. Bryant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cash: No, I will not. It goes on:

" . . . while only doubling the votes of the Small States. This happens automatically in January 2005, even if not a single new Member has joined the EU by then."

The reason I will not give way is this: I think it at least helpful to try to get across just exactly, for example, what the Irish people did vote on. Both the hon. Member for Preston and the hon. Gentleman whom I enticed to intervene—

Mr. Bryant: My constituency is Rhondda.

Mr. Cash: They may find that what I am quoting is not what I have said but what the no campaign in Ireland has said.

Mr. Menzies Campbell *rose—*

Mr. Cash: I will give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, because I rather enjoy his interventions.

Mr. Campbell: Me too.

If the Irish people are as perspicacious as the hon. Gentleman suggests, why does he think that they voted to join the single European currency?

Mr. Cash: The right hon. and learned Gentleman should cast his mind back to that particular referendum and debate, which took place some time ago. He should bear it in mind that the Irish Government clearly did not think the Irish people would vote the way they did. It was precisely because of the compelling nature of the arguments that they did so.

I have here a paper published by the Referendum Commission, entitled "An Insight into the Treaty of Nice: Your Voice, Your Choice. Treaty of Nice 2001". It is a

[Mr. Cash]

formal publication by the Referendum Commission. It is on the web at www.refcom.ie. Anyone who wants to read it can visit the site, rather than me reading it all out today.

Mr. Connarty: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cash: I will. I am glad that we are beginning to have a debate because I have not started yet by a long way.

8.45 pm

Mr. Connarty: I find the hon. Gentleman's comments slightly disingenuous. A number of my relatives live in Ireland. They told me that the biggest argument in their area was that, if Ireland agreed to enlargement, it would lose the grants it received from the EU: they would go to places such as Poland and other parts of the eastern bloc. That is what influenced a lot of people to whom I have spoken in Ireland to vote in that way. Believe it or not, other people do not read the esoteric documents that so delight the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cash: It so happens that the document to which I have referred was sent to every person in the Irish Republic, so the hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that one. The Irish no campaign made the point that Nice is not primarily about EU enlargement. It argued that it is about dividing Europe along the lines that many of us have described today.

On the grants, to answer that question directly, long before the Irish referendum came up, everyone knew that the Irish grants were going to disappear by 2006 at the latest. The Irish have known that for the best part of eight years, so there is nothing new in it. I do not see what the hon. Gentleman's point is. They knew it before they even voted on the treaty.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Cash: I shall carry on a little because I would like to develop the point about the weakening of small countries' negotiating positions.

We have seen the rules of play for new enhanced co-operation. If a country says no to an extension of EU co-operation—for example, because it has been rejected in a referendum—the countries that want it can simply go ahead on their own and use the Union's institutions for a purpose that voters may have expressly rejected. That procedure can be used for proposals on which a large majority of the European electorate, according to public opinion surveys, agree with the nation that rejected the proposals in a referendum. The fact that a scheme of enhanced co-operation can be voted through by majority decision—that takes us back to the group of amendments that we considered at the beginning of these debates—limits the capacity of Government to negotiate in the EU.

As I said earlier and on Second Reading, two parallel operations are running together. One is enhanced co-operation and the other is qualified majority voting. They interweave to achieve the objectives. It is all part of a seamless operation to take us further and deeper into European integration. Indeed, during the negotiations on the treaty of Nice, the Danish negotiator, Mr. Cristofferson, often said that if this or that wording were adopted there would be a referendum in Denmark—heaven forbid. Hence there would be a risk of the entire treaty being rejected. For those reasons, they were frightened sick of another referendum in Denmark. In every single instance it is the elite that is heeded, not the people, because they have common sense: the Swiss people, the Danes, the Irish and for that matter the people of the United Kingdom, particularly under the potential new leadership of the Conservative party.

Dr. Stephen Ladyman (South Thanet): I fail to understand how the hon. Gentleman can argue that small countries are being bulldozed when each one of them has an absolute veto over the treaty. Unless every one of those countries agrees to the treaty, there will be no treaty. How can that be bulldozing them? They should make the decision in their interest. We should be debating what is in our interest, not going over the Irish interest, as the hon. Gentleman is.

Mr. Cash: Not so. The fact is that we are all affected by what goes on in the other countries. The difficulty is that there is a referendum only in a limited number of countries. That is the point that I am making.

One cannot say that the people of any particular country have consented to the invasion of their right to decide who governs them—which is what the process is all about—if they have not been given a referendum. That is why I argued for a referendum from the very earliest days after Maastricht. I ran the Maastricht referendum campaign, for which I obtained 500,000 signatures, and have consistently campaigned for a referendum ever since.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman really is going a little wide of the amendment.

Mr. Cash: I am quite happy to accept that. There are many issues that one might raise, and fortunately we have enough time to raise some of them.

Mr. Spring: I am not sure about that.

Mr. Cash: We are heading that way.

The consent of the people would be gained in referendums. The issue of whether a small country's negotiating position would be adversely affected and weakened is directly related to the issue of consent.

Dr. Ladyman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cash: Only once more.

Dr. Ladyman: Our country has just had the ultimate referendum, a general election. Conservative Members said that the general election would be a referendum on Europe and European matters. Labour Members made clear our position on those matters and on the treaty of Nice and we won that general election. How therefore can the hon. Gentleman say that the United Kingdom has not been consulted?

Mr. Cash: I do indeed say that. First, in the last general election, the Government made absolutely no attempt to address the European issue. Secondly, the Conservative party failed in that election to address the issue properly.

All we did was to talk about not being run by Europe without explaining the impact of, for example, the European monetary rules on public expenditure. Nor did we point out the fact that we achieved a stable economy, which the current Government have inherited, only because we were out of the exchange rate mechanism. The Government now intend to re-enter the ERM. However, I am digressing and shall not pursue that point.

The bottom line is that there are very important issues in this business of enhanced co-operation, extending to enhanced judicial co-operation and the treaty establishing the European Community. Enhanced co-operation would extend to a range of matters. The vast impact that it would have is a matter of gravest concern. Every line of this Bill—it is subject to a programme motion, thereby preventing us from explaining precisely what is proposed in the treaty—is the equivalent of a whole Bill that it would take Parliament the best part of six months to consider and pass. That is what is so undemocratic about these arrangements.

We are legislating on a monumental scale. Many of the lines of this treaty which we shall be enshrining in statute are the equivalent of an entire Bill. I suggest that Labour Members carefully consider how democratic that is.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Cash: I beg to move amendment No. 54, in page 1, line 9, after "to", insert "4 and 6 to".

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 39, page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 11'.

No. 71, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 38'.

No. 72, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 39'.

No. 73, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 40'.

No. 74, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 42'.

No. 75, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 43'.

No. 76, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 45'.

No. 77, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 46'.

No. 96, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 19'.

No. 97, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 20'.

No. 98, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 21'.

No. 99, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 22'.

No. 101, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 24'.

Mr. Cash: We come now to an entirely different subject, social protection, which is very important and related to the blank cheque book that I have mentioned. What is actually happening is that we are introducing laws that are not capable of being reversed in any reasonable sense as any future amendment would require the agreement of all the member states. There is no apparent intention to amend the provisions, but they entail vast costs. It is perfectly right that there should be social protection in certain areas and I have never had a problem with that. Indeed, when my party was in government, we introduced laws—

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could help the Chair and explain how what he is now referring to relates to the amendment on various institutional matters. We are debating amendment No. 54.

Peter Hain: On a point of order, Mrs. Heal. With all due respect to the hon. Gentleman, whose diligence on these matters is well known, he is not speaking to the amendments and I respectfully suggest that either we should move immediately to a conclusion or that he should speak to the subject we are debating.

The First Deputy Chairman: I have asked the hon. Gentleman to address the amendment under discussion.

Mr. Cash: Under the circumstances, I am perfectly prepared to move on, as the Chair may request, but I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) has some remarks to make on these provisions. By the time that he has finished, I will have had the opportunity to find the place in my notes. I understand what the Minister has said, and I am happy that my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk should take up the thread.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Has the hon. Gentleman finished moving the amendment?

Mr. Cash: Yes, indeed. I invite my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk to pick up the thread of the argument. I shall return to it later.

Mr. Spring: This group is another miscellaneous group of provisions, and I shall keep my remarks short.

Amendment No. 39 relates to the new Social Protection Committee. We will be discussing social policy in connection with new clause 6 at a later date, so at this stage perhaps the Minister could provide us with some further information on the role of that Committee.

The issue arises from the Council decision of June 2000 setting up the Committee to strengthen co-operation on social protection policies. It is meant to promote exchanges of information, formulate opinions and the like. Its remit under the treaty has been expanded slightly, so that it will now be charged with monitoring the social situation in member states.

This would appear to be another example of Ministers' views evolving somewhat during the Nice discussions. The hon. Member for South Thanet (Dr. Ladyman) asked the right hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Tessa Jowell), now the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, about the Social Protection Committee during a debate in European Standing Committee C in November. The right hon. Lady said the proposal for a

[Mr. Spring]

Committee would need to be examined very closely before it was given support. Can the Minister say why the result of that examination was to change ministerial scepticism into support? What was the reasoning behind establishing a new treaty base for the Committee and broadening its remit? Can he assure the House that this will not lead to a further increase in the number of social policy measures, including harmonisation, arising from the EU institutions? Each member state appoints two members of the Committee. Can he tell us how the UK representatives are chosen?

Perhaps the Minister could also set out how he sees two of the other Committees included in this group developing in future years—namely, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Both sets of members will now be appointed by qualified majority voting.

The Nice treaty stipulates that the Economic and Social Committee represents

"the economic and social components of organised civil society".

The Minister of State's predecessor told the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) in a written answer that the aim would be to make the UK delegation as representative as possible. What progress is being made in that respect?

Finally, is it the intention that the role of the Committee of the Regions will increase? I appreciate that UK representatives on that Committee are all from local government, the Scottish Parliament or the Welsh or Northern Ireland Assemblies, but the same is not true of the appointments from other countries. There is some worry that the EU's concern for regions, including transnational regions, is intended to undermine Europe's national identities.

Does the Minister agree that genuine decentralisation should be to local government, and that regional government is more distant from local communities? Will he be cautious about any expansion in the role of regionalism in the European Union?

9 pm

Denzil Davies: The first amendment in this group is No. 54. I have always found it useful if the hon. Member moving an amendment reads out the bit that locates the text to be amended. In this case, it is clause 1, page 1, line 9. The amendment states:

"after 'to', insert '4 and 6 to'"—

which I assume means "to 10". The numbers refer to paragraphs in article 2. I am sure that I will be corrected if I am not right when I say that one of the amendment's purposes, therefore, is to delete paragraph 5 from article 2. Thanks to a piece of paper issued by the Foreign Office at the last minute, I have been able to find the treaty. Looking at paragraph 5 in article 2, I see that we are dealing once more with a subject that is an old friend. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister—whose letter I have not yet received—will not mind if I ask familiar questions.

I think that paragraph 5 refers to article 100 in the consolidated treaty of the European Communities, which is to be replaced. Thanks to the bit of paper from the Foreign Office, I have found that as well. Basically, article 100 allows qualified majority voting in certain situations where unanimity was previously required. It has been around for a long time. The draftsmen, out of a sense of tidiness, have inserted a reference to "natural disasters", but, except for the phrase "qualified majority", there is little to distinguish the proposed change from the original version.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can answer some questions on article 100, which, in its new version, will state in paragraph 1 that

"the Council, acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, may decide upon the measures appropriate to the economic situation".

I do not want to be a pedantic Welsh lawyer, but what is the word "the" doing there? Which economic situation are we talking about?

The paragraph goes on to say

"in particular if severe difficulties arise in the supply of certain products."

That is a complete mystery. I apologise again if I sound pedantic, but the House is legislating. The treaty is not the gobbledegook that the EU might churn out almost every two years, and one must hypothesise that it will become British law. If the matter ever came before the courts, lawyers could make a lot of money out of those words.

To contend that the supply of certain products might be in difficulty in this world of global capitalism is a strange concept. Which products are we talking about? I presume that the supply will be difficult within the European Union. Perhaps the article is referring to oil. I do not know. Apart from Britain, none of the EU member states produce crude oil. May we be told which products? The type of products must be in the mind of the person who drafted article 100. That person did not pick the words "certain products" out of the air. What on earth is the first paragraph of article 100 getting at?

Mr. Bryant: I presume that it refers to articles 95 and 96. My right hon. Friend is a far more able lawyer than me, but as memory serves me, those articles refer to state aid provisions. I presume that in that light article 100 makes sense.

Denzil Davies: I am not sure about that, although I do not criticise my hon. Friend. Article 100 comes under title VII entitled "Economic and monetary policy". Chapter 1 is entitled "Economic policy" and starts with article 98, I am sorry to tell my hon. Friend. Article 98 contains the terrible paragraph that upset the Irish. The powers in article 98.4 caused the Commission to issue a recommendation to the Irish Government saying that their economic policies were nonsense. That contributed to the defeat in the referendum. Article 98 comes under the heading of economic policy. My hon. Friend may be right—the article may be about state aids, but what are the products that are of considerable and fundamental importance to "the economic situation"?

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman may care to reflect on the possibility that the article is something to do with BSE and products that a country would normally expect to export. The supply of those products may be restricted due to the constraints that have been imposed.

Denzil Davies: That could be the case. We would like to know why we find concern about the supply of products in article 100.

What sort of measures could be deemed appropriate? Paragraph 1 of article 100 does not mention money, although it could be referring to state aids. I am sure that the Foreign Office is well aware of these things and that there are bundles of papers in the basement somewhere to explain the drafting of the clause.

I raised paragraph 2 of article 100 previously. It says:

"Where a Member State is in difficulties or is seriously threatened with severe difficulties caused by natural disasters"—

we understand that; it was in the original article in a different place—

"or exceptional occurrences beyond its control, the Council, acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, may grant, under certain conditions, Community financial assistance".

What exceptional occurrences?

Mr. Bryant *rose*—

Denzil Davies: Perhaps my hon. Friend is now about to mention state aids. I do not see where it fits in.

Mr. Bryant: Article 87 was formerly article 92, which refers to state aids. It makes it clear that there are certain situations in which state aid is legitimate. I presume that those provisions follow into the legislation that we are discussing.

Denzil Davies: I am glad that my hon. Friend is presuming that. I have discovered in debates over 30 years on these treaties that one should presume as little as possible. It may well be to do with state aids. The money seems to be coming from the other countries—financial assistance is given to the member state. I thought that state aid was given by the member state to itself. I am not sure about that, however.

Mr. Bryant: This is becoming a debate—I do apologise.

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): This is not a court of law.

Mr. Bryant: Indeed; I am sorry. My right hon. Friend is right—

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman could address the Chair?

Mr. Bryant: I am sorry, Mrs. Heal. My right hon. Friend is correct that in the majority of cases in the past, state aid has referred exclusively to the provision not just of financial assistance but of many other forms of assistance to organisations within the member state. However, if there were to be an earthquake in Turkey, for example, it might be appropriate for other member states across the European Union to provide financial assistance to organisations in Turkey. There is a danger that without reform of the present law, that might constitute state aid, to which others might take objection.

Denzil Davies: I would like to give my hon. Friend my copy of the treaty. This is not about aid to Turkey but to other member states. The treaty says

"the Council, acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, may grant, under certain conditions, Community financial assistance to the Member State concerned."

That does not mean Turkey, unless Turkey is a member state.

Mr. Bryant: That is the point that I was making.

Denzil Davies: I thought that my hon. Friend was assuming that Turkey was outside. In any case, the assistance goes to the member state. What exceptional circumstances, apart from national disasters, did the draftsmen have in mind?

Mr. Cash: I should have thought that foot and mouth disease might well be covered by exceptional circumstances. The treaty refers to exceptional occurrences beyond a member state's control. Given that aid to the tune of about £4 billion a year has been given to the German coal miners, our farming community, tourism industry and all areas of the British countryside affected by foot and mouth could qualify, on that basis, for several billion pounds worth of aid to get everything back on course.

Denzil Davies: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. It may have been under article 100, or perhaps it was under the common agricultural policy, that assistance was given to the United Kingdom in respect of BSE. No doubt the Minister will tell us what is meant by "exceptional circumstances."

I come back to the important point before us. We have given up the veto again. The Government argue that it is technical and not important in these areas. Basically, they are saying, "Who cares?" Well, one should care about it. We would not necessarily veto this measure, but it has financial implications and, ultimately, those financial implications concern the member state.

The President of the Commission wanted a European tax, but Finance Ministers gave that proposal short shrift. Ultimately, if something costs money, the cost falls on us. For the Government to argue that it does not matter is, at the least, cavalier. This is another area in which the veto is important. Nothing could be more important than finance and taxation. For the Government to give up the veto when money can be paid out was irresponsible. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister for Europe will disagree with me, and I hope that he will give me the answers for which I have asked.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I share the view of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) that the effect of the amendment is to excise article 5 of the Nice treaty. Article 5 of the treaty, which can be found on page 45 of Cm 5090, would add a paragraph 10.6 to article 10.

9.15 pm

Mr. Bryant: It is article 2, section 5 that is being replaced, not article 5. It can be found on page 16 of the treaty.

Mr. Campbell: No, I think that I am right—[HON. MEMBERS: "You are."] I appear to have support from quarters that have not commonly been supportive in recent times in this debate.

[Mr. Campbell]

The right hon. Member for Llanelli expresses the view that article 5 would be removed if the amendment were accepted. If that be correct—

Denzil Davies: I thought that it was paragraph 5 of article 11, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Bryant) says, can be found on page 16. However, I may be wrong about that.

Mr. Campbell: As I appear to have support from a variety of quarters, I shall press on. Our debate has been hindered to a degree by the absence of the usual lucid and clear exposition of the position by the hon. Member for Stone.

Assuming I am right—my view appears to be shared by others—we turn our attention to article 5, on page 45 of the treaty, Cm 5090. There, one finds that article 5 provides for an amendment to article 10 of the protocol on the statute of the European system of central banks and of the European central bank. It would add to article 10 a new provision, paragraph 10.6, the effect of which is to provide that article 10.2 of the protocol can be amended by the Council, provided it is done unanimously and in accordance with the respective constitutional requirements of the countries that are engaged.

That is what I understand to be the position of the hon. Member for Stone, for which there is some support. In his pamphlet on Nice, the hon. Gentleman deals with the question of the new procedures set out in article 10.6 of the protocol, stating that the new arrangement will

"introduce the possibility of abolishing equality"

in the equal voting rights of governors. No doubt, with the benefit of consideration, he will be able to tell us more about that view, but if he persists in pressing amendment No. 54, I shall certainly resist it.

Currently, the rules of the European central bank reflect neither the populations nor the gross domestic product differentials of the member states. On some future occasion, it may well be considered necessary to amend the deliberative procedures of the ECB, It strikes me as sensible to provide that the procedures are able to be amended, and that is what new paragraph 10.6, which we find on page 45 of Cm 5090, would provide. It seems to me that adequate protection for the interests of the United Kingdom is provided because any amendment has to be unanimous and has to be ratified by the constitutional provisions of all the countries that seek to take part in such a process.

In so far as amendment No. 54 would delete article 5, it is self-defeating, because the deletion of article 5 would be against the interests of the people of the United Kingdom and, more generally, against the interests of those who want the ECB voting procedures to be controlled or regulated by an arrangement that better reflects either GDP differentials of member states or their populations. Given the remarks made earlier today by hon. Member for Stone, I should have thought that he would argue for the retention of article 5 rather than its removal.

Peter Hain: I thank the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Menzies Campbell) for adding clarity and light to the issue. I say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) that the amendment does not refer to article 100. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, it refers to article 5 of the Nice treaty, which is the protocol on the European central bank statute. I did not want to intrude on the interesting dialogue between my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Bryant) and my right hon. Friend, but there we have it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I hope that the Minister will not think it immodest to suggest that one Scots lawyer is equal to two Welsh ones.

Peter Hain: I could not possibly agree with that, and nor would you, Mrs. Heal, as a good Welsh girl.

The Nice treaty is about a lot of things. In respect of the amendments, it is about reforming and modernising the European Union's institutions for enlargement. That is what the amendments are seeking to wreck. The hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) quite properly asked a series of questions about the Committees and I shall seek to answer them.

The Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee are important and they need reforming. That is why we agreed at Nice that the UK delegations to the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee should remain the same size, with a full 24 United Kingdom representatives on each. Both Committees will expand with enlargement, but there will be no change to the balance struck at Maastricht. We and the other big member states will retain more seats than anybody else.

The Nice treaty also requires that the Committee of the Regions should comprise representatives who are elected to a local regional authority or who are accountable to an elected assembly. The current practice in Britain is indeed to nominate people for membership who already hold an electoral mandate, so there will be no change to our appointment procedure. Nice brings others into line with our democratic standards. The treaty also introduces qualified majority voting for appointments to the two Committees. That makes sense too. In practice, no member state ever objects to another's nominations. That is another prudent efficiency measure.

In respect of the point raised by the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife on the European central bank, the future of the ECB after enlargement is an important issue. The Nice treaty changes the ECB's statute to allow the voting rules in the ECB's governing council to be amended by EU heads of state and the Government acting unanimously. That will allow the European Council to decide how the ECB should best function after enlargement.

However, any changes to the ECB's voting rules will still require unanimity—a point made by the right hon. and learned Gentleman—and ratification by all member states in accordance with their own constitutional provisions. That will ensure that British interests are fully protected and preserved, which I would have thought everybody would welcome, too.

Britain is one of the four major shareholders in the European investment bank, with nearly 18 per cent. of shares. The board currently has 38 members. Britain and the other three large states each have five full directors and two alternates. The distribution of shareholdings

between the member states will need to be adjusted to include the candidate states when they become members. We must provide for changes in the composition and voting arrangements of the board of directors to accommodate enlargement. The provisions of Nice allow those decisions to be taken in the Council, but only by unanimity. British interests will again be protected—again I would have thought that that would be welcomed.

I turn to one additional point of substance. We all agreed on the Social Committee at Lisbon that our systems of social protection would need to be modernised to cope with the new flexible marketplace and knowledge-based economy. The Social Committee already monitors the development of social protection policies in member states and promotes exchanges of information and experience among them.

The Nice treaty gives the Committee a proper legal base. It provides for the Council to act by qualified majority voting in formally setting up the Committee, but there is no question of the Committee forcing change on national social security systems. The Committee will prepare reports and opinions, and that is its job. However, if the Commission chooses to take those up in legislative proposals, they will be subject to the unanimous approval of the Council, as for all social security and social protection legislation. I should have thought that even the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) would welcome that.

I shall address one more issue in case I do not have a chance to do so before the end of this debate. It concerns a matter raised by the hon. Member for Stone on the question of child abduction. That matter is dealt with in amendment No. 233, which I accept does not come under the umbrella of the amendments that we are discussing, but I want to make a brief point that may help the House.

I understand and share the concerns of the hon. Member for Stone about child abduction, which is an international injustice and crime. As he knows, his representations have encouraged me to look closely at the issue. I, too, am keen to consider improvements to international rules and, to that end, I should like to invite him, and other members of the all-party group on child abduction, to discuss with me ways in which we can advance work in that area. I shall also ask a Minister from the Lord Chancellor's Department to join us if possible. I hope that that gives the hon. Gentleman some reassurance, so that he may not need to press his amendment to a vote at 10 o'clock.

Finally, lest there be any complaints—I have recently heard mutterings from the Opposition—about lack of time to discuss all these matters, I gently draw everybody's attention to the last full day's debate on the Bill. There were five Conservative speakers and six Labour speakers. The five Conservative speakers took three hours, five minutes; the six Labour speakers took one hour forty-five minutes. Three Conservative speakers took two hours, twenty minutes to make their points. I do not think that there is any reason for arguing in another place or here that there has not been time to address all the issues seriously. If people had been a little less long-winded, all the points that they made could have been addressed.

Mr. Cash: First, I thank the Minister not only for his concluding remarks but for his generous offer on child abduction, an issue about which he knows I feel strongly—as, I suspect, do many Members on both sides of the House. There has been a great step forward; I hope that we can build on that and achieve some protection, both for the children themselves, in this country and throughout Europe, and for parents affected by child abduction.

Briefly, on article 10 of the statute of the European system of central banks and of the European central bank, perhaps the Minister was a trifle disingenuous because he omitted to mention the fact that we have argued that the Nice treaty introduces the possibility of abolishing equal voting rights for ECB governors. I acknowledge that proposed article 10.6 is governed by unanimity, but recommendation 19 insists that work will begin speedily on reviewing paragraph 2—in other words, it gives a pretty firm indication that the balance currently maintained by the unanimity of voting rights on the ECB is under threat; otherwise, why have recommendation 19 at the end of article 10? In other words, the larger countries appear to be gearing up to grab more power from the smaller ones which, again, fits in with the arguments that I have already advanced on enhanced co-operation.

The tendency towards a combination of larger states and QMV illustrates the point that I have repeatedly made: the larger states will increase their power. The question is, who will they be? From the voting arrangements that have been set out—double majority voting and the rest of it—they will include our friend Germany yet again; we need to watch out for those things. In an opinion poll, the German people have just said that they want to keep the deutschmark, but would be glad if we managed to lose the pound. It all comes down to one simple thing; they are sensible, and we have to be equally sensible ourselves.

We can now expect a major pro-euro argument to collapse. The larger economies, particularly Germany, will eventually gain the most political and economic power in the ECB. Furthermore, nation states cannot legally instruct the ECB because, we remember from Maastricht, the governors of the banks congregating at the ECB cannot seek or take instructions from member states. So we have a problem in relation to the powers that are exercised over interest rates and inflation, for example. It is an unaccountable arrangement that affects UK voters. Yet at the same time, running in parallel, is a tendency towards an increase in the power of the larger states at the expense of the smaller ones.

I am grateful to the Minister for his remarks. I shall not press the amendment to a vote, and that is in the interests of my colleagues who are outside celebrating other things. The Committee will have an opportunity to vote on clause 1 stand part. There is no need for me to say anything further on that subject. For the record, in the light of what the Minister had to say, I shall also not press amendment No. 233 on child abduction to a Division. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

9.30 pm

Mr. Cash: I beg to move amendment No. 55, in clause 1, in page 1, line 9, after "to", insert "5 and 7 to".

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 19, in clause 1, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 32.'.

[The First Deputy Chairman]

No. 62, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 26'.

No. 63, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 27'.

No. 64, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 28'.

No. 65, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 31'.

No. 66, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 33'.

No. 67, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 34'.

No. 68, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 35'.

No. 85, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 8'.

No. 86, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 9'.

No. 87, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 10'.

No. 88, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 11'.

No. 89, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 12'.

No. 90, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 13'.

No. 91, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 14'.

No. 92, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 15'.

No. 93, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 16'.

No. 108, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 8'.

No. 109, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 9'.

No. 110, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 10'.

No. 111, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 11'.

No. 112, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 12'.

No. 113, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 13'.

No. 114, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 14'.

No. 115, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 15'.

No. 116, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 16'.

No. 130, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 1 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 131, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 2 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 132, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols" insert—

'(other than Article 3 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 133, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 4 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 134, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 5 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 135, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 6 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 136, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 7 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 137, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 8 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 138, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 9 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 139, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 10 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 140, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 11 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 141, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 12 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 142, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 13 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 143, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 14 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 144, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 15 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 145, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 16 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 146, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 17 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 147, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 18 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 148, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 19 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 149, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 20 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 150, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 21 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 151, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 22 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 152, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 23 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 153, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 24 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 154, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 25 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 155, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 26 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 156, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 27 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 157, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 28 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 158, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 29 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 159, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 30 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 160, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 31 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 161, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 32 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 162, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 33 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 163, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 34 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 164, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 35 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 165, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 36 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 166, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 37 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 167, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 38 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 168, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 39 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 169, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 40 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 170, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 41 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 171, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 42 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 172, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 43 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 173, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 44 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 174, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 45 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 175, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 46 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 176, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 47 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 177, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 48 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 178, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 49 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 179, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 50 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 180, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 51 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 181, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 52 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 182, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 53 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 183, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 54 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 184, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 55 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 185, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 56 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 186, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 57 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 187, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 58 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 188, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 59 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 189, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 60 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 190, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 61 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

[The First Deputy Chairman]

No. 191, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 62 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 192, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 63 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 193, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 64 of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice)'.

No. 32, in clause [illegible] page 2, line 1, after "or", insert—

'save in relation to sec[illegible] this Act.'.

New clause 29—*Extension of jurisdiction of European Court of Justice: legal advice*—

'.—This Act shall not come into force until Her Majesty's Government has obtained specific legal advice from the Attorney General setting out the extent to which the provisions of the Treaty of Nice extend the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in the United Kingdom, such advice to form the basis of a report to each House of Parliament and to be subject to an affirmative resolution.'.

Mr. Cash: The amendments deal with the European Courts. As Members may know, there are severe reservations about the extent and range of the judicial activism of those courts. I think that those matters have been explained so often in the House of Commons that there is no need for us to go through every detail of them, and I have no intention of so doing.

I merely draw attention to the application of qualified majority voting to the determination of the European Courts' rules of procedure. This applies with respect to the Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance. I think that it is stated in "Maine's Ancient Laws" that justice is to be found in the interstices of procedure. We are dealing with an issue that needs to be thought out carefully. The white book governs the panoply of procedure in the High Court, and it would be affected. So much of the law in section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 is already part of our law.

In so far as the overriding superior law of the Court of Justice is to be modified by qualified majority vote, let us consider the downstream impact of that in respect of any decisions regarding procedure that may be taken with regard to our High Court procedures. It is a point worth considering. As with so many of these matters, in one line we can make amendments that are the equivalent of an entire Bill which it could take the House up to six months to produce and deliberate on.

Mr. Bryant: That is clearly untrue. The procedures have not forced the Napoleonic code on British law. There is no reason to suppose that any changes in the procedure should enforce radical changes across British law.

Mr. Cash: That is a fairly astonishing statement given the effect of section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972. However, it is such an irrelevant point that I am not even prepared to respond to it. I leave my argument where it stands and invite my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) to take up the rest of the time that is allotted if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Spring: Hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber will appreciate that the changes addressed by the amendments are complex. The driving force behind the reforms proposed at Nice is the increasing volume of business in the European Courts. There is no controversy over that. If that increased volume of business is taken as read, some of the reforms in the treaty might be considered necessary, but that is a big "If". I shall return to that point in a moment.

I want to make a number of specific points in connection with the reforms with which the amendments deal. I hope that the Minister will address our concerns. First, it is proposed that the jurisdiction of the Court of First Instance be expanded. Amendment No. 55 would prevent the members and registrar of that court from being added to the list of Community representatives covered by the protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Communities. More importantly, the Nice treaty would give the Court of First Instance jurisdiction to hear certain categories of preliminary reference cases. Does the Minister recognise that such cases can often be important, as they are the appeal route from national courts to the European Court of Justice?

Secondly, it is proposed that the Council be given power to attach judicial panels to the Court of First Instance to hear specified classes of business. That is provided for in the treaty of Nice. Such panels might hear competition cases or appeals from the Community trade marks and designs registry. There are numerous cases in both those fields. In effect, a three-tier appellate structure is now developing, with the creation of a further tier of courts below the Court of First Instance. There will be first-instance courts and the judicial panels, and above them, an intermediate appeal court—the Court of First Instance. Above that court, there will be the supreme court: the European Court of Justice.

Does the Minister agree that the existence of the panels will make it easier to expand the direct jurisdiction of European—as opposed to national—courts in proceedings that involve the direct application of Community law to citizens? It might be said that the growth of the European court system into a full three-tier appellate structure is inevitable given the growth of jurisdictions and the increase in the number of cases going into that system, but one must question fundamentally that growth in jurisdictions and competences. It arises partly because of the flow of legislation, the nature of the court itself and its belief that it needs to continue to further the cause of European integration. As we have repeatedly pointed out, if the mincing machine is becoming clogged up, the best approach might be to try to force less mince through, but instead, the EU keeps installing ever-more powerful engines.

The institutions of the EU need to learn to do less and to do it better. That applies to the volume of legislation and also relates to the growing concern about the integrationist nature of the court and its tendency sometimes to extend competence beyond what was envisaged in the treaties.

Angus Robertson (Moray): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spring: I am just about to conclude my remarks. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for not giving way, but we have many matters with which to deal.

Will the Minister confirm that the change in definition introduced by the Bill would require our courts to follow decisions of the Court of First Instance or the judicial

panel? That could mean that our higher courts, including even the House of Lords, have to follow points of EC law that have been decided by judicial panels at a relatively low level, including, for example, the trade mark office boards of appeal at Alicante.

I realise that I am putting very technical points to the Minister, but I remind him that they have an important impact on our judicial processes. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give the House some assurances in that respect.

Peter Hain: In direct response to the points made by the hon. Members for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) and for Stone (Mr. Cash), let me say that an important part of the changes is the package of reforms to deliver a more effective system for justice in the European Union that will cut delays. The British Government have worked hard to achieve that package. Indeed, we overcame the objections of some other member states by insisting that it was included on the 2000 intergovernmental conference agenda.

The hon. Member for Stone asked about qualified majority voting for changes to the rules of procedure for the European Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance. It is important for us to secure that change, as it will make it easier to reach agreement in the Council on proposals to enable courts to organise their work effectively and especially to improve how they work within their existing powers. He will be pleased to know that the change does not hold any constitutional phantom threats for him. It is about making access to justice quicker and easier.

The hon. Member for West Suffolk raised a series of issues which do not apply. The changes introduced by the Nice treaty are much more modest. In particular, to address the hon. Gentleman's first point, the treaty gives the Council the power, by unanimity, to transfer jurisdiction for certain specific categories of case from the European Court of Justice to the Court of First Instance, including preliminary references. That will ease the caseload burden on the European Court of Justice. That is all that this is about.

Angus Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Hain: Not at the moment, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

The hon. Member for West Suffolk also asked about the enabling provision to set up judicial panels, as a third tier in the courts, to help relieve the caseload of the Court of First Instance, for example by dealing with specialised areas, such as staff cases. Those panels will be an integral part of the court architecture and each will be set up by the Council by unanimity.

The creation of such panels is a way of easing the pressure on the Court of First Instance. No big issue is involved here. That is precisely the type of reform that we wanted, to build new flexibility into the court system so that it can adapt its working practices and cut delays in administering justice.

Angus Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Hain: I am sorry, but I am short of time and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been in the Chamber much this afternoon.

The Nice treaty also agrees changes that will lead to improvements in the courts' efficiency and effectiveness. Those changes, which will speed up access to justice and build greater flexibility into the court system, will be good for British business and for British citizens. One need only consider the French ban on British beef to see that efficient courts are in the UK's interests. The courts uphold Community law in areas such as the single market. That is vital to enable British business to function effectively.

By opposing the ratification of the Nice treaty, the Conservative party demonstrates that it puts its own partisan interests before the interests of British business. The Government encourage the Opposition to reconsider their position in opposing such necessary, beneficial and modest reforms of the courts.

All the changes set out at Nice will deliver better access to justice and contribute to the modernised, reformed EU that we want, better equipped to deal with enlargement. That is why we stand by them and reject the amendments.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: If the lead amendment were to be allowed it would have the effect of taking away the privileges and immunities that ought properly to be available to the Court of First Instance. That is a somewhat nihilistic approach. There may be points, such as those raised by the hon. Members for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) and for Stone (Mr. Cash), but to get rid of those privileges is unnecessarily apocalyptic.

The treaty constitutes a reform of the European Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance. As the Minister has already said, an efficient and effective European Court of Justice is essential to the proper functioning of the EU and is in the interests of the British people. Without an effective court, there could not be an efficient single market.

The Minister referred to the Commission taking France to the court in relation to lifting the ban on British beef, and there are similar examples, some perhaps not so enormous in their significance. For example, Greece was forced to open its markets to soft drinks from the UK because of an ruling by the European Court of Justice, and Spain has been forced to change regulations that prevented British confectioners from selling their products there. An efficient and effective court is in the interests of the EU, the single market and the people of the UK. The amendments should be resisted.

Mr. Cash: The problem that we have with the court is its judicial activism. The more functions that are conferred on the EU in terms of European government and so on, the greater the power that the court has in respect of the government of Britain. The Minister has not referred to the European Parliament, but I do not criticise him for that because it has not been raised. However, the European Parliament will now have the right to bring actions to the European Court of Justice. In practice, that will be used to fight Council decisions which are deemed to be insufficiently centralising. We can expect the European Court of Justice to side with the European Parliament against the Council in such cases, thus reducing the power of national Parliaments. Again, that demonstrates the increasing power of the judiciary in the European Union. I warn hon. Members of all parties: watch this space.

Amendment negatived.

9.45 pm

Mr. Spring: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 8.'.

The Nice treaty goes beyond the extension of QMV. It represents the extension of Community competence beyond the existing common commercial policy to other aspects of services and intellectual property. Under the current mixed competence arrangements for overseas trade in services, member states take full part in bilateral negotiations with other World Trade Organisation members, but the Commission acts as lead negotiator in the WTO. Common positions are agreed unanimously with all EU member states. However, paragraph 8 of article 2 of the Nice treaty amends article 133 TEC to allow the Commission to negotiate, and the Council to agree external agreements on the trade in most services and the commercial aspects of intellectual property.

In addition, agreement will usually be reached through QMV. Labour Members highlighted those provisions when mentioning the alleged benefits of extending QMV. Their view is that the Commission tends to have a liberalising agenda, ergo the move must be beneficial. By questioning it, Conservative Members are told that we stand in the way of liberalisation and trade. However, the changes to article 133 represent a significant extension of Community competence in aspects that are vital to the UK economy. It is disappointing that the Government are content to rubber-stamp them so casually.

Perhaps it is true that the Commission would currently approach aspects of service trade agreements from a liberal perspective, but the extension of competence that we are discussing is not limited to specific agreements or times. Who is to say that the point of view of the Commission or the Governments of other member states, which are meant to guide the discussions, will not change? If it does, the House would be powerless to put the case for service trade discussions that are in the interests of this country or, as we perceive them, the EU as a whole.

Britain tends to have an outlook that is generally more oriented to free trade in international negotiations than that of some of our partners. It could be argued that QMV means that the British point of view can prevail. However, it could also be argued that an alternative viewpoint could prevail over ours. No individual state will have a veto on the conclusion of agreements by the Community. That applies to Britain as much as any other country.

The financial services sector is vital to the UK economy. Its importance continues to increase. Does not the Minister recognise that UK interests often differ from those of continental financial service centres? We have much more international business than our continental neighbours, especially in the bond and foreign exchange markets. The UK has massive investments outside the EU, and massive inward investment flows into this country from outside the EU. Can the Minister clarify whether the Nice treaty provisions mean that the UK would be unable to negotiate with, for example, the United States or Japan, even when our interests diverge from those of the rest of the EU? Could our interests be overridden by QMV? If that is the case, are the Government as genuinely comfortable with the changes as they suggest?

We are a trading nation par excellence and our capacity to continue as one needs to be assured.

Denzil Davies: I appreciate that the debate must end at 10 pm, but I want to ask my hon. Friend the Minister for Europe one or two questions. We are considering an important change, which could be relevant to the general agreement on trade and services and the intellectual property aspect of the Uruguay round. One of the few occasions when the European Court of Justice supported member states was when it upheld the argument that they had a competence in negotiating trade in services. Now, of course, that competence has been taken away and, in effect, given to the Council of Ministers and the Commission. In effect, therefore, a veto that would otherwise have been available to member states has gone.

New paragraph 5 of article 133—on page 17 of the treaty of Nice—refers to the

"commercial aspects of intellectual property, insofar as those agreements are not covered by the said paragraphs and without prejudice to paragraph 6."

Paragraph 7 also refers to intellectual property. What intellectual property is being referred to in paragraph 7 that is not included in paragraph 5? Paragraph 5 covers the commercial aspects of intellectual property. We are then told that other intellectual property agreements are covered by paragraph 7. I am not sure why it should be necessary to have a second paragraph. I would have thought that paragraph 5 would deal with the matter.

Secondly, why was it felt necessary to get a derogation in respect of human health services? The French got a derogation in respect of cultural services, as I understand it. I am not saying that we should not have that derogation, but what are we talking about? What human health services would otherwise have been affected by the general agreement on trade and services? Is that what the derogation relates to?

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Following the point made by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) a moment ago, I understand that the French insisted on agreements relating to trade in cultural and audio-visual services, educational services and social and human health services requiring unanimous agreement being required to remain matters of shared competence. Such agreements would be concluded jointly by the Community and the member states. Will the Minister confirm whether that is indeed the legal position and, if so, what reasoning lay behind it?

Peter Hain: I am grateful for the points that have been raised by right hon. and hon. Members. I continue to be amazed by the position taken by the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring).

Mr. Spring: Good.

Peter Hain: Well, perhaps I am not really amazed. Perhaps that is what one would expect from the Conservatives.

These are important changes to the EC treaty that will bring real benefits to Britain. I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) on the loss of the veto, because the common commercial policy helps the member states to combine their strengths to act as a liberalising force in the world market, which will help to open up overseas markets to British companies. That is the point of the measures. Those companies should be told about the Conservative party's position in wanting to block opportunities that will arise as a result of the changes in the Nice treaty.

We have to be prepared to modernise if our economies are to adapt to this century. That is why we agreed to extend the scope of the common commercial policy to include some services and commercial aspects of intellectual property, as my right hon. Friend mentioned. Those sectors of the economy are increasingly important in the modern world. An example is financial services, in which Britain is especially competitive, and it is important that the European Union should throw its full weight behind discussions on such issues. Britain will benefit from the measures; that is why we supported them and why we completely reject the amendment.

Mr. Cash: As has been said, the proposal brings in qualified majority voting for international trade agreements. Apart from extending the subject matter to intellectual property, this has a great deal to do with the obsession of France with cultural services. The article's main provisions on cultural services are a sop to France and its concern about losing the international cultural rules, as the French put it, to the United States of America. That is really what this is all about. Elements of unanimity remain, but this is eventually going to have a severe impact on much of the World Trade Organisation's negotiations, which will be affected in unpredictable ways.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Spring: I beg to move amendment No. 30, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 2, paragraph 17'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 79, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 3, paragraph 1'.

No. 105, in page 1, line 9, after "10", insert—

'other than Article 4, paragraph 5'.

No. 119, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than Article 1 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 120, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 1 of Article 2 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 121, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 2 of Article 2 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 122, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 3 of Article 2 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 123, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 124, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 1 of Article 3 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 125, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 2 of Article 3 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 126, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 1 of Article 4 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 127, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 2 of Article 4 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 128, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 3 of Article 4 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

No. 129, in page 1, line 12, after "Protocols", insert—

'(other than paragraph 4 of Article 4 of the Protocol on the enlargement of the European Union)'.

Mr. Spring: Many issues covered by the amendment are vital to the functioning of a post-enlargement EU. I want to address the changes to the European Parliament and then issues connected with Council reweighting and the Commission's size. The amendment relates to the number of Members of the European Parliament. The new limit is set at 732 compared with the 700 envisaged previously, so that is yet another clear reversal of the Government's position.

In March 2000, the former Minister for Europe told the Foreign Affairs Committee that the ceiling of 700 was an acceptable position. The former Foreign Secretary also opposed a two-stage transition to a lower limit for the number of MEPs. He said:

"we are less convinced by the EP's idea of a two-stage transition. A single re-adjustment would avoid the need for two separate changes to national arrangements, and to predict how many new countries will accede in the period between 2004 and 2009. The accession of more than had been expected would lead to a breach of the 700 seat ceiling, from which it might subsequently be difficult to row back."

Guess what happened at Nice? The Government agreed to just such a breach of the 700-seat ceiling. Does the Minister think that it has subsequently been difficult to row back? Are the Government rowing back from their original position or is it still their objective? Having set out the position of trying to keep in balance the size of the European Parliament, have they rowed back from it? Perhaps the Minister will explain his predecessor's failure to persuade others of the Government's case at Nice, which will be all too familiar to the former Foreign Secretary who is now on the Front Bench.

I must deal with the reweighting in the Council and briefly discuss the amendment and the Commission's size. The Opposition have made it clear that they are willing to accept those provisions in the treaty of Nice as being connected with EU enlargement, which we passionately support. That is not to say that current arrangements are the biggest obstacle to speedy and successful enlargement. The biggest obstacles, such as an unreformed common agricultural policy, are not addressed in the treaty at all. Nor do we believe that the new arrangements are by any means perfect, but an EU preparing the way for enlargement needed to limit the size of the Commission and rebalance the votes in the Council, so we shall not vote against those changes.

A number of comments have been made about Britain's relative influence under the revised voting procedures. I shall not go into detail about that, but I must ask the Minister about the attitude of EU leaders to the applicant states. Does he share our view on President Chirac's apparent assertion that it is

"legitimate that old member states, who have contributed so much, have more votes than those who are new and will bring problems"?

[Mr. Spring]

Does he regard that as acceptable or regrettable? In particular, as the Foreign Affairs Committee has noted, the Czech Republic and Hungary have both expressed disappointment that they were allocated two fewer European Parliament seats than Belgium, Greece and Portugal, which have similar populations. Malta also has concerns. Can he clarify whether those provisions in declaration 20 of the treaty of Nice are final?

The Foreign Office memorandum was at pains to point out to the Select Committee that the vote weights in the declaration do not have legal force. Rather, they represent a political commitment and a guide for accession negotiations. It is said that any applicant country that feels that it has been unfairly treated is free to raise the matter during the negotiations, but that raises two questions. First, at Nice, why did Ministers once again agree to measures that they clearly do not support and are unable to defend? Secondly, if applicant countries raise the issue during the negotiations, can they hope to receive support from Her Majesty's Government?

Peter Hain: I disagree with all the points made by the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring), which is why we call on the Committee to reject the amendment.

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN, *pursuant to Orders [4 and 11 July], put forthwith the Questions necessary to bring proceedings on clauses 1 to 4 to a conclusion.*

Amendment negatived.

Question put, That clause 1 stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee proceeded to a Division.

The First Deputy Chairman: I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate the delay in the No Lobby.

The Committee having divided: Ayes 367, Noes 146.

Division No. 29] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Rt Hon Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atherton, Ms Candy
Austin, John
Bailey, Adrian
Baird, Vera
Banks, Tony
Barnes, Harry
Barrett, John
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Begg, Miss Anne
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Hilary
Bennett, Andrew
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Best, Harold
Betts, Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blizzard, Bob
Borrow, David
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Bradshaw, Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brooke, Annette
Brown, Rt Hon Nicholas *(Newcastle E & Wallsend)*
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Colin
Burnham, Andy
Burstow, Paul
Cable, Dr Vincent
Caborn, Rt Hon Richard
Cairns, David
Calton, Patsy
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Cann, Jamie
Caplin, Ivor
Carmichael, Alistair
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chaytor, David
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Iain
Colman, Tony
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Corston, Jean
Cotter, Brian
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis-Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dean, Mrs Janet
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Doughty, Sue
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Drown, Ms Julia
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flynn, Paul
Follett, Barbara
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foulkes, George
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Gidley, Sandra
Godsiff, Roger
Goggins, Paul
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grogan, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hanson, David
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Heath, David
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Heppell, John
Hesford, Stephen
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hinchliffe, David
Holmes, Paul
Hood, Jimmy
Hope, Phil
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Beverley *(Stretford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Kemp, Fraser
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lamb, Norman
Lammy, David
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laws, David
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Llwyd, Elfyn

Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
MacDonald, Calum
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McNulty, Tony
MacShane, Denis
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWalter, Tony
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moore, Michael
Morgan, Julie
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oliner, Bill
Öpik, Lembit
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Sir Raymond
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Price, Adam
Prosser, Gwyn
Pugh, Dr John
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Rendel, David
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Roy, Frank
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Salmond, Alex
Salter, Martin
Sanders, Adrian
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Shipley, Ms Debra
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Straw, Rt Hon Jack
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Stunell, Andrew
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tyler, Paul
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
Webb, Steve
Weir, Michael
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*
Willis, Phil
Wills, Michael
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wray, James
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Younger-Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Ayes:
Angela Smith and
Dan Norris.

NOES

Amess, David
Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bacon, Richard
Baldry, Tony
Barker, Greg
Baron, John
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bercow, John
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Worthing W)*
Brady, Graham
Brazier, Julian
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burns, Simon
Burnside, David
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cameron, David
Cash, William
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chope, Christopher
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Collins, Tim
Cran, James
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Donaldson, Jeffrey M
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Duncan, Alan
Duncan, Peter
Evans, Nigel
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flight, Howard
Flook, Adrian
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Fox, Dr Liam
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
Garnier, Edward
Gibb, Nick
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Gray, James
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Greenway, John
Hammond, Philip
Hawkins, Nick
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Hendry, Charles
Hermon, Lady
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Johnson, Boris *(Henley)*
Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(E Yorkshire)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lansley, Andrew
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Liddell-Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Loughton, Tim
McIntosh, Miss Anne
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
Mercer, Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Moss, Malcolm
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Norman, Archie
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pickles, Eric
Prisk, Mark
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, Laurence *(Tewk'b'ry)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Sayeed, Jonathan
Selous, Andrew
Shephard, Rt Hon Mrs Gillian
Shepherd, Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Keith *(Mid-Norfolk)*
Skinner, Dennis
Soames, Nicholas
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Streeter, Gary
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Syms, Robert
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tredinnick, David

Trend, Michael
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Walter, Robert
Waterson, Nigel
Watkinson, Angela
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Rt Hon Miss Ann
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Luff and
Mr. John Randall.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

To report progress and ask leave to sit again.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to delegated legislation.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 118(6) (Standing Committees on Delegated Legislation),

Local Government Finance

That the Local Government Finance (England) Special Grant Report (No. 83) (HC88) on Maintenance of Roads Grants 2001–02, which was laid before this House on 2nd July, be approved.

That the Local Government Finance (England) Special Grant Report (No. 82) (HC111) on 2001–02 Special Grants in connection with pilot Local Public Service Agreements, which was laid before this House on 2nd July, be approved.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

That the draft National Minimum Wage Regulations 1999 (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2001, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

Constitutional Law

That the draft Scotland Act 1998 (Transfer of Functions to the Scottish Ministers etc.) (No. 2) Order 2001, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

Transport (Scotland)

That the draft Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 (Conditions attached to PSV Operator's Licence and Competition Test for Exercise of Bus Functions) Order 2001, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

Representation of the People

That the draft Representation of the People (Form of Canvass) (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

That the draft Representation of the People (Form of Canvass) (Scotland) Regulations 2001, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

Local Government Finance

That the Local Government Finance (England) Special Grant Report (No. 85) (HC130) on Invest to Save Budget Round 3 projects, which was laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

Representation of the People

That the draft Representation of the People (Form of Canvass) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2001, which were laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

Question agreed to.

Social Security

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 118(6) (Standing Committees on Delegated Legislation),

That the draft Social Security (Literacy Etc. Skills Training Pilot) Regulations 2001, which were laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think the Ayes have it.

Hon. Members: No.

Division deferred till Wednesday 18 July, pursuant to Order [28 June 2001].

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 118(6) (Standing Committees on Delegated Legislation),

Local Government Finance

That the Local Government Finance (England) Special Grant Report (No. 86) (HC147) on 2001–02 Special Grant for Rate Relief in Respect of Hardship caused by Foot and Mouth Disease, which was laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 118(6) (Standing Committees on Delegated Legislation),

Agriculture

That the Home-Grown Cereals Authority Levy (Variation) Scheme (Approval) Order 2001, which was laid before this House on 20th June, be approved.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [28 June],

That Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 26th October, 2nd, 23rd and 30th November 2001, 11th, 18th and 25th January, 15th March, 12th and 19th April, 10th May, 21st June and 19th July 2002.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick*].

Hon. Members: Object.

PETITION

Northern General Hospital, Sheffield

10.20 pm

Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I wish to present to the House a petition from 62,000—[*Interruption.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): Order. Will hon. Members please leave the House quickly and quietly?

Helen Jackson: I wish to present to the House a petition from 62,000 members of the community in south Yorkshire who oppose the possible closure of the heart transplant unit in Sheffield's Northern General hospital.

The petition states:

The Petitioners therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Secretary of State for Health to intervene to ensure the continued functioning and development of the cardio-thoracic transplant unit at the Northern General Hospital.

To lie upon the Table.

Southend (Regeneration)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Jim Fitzpatrick.]*

10.21 pm

Mr. David Amess (Southend, West): I think that the whole House recognises that Southend is the finest seaside resort in the country. Any hon. Member who saw the exhibition that we held in the Upper Waiting Room before the general election will have been truly impressed by the quality of the different facilities that Southend has to offer. It is a remarkable seaside resort. How could anyone not enjoy Rossi's glorious ice cream, a trip to the end of the longest pier in the world or the magnificent plants and shrubs that adorn the cliffs at the side of the Thames estuary?

We recently had a magnificent air show, which attracted people from all over the country. I am very proud of the town of Southend, but, like so many seaside resorts, it faces a number of challenges. It is recognised, for instance, that holidays in this country are not as popular as they used to be. Air fares are much cheaper than they used to be, and our weather can be rather unpredictable, so it is clear that Southend and other resorts have lost much of the domestic business that they used to enjoy.

For those and other reasons, Southend has found that it has had to reposition itself in the market. The House will know that, for two or three years, I urged the Government to support our bid for funding from the European Union, and the Government gave that support. I welcome the new Minister to her post, and I know that she will want to do her best to support my constituents in Southend, West.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) is present, as is the hon. Member for Colchester (Bob Russell), who takes a great interest in these matters. When we first tried to secure European funding some considerable time ago, we had meetings with Ministers at which it was well understood that five wards in Southend would be supported. Two of the wards to benefit were in my constituency, and the other three were in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor).

I shall not bore the House with details of what went on, but without any warning I suddenly discovered that the two wards in my constituency would not receive any support because we had initially applied for funding under the fisheries strand. I was not involved in the process whereby that bid collapsed. All of a sudden, we found out that we qualified only under the urban strand. All five wards that qualified turned out to be those in the constituency of my hon. Friend. That was a huge disappointment to my constituents and to me.

We had a debate in Westminster Hall about the bid. The then Minister, the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), was gallant and recognised that the matter could have been handled differently. That said, I felt that as we qualified under the urban strand, one of the wards in my constituency—Westborough—certainly would have met the criteria: but there we are, it was done and dusted. I hope that everything that I intend to put before the Minister will persuade her that the fishermen and women who were disappointed by what happened can take some encouragement from what we may be able to secure for them.

[Mr. David Amess]

The council has a good working relationship with regional organisations and the east of England objective 2 partnership. A number of projects in Southend are being developed with access to EU funding. Southend has recently been awarded £5.4 million of EU objective 2 funding, about which we are truly delighted. It will go towards a major £17 million project, to be known as Southend seafront high street and pier enhancement. Again, none of the wards falls in the constituency that I represent, but there is no doubt that the development will have a great impact on the whole of Southend and will attract more businesses and visitors to the town.

The local authority welcomes the project and the financial support from Europe. We thank the Government for their backing, but in the midst of all this good news the fishing community is experiencing difficulties in obtaining financial support for a project that has great potential for innovation and diversity within the industry.

I pay a warm tribute to two council officers, Philomena Kettlewell and Vivian Byczynski. They have worked hard to try to secure EU funding for the project, but it is a private project led by Mr. Michael King and Mr. Paul Gilson, who have done a splendid job in developing it. It is a remarkable scheme that everyone praises.

The fishing grounds of the Thames estuary are under considerable pressure as a result of various EU restrictions, as Essex Members know. The number of fishermen has declined, and the retail price of fish has increased, to the disadvantage of the consumer. Fish farming and, more recently, genetically modified fish, have affected consumer confidence in the product. The programme would increase the number of harvestable fish in the area and the opportunity for fishermen to make a living in a manner that does not involve GM fish or fish farming. The project will also enable complementary industries such as marine engineering and transport to prosper. Scientific research associated with the project has educational and tourist potential and will enhance the image of the town, not that it needs too much of that, but I admit that I am biased.

Dover sole, as most Essex Members know, is the most important fish caught in the Thames estuary. It is a high-value item, but stocks have decreased despite conservation measures. That species will form the thrust of the initial project. Adult fish caught in the wild in spawning conditions will be retained on board fishing vessels in special holding tanks and transferred ashore to fertilisation tanks on the same day. Once fertilised, the larvae will be grown in tanks—half will grow to 5 cm long and half to 10 cm—and then returned to the sea. They will be separately identified to compare survival of the different-sized released juveniles.

Following the success of the Dover sole scheme and in order to utilise the facility throughout the year, the project leaders believe that the same procedure could be used with turbot and lobster. Lobsters, I am advised, have the advantage of not straying far, so they can be harvested locally. As major growth would take place in the sea, the image associated with fish farming would be avoided. They will be "wild fish".

Hatcheries are already being run successfully in Canada and Japan, and some have recently been started in the British Isles. There is the Padstow lobster hatchery in Cornwall as well as the Wexford lobster co-op and the Dingle aquarium and flatfish hatchery, both in the Republic of Ireland. Members of the committee working on the project have visited all those sites. As far as they are concerned, the two hatcheries could be run in conjunction with an aquarium and would be well supported by local fishing industries and the local authority.

The hatcheries in Dingle and Padstow are both adjacent to, and reliant on, aquariums. The equipment and expertise needed to operate an efficient aquarium are similar to those for a hatchery, so co-location is desirable. At present, the idea is that the Southend Sea Life centre, which has substantial advantages for the scheme, would be used as a main base, but a number of other possibilities are being explored.

I hope that the Minister recognises that this project is very important for employment. Fishing has steadily declined in recent years—we are down to about 60 fishermen working in the area. The project would protect these jobs and we believe that there would be an increase in such employment. Members of the Kent and Essex sea fisheries committee support it, as do others. Research is also crucial.

Some might say that Mike King, the chairman of the project, has been using intemperate language about his disappointment. That is unfair, but he is somewhat frustrated about how the scheme has been handled. The committee first met in February 2000; the scheme was prepared for objective 2 funding, only to be told nine months later that fishing was excluded. The committee checked with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the latest funding became known. It was advised that it was okay, only to be told later that it was excluded because it was aquaculture. We do not have the time to go into detail in this short debate, and I will send the information to the Minister's office, but advice from Brussels seems to contradict that. I am not criticising civil servants or others; I am simply asking the Minister to ensure that we receive the correct information.

Mike King believes that there are two issues. He believes that the scheme would be widely supported and that it is unable to proceed after 18 months owing to bureaucracy. He has found getting a straight answer about whether the scheme is viable to be a frustrating exercise. I shall not name names, but he is adamant that we were given the wrong information about the scheme at the start.

From the local authority perspective, I pay tribute to Councillor David Garston and his vice-chairman, Mrs. Anna Whaite, who have done a magnificent job. They have asked me to draw to the Minister's attention a number of points in conclusion.

We ask the Minister and her officials—I know that she will have to talk to those in other Departments—to see whether there is a way to help the fishermen through the difficulties from which their industry is suffering at the moment. Why are the funding restrictions such that the project faces so many obstacles, even though everyone seems to agree its merit and potential? I would like Government advice on how barriers can be broken down so that the most up to date and appropriate advice can be given to fishermen to support their initiative. I ask the Minister to assure the fishermen of Southend that every effort will be made to find a solution before the next bidding round, which I am advised will start in

September. I therefore hope that, during the long summer recess, the new Minister will use her very best endeavours to bring some joy and hope to Southend fishermen.

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Ms Sally Keeble): I congratulate the hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) on securing this debate. He has eloquently explained the problems of Southend and even more eloquently set out its attractions. He has tread that very careful line between praising an area and recognising its problems.

It is widely recognised that, despite its many attractions, Southend has a number of very long-standing problems. The district ranks among the most deprived in the east of England in terms of income and employment. Southend's unemployment rate stands at 4.2 per cent, which compares unfavourably with the east of England average of 2.1 per cent. and a United Kingdom average of 3.2 per cent.

The problems, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, are rooted in structural weaknesses in the Southend economy—principally its overdependence on tourism, fishing and certain types of financial and business services, which are all in decline. Recent plans to redevelop Southend's former gasworks site by building a 15-bedroom hotel and houses have been axed, and a local manufacturer has announced the redundancies of 33 people.

I should, however, like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Southend-on-Sea council and other local and regional agencies—the hon. Gentleman mentioned some of the individuals involved who deserve credit—for tackling the problems with exemplary vigour and imagination. I congratulate the council on its successful campaigns for some Southend wards to be included in the east of England objective 2 programme—I recognise the resentment that some feel when their wards are not included in a funding area—and for the whole of Southend to be included in the Thames gateway, which has been extended to include south-east Essex and which will be an important driver for the regeneration of the area.

The objective 2 programme provides a tremendous opportunity for Southend and other needy areas in east England. Over the seven years from January 2000 to December 2006, almost £100 million of European grants will be available to objective 2 areas in the east of England, supporting projects to the value of more than £260 million.

Southend-on-Sea council and its partners have come together in a local area group for the Southend-on-Sea objective 2 area, which will oversee the preparation and submission of bids. The partnership's vision is that, by the end of the objective 2 programme, Southend-on-Sea will be known throughout the east of England and beyond as a vibrant and different area that is an attractive place in which to live, work, shop and spend time and—hopefully—money.

The partnership has already bid successfully for its first major objective 2 project: a £17 million Southend sea front, high street and pier-enhancement project. That will be supported by a £5.4 million grant from the European regional development fund. The project will transform the appearance of the town's central corridor, from the gateway entrance in Prittlewell through the high street and along the 2 km pier, which is being restored following the disastrous fire of a few years ago.

Works to be undertaken as part of the project include a heritage trail, cycle paths, the creation of a series of themed quarters in the high street and the removal and replacement of unsightly and out-dated features. Southend is already visited by 1.6 million people a year. The aim of the project is to increase that number substantially, and I am sure that it will have the hon. Gentleman's strong support.

Two other major bids are at an advanced stage of preparation. The first is the Milton "investment in learning" project, which will provide community facilities on the new South East Essex college campus in Milton, with the aim of stimulating demand for learning and skills development and delivering business support to local enterprises. The second is the "advance, learn and live" project of the Southend Association of Voluntary Services, which will provide additional facilities for the association's centre in Alexandra street, offering volunteering and training opportunities to people who feel disengaged and marginalised, including the long-term unemployed. As the hon. Gentleman said, Southend also benefits from objective 3 funding which has made a significant contribution to the local economy in a number of ways, through projects totalling £812,151.

The hon. Gentleman specifically mentioned the problems of the fishing industry. I shall now address that and discuss the details of the project about which he is particularly concerned. The coastal area around Southend was designated as a PESCA area under the previous European Union community initiative programme—the hon. Gentleman might be familiar with PESCA, which I am told is not an acronym. In addition to the nationally acclaimed cockling industry based in Leigh-on-Sea, the area is known for its stocks of a wide range of fish and shellfish subject to the EU quota system. Local fish merchants, supermarkets and restaurants purchase some of the catch, but the vast majority of locally caught fish is exported.

The fishing grounds of the Thames estuary are under considerable pressure as a result of EU restrictions. Within the area, the number of fishermen has declined and the retail price of fish has increased, to the disadvantage of the consumer. Fish farming and, more recently, genetically modified fish have affected consumer confidence. I am aware that the fishing industry has been suffering serious decline. One positive outcome, however, is the way in which fishermen have pooled their resources and expertise in a partnership approach to tackling the issues that they face and the challenges facing the industry. The fishing community has considered how to embrace new technology, new ideas and innovative ways to diversify and compete in today's market, and to maintain the skills that have been passed down the generations.

The fish restocking project is a good example of that. It has been discussed and developed during the past 18 months, with the support of the hon. Gentleman. It is regarded as an innovative project that would address the issues of fish stocks. It involves removing the eggs from caught fish, allowing the larvae to grow in controlled conditions and releasing the juveniles back into the water, so helping to provide adequate fish stocks for local

[Ms Sally Keeble]

fishermen to catch. The project also offers an opportunity for scientific research into the development of fish larvae, tagging of young fish and measuring their rate of growth, the distance they travel and the number that are subsequently caught in local waters.

The fish restocking project will increase the number of harvestable fish in the area and enhance opportunities for fishermen to make a living in a way that does not involve GM fish or fish farming. It will also enable complementary industries to prosper, including marine engineering and transportation. In addition, the scientific research associated with the project has educational and tourism potential, and it will enhance the town's image. Once the immediate target of increasing stocks of Dover sole has been met, there is a prospect of turning to turbot and lobster.

Discussions have taken place between the fish restocking project partnership and officials at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. They have identified a question about the project's eligibility for the financial instrument for fisheries guidance scheme: the nub of the issue is whether the project constitutes aquaculture, which is excluded from the scheme. DEFRA officials understand the issues and are working hard to resolve them in the near future. I know that they have been supportive in pointing out issues relating to eligibility and have identified areas where more information is needed for a bid. I understand that the project partners decided not to submit a bid in June as a result of those problems, but I strongly encourage them to continue discussions with DEFRA and to explore fully flexibilities in the scheme. The next round of bidding will close at the end of September this year, which allows time for partners to discuss issues and to submit a formal bid. I assure the hon. Gentleman that DEFRA will do all that it can to help them in the bid process. It is also sensible for those concerned with the project to consider alternative avenues and sources of funding by, for example, talking to the East of England development agency.

Despite the problems with that project, there is good news about the regeneration of Southend. Plans to renovate and improve Southend pier were unveiled in May and a new pier entrance should be ready in June 2002. A £2 million programme to re-deck the fire-damaged pier head should be finished by December 2002. There are two major developments at Shoeburyness, which is at the eastern periphery of the borough, both of which are former Ministry of Defence ranges and are considered crucial to the regeneration of the area. One development, at Shoeburyness garrison, will result in 600 jobs as the result of the creation of a mini-town comprising 465 new homes, a school, shops, leisure centre and health centre. Moreover, 150 new jobs were created by London Clubs International, which opened a new Casino at the Kursal building earlier this year.

We are taking action to improve local transport for Southend. Communications are good; the A127 and A13 trunk roads link Southend to the national motorway network via the M25, which is 20 minutes' drive from the town. However, both trunk roads are overloaded and we are contributing £14.5 million to the borough council's scheme to improve passenger transport and reduce congestion on the A13 and A127. In addition, Southend received an increase in transport block funding of £4.6 million for 2001-02, against funding of £2.3 million in the previous financial year.

Southend is now receiving funding under the fifth and sixth rounds of the singe regeneration budget programme. In the fifth round, Southend received more than £1.8 million of SRB money for a £3.758 million seven-year scheme that is aimed at identifying and developing solutions for the deprived wards of Milton, Victoria and St. Luke's. Projects include a community information and learning centre; improving educational attainment and health awareness; and addressing the needs of minority and vulnerable groups. In the sixth round, Southend received £3.75 million of SRB money for a £27 million seven-year scheme aimed at providing information on learning, education and skills through community capacity building and community renewal projects and a mental health project.

Those were substantial amounts of money from a wide variety of sources, both from the Government and Europe. I am sure that they will greatly enhance the regeneration of all of Southend which, of course, will benefit all its constituents. The hon. Gentleman can take much comfort from the fact that his constituents are getting a large slice of regeneration funds, even though there are difficulties with the project in which he has a particular interest. Clearly, it is an emotive subject because of the area's traditional connections with the fishing industry.

However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that I have taken note of his comments on the problems for the fishermen at Southend, specifically the fish restocking project. I know that Southend is in receipt of large amounts of regeneration funding, which should have a huge impact on the area. Once again, I should like to take the opportunity to encourage the project partners to work with DEFRA officials on a bid for September. I assure the House that the Government office for the east of England is well aware of the difficulties surrounding the project and of the hon. Gentleman's interest in it; it will work with partners to ensure that all of Southend can make best use of the opportunities offered it by the funding and initiatives that I have mentioned.

In conclusion, I again congratulate the hon. Gentleman on raising this subject. I am sure that, with his skilled advocacy on behalf of his constituency and town, Southend will truly realise its full potential.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 18 July 2001

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (WARD ELECTIONS) BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the promoters of the City of London (Ward Elections) Bill which originated in this House in the last Parliament but had not received the Royal Assent may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the bill in the present session of Parliament; and the petition for the bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable to it shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That the bill shall be presented to the House by deposit in the Private Bill Office no later than the fifth day on which the House sits after this day;

That a declaration signed by the agent shall be annexed to the bill, stating that it is the same in every respect as the bill presented in this House in the last Parliament;

That on the next sitting day following presentation, the Clerk in the Private Bill Office shall lay the bill on the Table of the House;

That in the present session of Parliament the bill shall be deemed to have passed through every stage through which it had passed in the last Parliament, and shall be recorded in the Journal of the House as having passed those stages;

That no further fees shall be charged to such stages.—[*The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed on Wednesday 17 October.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Secretary of State was asked—

Terrorism

1. **Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East): What progress has been made on the dismantling of the structures of terrorism in Northern Ireland since April 1998. [2872]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. John Reid): The Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda have had a number of significant successes against terrorists recently. Through the work of the agencies that come together in the organised crime taskforce, we have also seen considerable disruption to criminal activity.

Putting paramilitaries' arms beyond use was one of the outstanding issues discussed at the Weston Park talks last week. As the concluding statement, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, explains, progress was made. It is now for the two Governments to draw together a final package covering all the outstanding issues.

Dr. Lewis: I realise that the security forces are still fighting against the structures of terrorism, as the Secretary of State says. Does he recall that during the referendum campaign on the Belfast agreement in May 1998, the Prime Minister repeatedly said in speeches and wrote in articles that it would not be enough merely to decommission weapons, but that the paramilitary structures of terrorism must progressively be dismantled? We know that, sadly, the former has not been achieved. Has any progress been made with the latter objective?

Dr. Reid: That is our ultimate objective. We have made sure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities under the Good Friday agreement. That requires a rejection of not only the use of force but the threat of force. That point was made during the discussions at Weston Park, and it is one of the outstanding issues with which we have to deal. We will continue to do everything that we can to disrupt those elements of the paramilitaries that are involved in organised crime, and to make sure that progress is made in putting beyond use weapons that are illegally held on either side.

Mr. Harry Barnes (North-East Derbyshire): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the guns are not silent in Northern Ireland, that beatings are on the increase, that paramilitaries continue to train, recruit and gather intelligence, that the IRA has imported £2 million worth of weapons from America recently and that in the past 18 months it has killed eight people for alleged criminal offences—offences that the IRA itself is committing? In those circumstances, should not everyone be part of a pan-decommissioning front calling for an end to the availability and use of weapons and for progress to be made in the peace process?

Dr. Reid: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's last statement. It is an essential part of the peace process that we continue to make progress in putting illegal arms beyond use. It is opportune to pay tribute to the courage and professionalism of those who have been involved in combating some of the illegal activity, particularly members of the RUC. They, along with their partners south of the border in the Garda, have been involved in thwarting dissident activity. Recent successes have included the seizure of a significant quantity of explosives, firearms and ammunition. Charges have been brought against alleged dissidents. An example of the illegal activity is the fact that in the past financial year more than 51.5 million cigarettes were seized by Customs in Northern Ireland. In the midst of all the change, we should recognise the marvellous work that is being done by police forces north and south of the border.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Mid-Sussex): Does the right hon. Gentleman nevertheless agree that, with the prevailing uncertainty in the security situation, this would be no time to reduce the number of the security forces posted in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Reid: As the hon. Gentleman knows, his having had some experience of such matters as a former Armed

Forces Minister, I will take due cognisance of and place great emphasis on the advice that I get from the Chief Constable, the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland and other security advisers. The hon. Gentleman can rest assured that I would not take any steps without their advice.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Following on from the remarks of the hon. Member for North-East Derbyshire (Mr. Barnes), will the Secretary of State welcome President Bush's comments on decommissioning, thus demonstrating that there is broad support among all democrats for the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons? President Bush's statement shows that Sinn Fein and its handful of supporters are now completely isolated on this issue.

Specifically on dismantling paramilitary structures, the Secretary of State referred to racketeering. Will he confirm that all the paramilitary organisations, including those that claim to be on ceasefire, are deeply involved in racketeering, and that the finance therefrom provides the main resource of those paramilitary organisations and the political parties linked to them? Surely more could be done to draw into the public domain the extent to which certain political parties are involved in and financed by racketeering.

Dr. Reid: On the right hon. Gentleman's first point, we deeply appreciate President Bush's support, as we always do, for the implementation of the Good Friday agreement. I know that the whole House will welcome his generous comments on the efforts made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. As both Prime Ministers said at Weston Park last week, if we are to implement the Good Friday agreement we need to move forward on all the issues, which obviously include paramilitary weapons.

On the right hon. Gentleman's second point, I am sure that he will appreciate that we have paid considerable attention to paramilitary involvement in racketeering and criminality. That is one reason why in the past year we established the organised crime taskforce. The taskforce is still in its early days, but I can assure him that we will ensure that it has the motivation and resources to tackle the questions that he raised.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Hull, North): We all want decommissioning to occur and arms to be put out of use as soon as possible, but does my right hon. Friend agree that, whenever people start to impose deadlines and demand that others jump through hoops, they create a deterrent to those with the arms, who do not want to be seen to be controlled by ultimatums imposed by parties with which they disagree?

Dr. Reid: In terms of moving forward, the two Governments have made it plain through the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach that the agreement can succeed only if all parts of it are implemented together. As a Government, we will discharge our responsibilities to set that context, but I hope that all the others who are involved will reflect carefully on their responsibilities and do likewise.

On deadlines, my hon. Friend will appreciate that neither myself nor any other individual set a deadline at the end of June, although last May, which is now more than 12 months ago, both Governments expressed the hope and belief that considerable progress would be made on all the elements of the Good Friday agreement by the end of June. That remains our aim.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Bracknell): Will the Secretary of State make it abundantly clear to the House that there is only one reason for the present deadlock: the fact that decommissioning has not taken place? All other aspects of the Belfast agreement are moving forward, yet not one gun or ounce of Semtex explosive has been handed in by the paramilitaries who signed it, whether they are republicans or so-called loyalists.

Dr. Reid: As the right hon. Gentleman and the House will appreciate, there has been some progress on the question of arms, in the sense that the arms dumps have been opened up for inspection, but he is absolutely right to say that we need more. We need arms to be put beyond use. Of course, there are other matters that we discussed last week and will continue to discuss—the two Governments will address them in the package of measures that we are currently considering—but, yes, there needs to be more progress on the issue that he raised.

I should take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Taoiseach, to Brian Cowen, the Foreign Affairs Minister of the Government of Ireland, and to other colleagues in that Government. I believe that the co-operation between our two Governments has been the bedrock of the Good Friday agreement. I am happy to say that the relationship between us has never been stronger or closer. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that we share an assessment of the way forward, which will form the basis of the package. In that context, one of the elements on which progress must be made is putting illegal weapons beyond use.

Mr. MacKay: The House will be grateful for the fact that the Secretary of State clearly wants to put pressure on the paramilitaries to decommission, but will he assure us that, in doing so, he will not jeopardise the security of the Province through further changes to policing arrangements or by reducing the armed presence or security operations?

Dr. Reid: I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I shall take no steps other than through consultation and with the agreement and advice of my security advisers.

Violence (Victims)

2. **Brian White** (Milton Keynes, North-East): What support his Department gives to victims of violence. [2873]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Desmond Browne): Like the rest of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland has a criminal injuries compensation scheme, which, in the last financial year, we funded to the tune of £47 million.

In addition, the Government provided overdue acknowledgement of the human cost of the troubles when my right hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) instituted for the first time a programme of support for victims of the troubles.

More than £18.25 million has been allocated to support victims of the troubles in Northern Ireland. The support includes the establishment of a family trauma centre, the Northern Ireland memorial fund and funding for groups that provide support to victims. Support for victims who live in Great Britain was announced earlier this month, and further initiatives will be announced in the coming months.

Brian White: In paying tribute to groups that have helped victims of the troubles, may I draw my hon. Friend's attention to several individuals who have not been able to access support from them? What are the Government doing to help individuals?

Mr. Browne: My hon. Friend makes an especially valid point. Isolation and lack of awareness of what is available are especially acute among the victims of the troubles. Consequently, the service that the family trauma centre provides is designed for individuals; those individuals whose education was disrupted by the troubles have received grants and bursaries of approximately £300,000, and the Northern Ireland memorial fund has devised schemes for individuals.

Lady Hermon (North Down): I understand that an eminent Queen's Counsel has backed the civil action being taken by the victims of the Omagh bombing. In those circumstances, are the Government prepared to give public support to, and encourage businesses to provide financial backing for, the legal fund for the Omagh victims?

Mr. Browne: The hon. Lady knows that a specific initiative was taken in conjunction with the local health organisation to respond to the trauma of the Omagh victims. Research has revealed the need for significant support, which has been put in place.

The Government cannot adopt a position on civil litigation, but we understand entirely the feelings that lie behind such an action.

Marches

3. **Mr. Gordon Prentice** (Pendle): What factors the Parades Commission takes into account when deciding whether to ban or re-route a march. [2874]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Jane Kennedy): As my hon. Friend may know, the Parades Commission has no statutory power to ban a parade. The factors to which the commission has regard in deciding whether to impose conditions on a procession are set out in the Public Processions Act 1998 and in the commission's statutory guidelines. It may, for example, take into account the likelihood of public disorder or damage to property, the potential impact on community relations and whether a parade is a traditional parade. In reaching a decision, the commission also takes into account the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Mr. Prentice: I understand that only 151 out of 3,400 parades have been re-routed. A tiny number of parades cause problems, yet the same parades cause them year in, year out. Should not parades that habitually cause offence and disorder and offend community relations be re-routed as a matter of course? The Drumcrees would not then happen year after year.

Jane Kennedy: My hon. Friend exaggerates slightly. As always with Northern Ireland, it is important to keep matters in perspective. Last year, the Parades Commission found it necessary to restrict routes on only 130 of the 3,440 parades of which it was notified. As my hon. Friend knows, the Government have consistently stated that our preferred outcome is the resolution of disputes through local agreements that reflect mutual respect for people's rights, traditions and sensitivities, thus rendering determination by the commission unnecessary.

Mr. Roy Beggs (East Antrim): Will the Minister join me in condemning those who took part in a republican-orchestrated attack on the RUC while it was carrying out its lawful duty of upholding a decision by the Parades Commission? In upholding that decision, the RUC made limited use of plastic bullets. Does the Minister agree that the do-gooder, naive comment by Professor Brice Dickson that the use of plastic bullets should be ended should be put to him face to face and that he should be asked to withdraw such a ridiculous statement?

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): And he should resign.

Mr. Beggs: And he should resign.

Jane Kennedy: May I first place firmly on record our appreciation of the work, courage and endurance displayed by the RUC in the situation that it faces? It is important to recognise that it was serving both sides of the community in implementing the decisions of the Parades Commission.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about baton rounds, everyone agrees that we would like to find an alternative. We are following the recommendation of the Patten report by urgently researching alternatives, but until they can be found we cannot take from police officers the ability to defend themselves from blast bombs, petrol bombs, acid bombs and live fire.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): I welcome my hon. Friend's strong expression of support for the police service in Northern Ireland. It is not responsible for creating the divisions, the sectarianism or the ensuing disorder that still blights Northern Ireland's society. Does my hon. Friend agree that, for the police to do their job in Northern Ireland, they need adequate manpower resources, in terms of the number of officers available to go on to the streets during times of disorder, and financial resources to cope with the disorder and violence and to see through the reforms resulting from the Patten legislation? Will she reassure the House that those manpower and financial resources will continue to be made available to the police in the coming years?

Jane Kennedy: I am happy to give the House those assurances. As my right hon. Friend says, policing in Northern Ireland will require additional funds during 2001–02 and in subsequent years. That is due to the specific pressures caused by sectarian tensions and

parades. We are well aware of the concerns expressed about funding, and we have given assurances—I do so again today—that the RUC will have the resources necessary to continue to deliver a high-quality policing service.

Lembit Öpik (Montgomeryshire): As we have already heard, the RUC is primarily responsible for enforcing the determinations on marches. I hear what the Minister says about adequate resources. Is she saying, therefore, that she will make good the £117 million shortfall in resources that the RUC estimates it will require adequately to do the job that we all agree it must do? Will she confirm that specific figure?

Jane Kennedy: I will not confirm any specific figure today. My officials are continuing discussions with the Police Authority for Northern Ireland and with the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland, and it is likely that we shall consider carefully the proposals that they make.

Good Friday Agreement

4. **Mrs. Claire Curtis-Thomas** (Crosby): If he will make a statement on progress in implementing the Good Friday agreement. [2875]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. John Reid): At the conclusion of the Weston Park talks, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach issued a paper setting out the progress made so far in implementing the Good Friday agreement; a copy is in the Library.

More remains to be done in a number of key areas, but, as the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach made clear, it is now for the two Governments to draw together a final package to secure the full implementation of all aspects of the Good Friday agreement.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: My constituents, a large number of whom are either Irish or direct descendants of Irish people, will be grateful for those words because they fully understand that the Good Friday agreement has brought great prosperity and the alleviation of many of the troubles of Ireland. Does my right hon. Friend agree that only the full implementation of that policy will bring to the Irish people the rewards that they deserve?

Dr. Reid: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. Full implementation of the Belfast agreement is the only basis for lasting peace and stability in Northern Ireland, and the agreement can succeed only if all its parts are implemented together. We as a Government will discharge our responsibilities and I hope that all others will do likewise. My hon. Friend will recognise that, as a Government, we are working hard in the midst of conflicting pressures and sensitivities to ensure that all the parties implement all parts of the agreement.

Mr. Nigel Dodds (Belfast, North): Is it not the case that the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary said last week that the IRA orchestrated and organised violence in Ardoyne in my constituency? In view of that breach of the ceasefire and the revelations that the IRA at the highest level was involved in importing arms, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us why he continues to negotiate the future of Northern Ireland with IRA-Sinn Fein, which are in clear breach of their ceasefire, and exclude representatives of the Democratic Unionist party, which has more votes and more seats in the House? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask the House to come to order.

Dr. Reid: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I can assure him that I will, as I have over recent weeks, act on any information given to me by my security advisers, including the Chief Constable. The hon. Gentleman referred to a specific case, but information has not been put to me on it. If it is, I will consider it.

The hon. Gentleman's second point—his feeling that we are not meeting his own party—is of course incorrect. The Prime Minister met representatives of his party recently, including the hon. Gentleman himself. Indeed, only yesterday I wrote again to his party leader to accept two invites—one to his constituency and one to have a further meeting. The hon. Gentleman was not at the Weston Park talks for a simple reason: the talks brought together those who signed the Good Friday agreement and those who have acted in support of it. Of course, he and his colleagues are neither.

Mr. Stephen McCabe (Birmingham, Hall Green): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, since the signing of the Good Friday agreement, there have been significant troop reductions in Northern Ireland, the closure of more than 40 security installations and the highest economic growth in the UK? Is not that a powerful argument for persisting with the peace process and encouraging all parties to press ahead with the full implementation of the agreement?

Dr. Reid: I can confirm the figures referred to by my hon. Friend. Troop levels in Northern Ireland are at their lowest for 31 years: at about 13,500, they are half what they were—26,000—at their height and 34 military establishments and nine joint establishments have been closed. I emphasise to him that the number of troops deployed to Northern Ireland is commensurate with the threat, and I shall continue to take advice on that from the Chief Constable and others.

That makes the point solidly: we have to move forward on all aspects of the agreement, including putting illegal paramilitary weapons beyond use. In that context, a signal that the threat has been further reduced may enable us to take further measures. However, we must keep in step with the politics and the security situation and move hand in hand on those and all other aspects of the agreement.

Mr. John Taylor (Solihull): I think that I heard the Minister correctly earlier, but will the Secretary of State confirm on the record that all necessary resources continue to be available to the RUC in protecting the law-abiding from the lawless, including, if necessary, the use of plastic baton rounds at the discretion of the Chief Constable?

Dr. Reid: Yes, of course I will discuss the problem with the Chief Constable, and ensure that he has the financial and personnel resources to match the task.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, all of us in Northern Ireland want to see a situation in which the police do not have to have recourse to plastic baton rounds, but the police have recently been faced night after night with petrol bombs, acid bombs and live firing. Two hundred and forty eight police officers were injured between 1 June and 14 July, and in the two days after that an additional 38 were injured, 28 of them seriously. Every Member will understand why it is necessary to have the means between a baton and a bullet to allow the police to protect themselves. As long as that is necessary, the police will have such weapons at their disposal.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [2902] **Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 18 July.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Tony Blair): This morning, I met Shimon Peres, the Israeli Foreign Minister, and I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does the Prime Minister believe that, following the sacking of Mr. Bob Kiley, the chairman of London Transport, by the Transport Secretary yesterday, there is strong evidence that the sacking of distinguished chairmen who have the temerity to utter unpalatable truths to the Government is becoming something of a habit? Should not we have a debate on the future of the London underground, which is of grave concern to the travelling public? At least we might then have the chance of reinstating the chairman.

The Prime Minister: No, because what is important is that money and investment go into the tube as quickly as possible. If we had suspended the negotiations on the public-private partnership, there would have been a delay of about two years. That is why every other member of the board was going to resign unless Mr. Kiley withdrew his threat.

Laura Moffatt (Crawley): Does my right hon. Friend agree with the charity Cancer BACUP that pain has no place with someone living with cancer or dying from cancer? Does he agree that it is important to ensure that all the professions in the health and voluntary sectors believe that it should be eliminated? Would he sign the freedom from pain charter to give it the importance that it deserves?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with the principle set out in the charter. The additional £600 million going into the treatment of cancer in the next few years will result not just in patients being seen and treated more quickly, but in about 1,000 extra cancer specialists. Together with the extra radiographers and nurses, that will result in a substantial advance in the treatment of cancer in this country.

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): Is it still the Prime Minister's view that the Government's annual report is a major innovation to be repeated every year?

The Prime Minister: Before I answer the right hon. Gentleman's question, as this is his last Prime Minister's Question Time I want to say that Members on both sides of the House wish him well and good luck for the future. We shall all miss his wit and humour—although I may not, as I was the object of most of it. Anyway, we wish him well in the future.

In respect of annual reports, it is important that we set out the Government's achievements and lack of achievements in whichever year we are in power.

Mr. Hague: I thank the Prime Minister for his remarks about me. Debating with him at the Dispatch Box has been exciting, fascinating, fun, an enormous challenge and, from my point of view, wholly unproductive in every sense. I am told that in my time at the Dispatch Box I have asked the Prime Minister 1,118 direct questions, but no one has counted the direct answers—it may not take long.

Four years ago, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"The Annual Report is a major innovation. People are entitled to know how we are shaping up . . . This Report is part of that process. We will repeat it each year."

The first annual report was called "So what do you think?" and the second was called "So what are we doing?" This year's seems to be called "So where is it?" How does the Prime Minister feel about not even keeping his promise to publish a report about keeping his promises?

The Prime Minister: I confess that I never thought the right hon. Gentleman was that keen on our annual reports when we did publish them—but what we do, of course, is publish all the results of the things we have done during the year, and the things we have not done, as well. Those are the things about which the right hon. Gentleman has asked me in the more than 1,000 questions that he has asked from the Dispatch Box.

Hon. Members: Where is it?

Mr. Hague: "Where is it?" is indeed the question. As the Prime Minister has abandoned the annual report as a way of holding the Government to account, what about the traditional way of holding the Government to account? What about Ministers—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members must understand that Governments must be held to account between elections as well as at elections.

What about Ministers taking responsibility? The Government's introduction of AS-levels has made schoolchildren's lives a misery, added to the burden on teachers and led to the extraordinary circumstances in which the Government cannot even guarantee that the results will be published on time. Which Minister will take responsibility for that?

The Prime Minister: Of course we take responsibility—all of us collectively, as a Government—

for both the publication of results and the AS-levels. The AS-levels were introduced to ensure that children were tested properly throughout their schooling; that is in common with the system in many other countries. Of course, after their introduction it is important for us to look at the way that has been done and there may well be lessons that we can learn, but I think it would be a big mistake for us to end up saying that it was not important to test children throughout their schooling and to publish the results.

Mr. Hague: In other words, no Minister will take responsibility. AS-level students are told that if they

"do not offer an adequate attempt to answer the question or complete the task"

they will be ungraded. It is a good job that the Prime Minister is not doing AS-levels.

No annual report, and no Minister willing to take responsibility—let us try another form of accountability. The Prime Minister has said that he accepts the need for a proper inquiry into the foot and mouth disaster. Does he agree that a proper inquiry must be a public inquiry?

The Prime Minister: I do not agree that it must be a public tribunal inquiry, for the reasons given by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, which said that it was sensible to have a different type of inquiry in order to produce an inquiry more quickly. We will have that inquiry, and we will publish the results. But we have also said, again in line with what the royal college has said, that it is better to have the inquiry after we have eradicated the disease, which must remain our No. 1 priority.

Incidentally, in respect of the AS-levels, I did not say that no one would take responsibility; I said that we all, as a Government, take responsibility.

Mr. Hague: Well, for the whole Government to resign immediately would be a rather extreme step to take over AS-levels. *[Interruption.]* It might be a welcome step, however.

So, there is no annual report, no Minister will take responsibility for a fiasco, and no public inquiry will be held into foot and mouth despite all past precedent. Perhaps the Prime Minister will at least agree to accountability to the House after this week's vote in the House. Will he now listen to Members in all parts of the House, and adopt the proposal that Select Committee members should not be appointed by the Whips or by any party managers?

The Prime Minister: I gather that the Modernisation Committee decided this morning to look into the matter. It will publish a report and we will consider it carefully.

I simply point out that it is funny that in the 18 years of Conservative government, when the right hon. Gentleman was in office, all these great designs to reform Parliament never saw the light of day.

Mr. Hague: My 1,123rd and final question is on the same theme of accountability. May I ask the Prime Minister about what he and I know to be the case—that allowing one Prime Minister's Question Time a week is not an adequate way of holding the Prime Minister of our country to account? Members of all parties should have an opportunity to question the Prime Minister of the day more frequently, and on a more sustained basis. Would that not be in the best interests of the Government, Parliament and public engagement in our political life?

The Prime Minister: In respect of holding the Government to account, let me point out that over the four years that I have been Prime Minister I have answered questions in the House for longer than either of my two predecessors, and made more statements.

In respect of accountability, of course we as a Government are held to account. We are held to account in the House, where, for example, the number of ministerial statements has, I think, been far in excess of the number under the previous Government, and we are held to account by the British people. We were held to account by them on 7 June. We were returned with this majority as a result of that general election.

We will indeed miss the right hon. Gentleman's wit and humour. I hope that he is not retiring to the Back Benches as they are getting rather overcrowded at the moment. I would have thought that there was every role for him, for example as shadow Foreign Secretary. If the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) were to win, he could come here and tell us about the virtues of the single currency and the rapid reaction force. Alternatively, if the hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) were elected, he could come here and tell us what a dreadful idea it was and how the country would have none of it. In any event, whatever the right hon. Gentleman does, we wish him well.

Mr. Gwyn Prosser (Dover): During Dover's difficulties with asylum issues, does my right hon. Friend remember telling my local newspaper

"I also accept Dover has suffered an unfair burden"?

Taking account of local sensitivities and our recent history, does he agree that yesterday's decision, taken without any consultation or prior notification, that my local young offenders institution should be converted into a detention centre for asylum seekers was a bad decision, badly handled?

The Prime Minister: I entirely understand my hon. Friend's concern and I will make sure that the relevant Minister sees him today. I understand the deep concern that there is over the issue in Dover. Therefore, it is entirely right that it be discussed with him properly.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Skye and Inverness, West): May I first associate the Liberal Democrats—

Mr. Tony McNulty (Harrow, East): Who cares?

Mr. Kennedy: I think that public empathy out there probably cares. We associate ourselves with the good wishes that have been properly expressed by the Prime Minister to the outgoing leader of the Conservative party. We wish him well and commiserate with his successor, whoever it will be.

Returning to the earlier question about the sacking of Bob Kiley and his role as chair of London Regional Transport, will the Prime Minister explain why it was that

only 10 weeks ago he agreed with Bob Kiley's being appointed to that job, and only 10 weeks later he is in favour of sacking him?

The Prime Minister: I will explain exactly why. Mr. Kiley was appointed chairman of London Transport in order to negotiate what he wanted, within the outlines of the public-private partnership, and he came back a couple of weeks ago and said that he was unable to do so. The dispute with Mr. Kiley, and, indeed, with Ken Livingstone, is not about the running of the tube as such; it is about the financing of it. We are putting billions of pounds of investment from the general British taxpayer into the underground, the largest ever investment that has been made, and we need to make sure that there is value for money and that taxpayers' money is properly used. I understand entirely why Mr. Kiley and Mr. Livingstone want to take the money and spend it as they wish, but we have a duty on behalf of the taxpayer to get value for money and that is what we will do.

Mr. Kennedy: Is not the real lesson of the episode that the Prime Minister fails to understand in his second term that power devolved is not power retained? Would it not make more sense to allow the elected representatives, of whom Ken Livingstone is obviously a primary example, to make decisions, whether they be on the London underground, the Welsh Assembly, the Scottish Parliament, Bob Kiley, or for that matter the Select Committees of the House of Commons? To let go once in a while would be a very good reflection for the Prime Minister over the forthcoming summer recess.

The Prime Minister: I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Devolving the running and management of the underground is of course precisely what the devolution to the Mayor is all about, but the financing of it coming from the general British taxpayer is billions of pounds. We know that the real problem on the tube is financing the construction, the track and tunnelling.The right hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but he is simply wrong. That is the problem that the tube has. We need investment in the capacity of the tube, and it is extraordinary that the Liberal Democrats do not want any private sector involvement in the financing of the system when that plainly offers the best value for money. We are doing this because although the running and management of the tube will, of course, be for the Mayor and Transport for London, when it involves general British taxpayers' money—not just from London but across the rest of country—the Treasury has a duty to ensure that it is properly spent, and we will discharge that duty on behalf of the taxpayer.

Kali Mountford (Colne Valley): I know that the House will join me in my heartfelt concern for Peter Falconio's family while he is missing in the Northern Territory of Australia. Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking the Australian police, the Aborigine trackers and the people of Australia who are helping in the search for Peter? Will he also join me in asking anyone who has any evidence of where Peter might be—possibly people coming home from their holiday in the Northern Territory—to tell Scotland Yard or their local police force and help to find Peter so that this nightmare can end for the Falconio family?

The Prime Minister: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. We extend our sympathy and concern to Peter's family, who must be desperately worried. We have been in touch with the Australian high commission. As my hon. Friend said, the Australian police are doing everything they can to assist, and of course I join her in asking anyone with any information to come forward and speak to the proper authorities.

Q2. [2903] **Mr. Stephen O'Brien** (Eddisbury): Why do the Prime Minister and the Government persist in forcing local councils to build up to 165 new waste incinerators at the expense of far more environmentally sustainable recycling plants? For example, my constituents will be the victims of pollution from such a plant in Wrexham, which is just across the border from my constituency. Under the Prime Minister's devolution arrangements, my constituents have no powers of representation for objection at local level, and it is causing great anger.

The Prime Minister: Incineration has been used by Governments for many years. In fact, it is the last method that we wish to use. First, we want to reduce waste and, secondly, we want to improve recycling. That is why we are putting substantial additional investment—from memory, about £160 million—into improving recycling. Thirdly, there will be situations in which we have to incinerate. Although we regret that and wish to avoid it where we can, it is not realistic to think that we can deal with all the waste we have in any other way.

Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): In his meetings with the President of the United States, will the Prime Minister make it clear to him that his presidential pronouncements about his commitment to cleaning up the environment and making the world safe for democracy have done nothing but strike fear into the hearts of my constituents? Will he make it abundantly clear that they value the special relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States but would wish for rather more understandable commitment on the part of the President to those two issues?

The Prime Minister: We remain committed to the Kyoto protocol on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We have achieved reductions of about 14 per cent. on the 1990 levels, and we will carry on doing a great deal more to meet the targets set out. We have a disagreement with the United States over this, as we have said on many occasions. We are in a position to ratify the Kyoto protocol but America does not agree with that. It is important, however, that the United States Administration have agreed that the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is important and right, and we are now debating the means of achieving that. I hope that we can continue the dialogue with them so that we can bridge the gap and make the discussions on this important issue succeed.

Mr. Speaker: I call Sir Michael Spicer.

Hon. Members: More ballots.

Q3. [2904] **Sir Michael Spicer** (West Worcestershire): Not now.

How will the Prime Minister square the TUC, or for that matter the Labour party, to his plans for involving the private sector in the public services? Is not such involvement antithetical to socialism?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is giving me a lesson in party management. May I say how much we welcome his contribution, as the person responsible for the Conservative leadership election, to our political debate? Of course there will be an interesting and lively debate on public service reform, but that is what politics is about, and I am confident that we shall win that debate.

Q4. [2905] **Mr. Andrew Dismore** (Hendon): Could my right hon. Friend find time to visit the Metropolitan police training centre in my constituency to meet some of the excellent new recruits with which the training centre is now bursting at the seams? Will he also give my constituents an assurance that when those police officers leave the training school, my constituents will see a real increase in police numbers on the streets of Hendon?

The Prime Minister: There is, I think, a record increase—certainly the best increase for many years—in the number of recruits entering training in the Metropolitan police. The numbers are increasing again, after 10 years of declining, and we shall in the next few years hit our target of having the largest number of police officers that this country has seen. I pay tribute not only to those who have been recently recruited but to serving officers in the Metropolitan police area who do such an excellent job protecting our citizens.

Q5. [2906] **Mr. Paul Burstow** (Sutton and Cheam): Is the Prime Minister aware that the annual general meeting of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence is being picketed today by multiple sclerosis sufferers who are angry at a two-year delay in obtaining a decision on drugs that can make a difference to their lives? Does he accept that the institute's foot dragging has cost hundreds of MS sufferers their health and condemned them to irreversible disability?

The Prime Minister: I accept entirely the frustration that people have at the delay. However, I also tell the hon. Gentleman that in a decision of this nature, which affects thousands of people suffering from MS, it is important that all the information is tested and got right. The national institute will make known its deliberations when it can; that is up to it. It is an extremely important decision to get right and has huge consequences not only for MS sufferers but for the whole of the national health service.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): May I place on record—I know that I am speaking for the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland—our deep gratitude to the Prime Minister for the enormous energy, commitment and work that he is putting into resolving our current crisis? In so doing, he has revealed that he sees that problem as the greatest human problem facing this House—although one might not believe that, listening to some hon. Members in today's Northern Ireland Question Time. We await with great hope the package that the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach will be producing. Let us all hope that it will lead to the full and absolute implementation of all aspects of the Good Friday agreement and create lasting peace and stability on our streets.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for those kind comments. I do not begrudge any of the time that we spend on this peace process, first, because it is so important and, secondly, because I believe that there is a chance of resolving the issues and implementing the Good Friday agreement in full, which is what everyone wishes to see. The two Governments are in agreement that it is the right package and that it covers all the outstanding issues. We believe that the package will be a fair and reasonable one that should recommend itself to all political parties. We need only look at the middle east peace process to see what happens when we stop moving forward in such processes. I believe that the package offers us the chance to overcome the remaining obstacles and give people in Northern Ireland the future that they deserve.

Q6. [2907] **Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): Why are the Government so reluctant to award a long-term franchise for the east coast main line to GNER, which is generally thought to have done a good job? Is it not clear that short-term franchise extensions will stifle rather than encourage much-needed investment? It is not only Bob Kiley who is out of favour: what was the point of asking a rail expert such as Sir Alastair Morton how to improve the railway only to ignore his advice?

The Prime Minister: I think that being lectured by a Conservative on railway privatisation is a little bit much. It is important that we have different ways of dealing with the franchises. Some franchises may be short, while others may be longer. That is sensible, because it gives us the flexibility that we require. As for GNER and the east coast main line, that decision will be taken shortly.

Q7. [2908] **Ian Lucas** (Wrexham): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. O'Brien), who referred to Wrexham in his question. I would like to point out to him and to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that Wrexham council has recently appointed a recycling officer. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that that is fully in accordance with his policy, the Labour policy, which is to re-use and to recycle?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it is indeed in line with Government policy. As I explained a moment or two ago, we are increasing the funding available for recycling. That will significantly increase the amount of recycling that takes place, giving us a considerably better record than the Conservative party.

Q8. [2909] **Mr. Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury): When there is an inquiry into foot and mouth disease—be it public or private—could the Prime Minister ensure that one of its terms of reference is to look at the effect of the disease on non-farming businesses? My constituency has probably lost out more than most, in

particular because of the cancellation of the Cheltenham racing festival, when millions and millions of pounds were lost by small businesses that could least afford it.

The Prime Minister: The impact on the non-farming industry is extremely important too. That is why it is necessary to take all possible measures to try to stamp out the disease, as we have done. It remains extremely important that all parts of the farming community take the relevant biosecurity measures in terms of disinfection. The way in which the disease is still being spread is essentially through farm-to-farm movements or agricultural trade vehicles. We have given every assistance we can so that people know the measures they have to take, but the only way to make sure that we use these summer months to eradicate the disease is if the biosecurity measures are in place and followed.

Q9. [2910] **Lynne Jones** (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend assure council tenants in Birmingham that if they do not wish to change their landlord, the Government will honour their commitments to bring their homes up to a decent standard by 2010? Will he ensure also that necessary resources will be made available as, under current financial predictions, the necessary resources are not being made available?

The Prime Minister: First, people have the right to vote on the system they wish. Secondly, we are substantially increasing investment in housing: over the next three years or so, it will rise to somewhere in the region of £4 billion. I am aware that there are always greater demands for money, but we must put money into the health service, schools, the police and other things. We are doing what we can on housing in my hon. Friend's area and others. In respect of the proposals, it is for her constituents and others to vote upon them.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): May I congratulate the Prime Minister on the success of his personnel policies? He sacked his Foreign Secretary, who is now a runaway success as Leader of the House. He sacked the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and the right hon. Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson) and now they have been restored and are held even higher in the public esteem. Yesterday, he sacked Mr. Bob Kiley who—obviously, at this rate—will stop the privatisation of the tube. Can the Prime Minister deny that he is power mad, as some people believe, and say that he is actually engaged in a very subtle demonstration of the limits of prime ministerial power and arrogance?

The Prime Minister: Since the hon. Gentleman has congratulated me on my personnel changes, perhaps I can congratulate him on his; not least in respect of himself. I gather he said that he wished to have nothing whatever to do with the Westminster Parliament, since it was inconsistent with Scottish nationalism; yet, lo and behold, here he is, popping up and asking me questions—but then, that type of double standard is nothing new from the Scottish National party.

Q10. [2911] **Jane Griffiths** (Reading, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the plight in India of Ian Stillman—formerly of Reading—a charity worker who is disabled, who has been sentenced to 10 years in prison because he was in a taxi in which cannabis was later discovered? What representations can Ministers make to the Government of India to help secure the release of Ian Stillman?

The Prime Minister: We are indeed aware of Mr. Stillman's case. We are making representations and are in touch with the Indian authorities. I assure my hon. Friend that we will keep this case closely under review and that we will be in close consultation throughout with the appropriate authorities.

Q11. [2912] **Mr. Jonathan Sayeed** (Mid-Bedfordshire): Does the Prime Minister believe that there will be a downturn in the British economy over the next two to three years? If so, how will the Government fund their promises on education, health and the police?

The Prime Minister: We are confident that we can fund those programmes as the money for them has been set aside. The hon. Gentleman will know that, as a result of the successful management of the economy by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, our public finances are in a very healthy state. Therefore, unlike the Conservatives, who want to cut investment we can put money into schools, hospitals, transport and the police.

The other reason that we have managed to run the economy successfully is that we have avoided the age-old Conservative problem of—[HON. MEMBERS: "Boom and Bust."] No doubt, Mr. Speaker, you will call time shortly, so, as the two Ronnies would say, "It's goodbye from Mr. Boom, and goodbye from Mr. Bust."

Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Alan Milburn): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the Bristol Royal infirmary inquiry.

The report of the inquiry into the care and management of children receiving complex heart treatment between 1984 and 1995 is being published today. It is now available in the Vote Office. I am grateful, Mr. Speaker, for your agreement that the parents and their representatives should also have advance access to copies of the report.

The inquiry was established in 1998 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I want to express my thanks to Professor Ian Kennedy and his panel members, Professor Sir Brian Jarman, Mrs. Rebecca Howard and Mrs. Mavis Maclean, for doing a quite outstanding job in delivering a well considered and far-reaching report.

Words in a report can never be enough for those families whose children died or were damaged. When I met representatives of some of the parents earlier this week I think that I was speaking for the whole House when I expressed my profound sorrow for the pain and loss the families have endured. I hope that the report at least provides an explanation, and that those families are able to take some small comfort from it.

The report and its annexes run to some 12,000 pages. We will study the findings and the 198 recommendations with care. Today, I can outline the thrust of the inquiry's findings and some of the Government's initial responses. Our substantive response will be made in the autumn. It is right that this House and the public should have the opportunity to study the report in detail. It will be available from this afternoon on both the inquiry's website and through the Department of Health's website. I would welcome views from the public and those working in the NHS to inform our full response.

In examining events at the Bristol Royal infirmary between 1984 and 1995, the report recognises that a great deal has changed since then. It also, quite rightly, commends NHS staff in Bristol and throughout the country for their dedication and commitment in providing care and treatment to hundreds of thousands of patients every day.

I hope that today, above all other days, all of us—across the House, in the media and among the public—remember one simple truth: the NHS is full of good doctors, not bad ones, and of good people who are doing their best for patients, sometimes in difficult circumstances. The report rightly reminds its readers that between 1984 and 1995 staff at Bristol carried out heart surgery on 1,827 children. The great majority of those children are alive today because of the efforts of those NHS staff. As the report puts it:

"Many patients, children and adults benefited; too many children did not. Too many children died."

In discovering what happened at Bristol, the report describes

"a tragedy born of high hopes and ambitions".

The senior NHS staff concerned got things wrong, not least because they assumed that in time they were bound to come right. As we now know, they never did. Between 1991 and 1995, the report makes it clear that between 30 and 35 more children aged under one year died after open-heart surgery in Bristol than was typical of similar heart units elsewhere in England. The report says that that was not due to differences in the severity of the cases. While mortality rates fell throughout the rest of the country as time went on, this did not happen in Bristol.

The report paints a picture of a hospital short of resources and short of specialist staff. Cardiac care was split between two sites; children's services played second fiddle to adult services. Power was concentrated in too few hands. The hospital was a closed world. The report describes a "club culture" in which problems were neither identified nor resolved. Paternalism towards patients sat side by side with rivalries between professions.

Concerns about paediatric open-heart surgery at Bristol were first raised as early as 1986—first inside the hospital, then outside, then with the Department of Health and Social Security, as it was at the time. Concerns continued to be raised but no one acted effectively to protect the welfare of the children who were patients there.

There was a tragic combination of key clinicians failing to reflect on their own performance, senior management failing to grasp the seriousness of what was going wrong, and people in various official capacities—including in the Department of Health—failing to act. Uncertainty about who was responsible for sorting out problems meant that they were never sorted out. In the meantime children were dying who should not have died. It was left to a whistleblower, an anaesthetist in the hospital, Dr. Stephen Bolsin, to trigger the chain of events which led eventually, in 1995, to the suspension of children's heart surgery. As the report says, Dr. Bolsin is owed a debt of gratitude for what he did.

The report is directly critical of certain individuals, including the senior doctors concerned. As the House is aware, Dr. Roylance, Mr. Wisheart and Mr. Dhasmana have already been the subject of action by the General Medical Council, but the inquiry panel made clear its determination to avoid simply pointing the finger of blame at a few individuals. I commend this approach, because the Bristol tragedy was born of deeper causes than the actions of a handful of senior clinicians and managers, wrong though they were to act as they did. The children who died and who were damaged were failed by a few people in senior positions in the hospital but, even more so, they were failed by the very system that was supposed to make them well and keep them from harm.

If the NHS is to learn from when things go wrong, it must move beyond a culture of blame. The tenor of the Bristol inquiry report is, in my view, a significant step towards a more open and honest health service. Medicine is not a perfect science. Even the best people can make the worst mistakes. Putting right what can sometimes go wrong relies on the NHS being able to acknowledge error and having systems in place to minimise error. The absence of such an approach at Bristol, and in the wider NHS at the time, contributed directly to the tragedy that cost dozens of children their lives.

Bristol was designated a specialist regional centre for children's heart surgery. It probably never should have been. It never performed sufficient operations to ensure safe outcomes for patients. Monitoring was virtually

non-existent. Accountability was confused. There were no national standards in place. The inquiry report puts the position starkly:

"we cannot say that the external system for assuring and monitoring the quality of care was inadequate. There was, in truth, no such system."

That was the norm for the NHS then. The events at Bristol have been a major catalyst for change since. As the report repeatedly acknowledges, since those years the NHS has moved on. Earlier this year the new Bristol Royal Children's hospital opened. The United Bristol Healthcare trust has a new, strong management team with extra cardiac staff.

As elsewhere in the NHS, problems remain—of course they do—but it is worth noting that today's survival rates for children's heart surgery at Bristol are among the best in the country. The energy and commitment that the staff, the managers and the trust board have shown in turning the service around deserve recognition and praise. I hope that the whole House will join me in doing so today.

The NHS today is a very different health service, too. As the report acknowledges, the under-resourcing that was such a feature of the NHS then is beginning to be addressed now. The events at Bristol have spurred the Government and the medical profession to work together to put in place new standards and structures to improve quality in care. As the Kennedy report says,

"Recent developments give cause for optimism. These include statutory responsibility for the quality of health care, the development of clinical guidelines through the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, and the monitoring of performance through the Commission for Health Improvement."

The report welcomes the establishment of the National Patient Safety Agency to run a single reporting system for all adverse health events. The report welcomes annual appraisal and revalidation for doctors; it recognises that a new contract for hospital consultants is being negotiated and that joint training for health professionals is being introduced. The clinical negligence system, which the report rightly criticises, will be the subject of a White Paper to be published early next year. Many of these changes, and other reforms contained in the NHS plan, are welcomed or endorsed by the report.

As the report highlights, however, further action still is needed if we are to prevent another tragedy on the scale of Bristol's. Between now and the autumn, the Government will give the report's recommendations careful consideration. Today I can tell the House that I am taking the following steps immediately in response to the Bristol report.

First, the report laments the lack of priority given to children's services in the NHS. It calls for the appointment of a national director of children's health care services. I have therefore appointed Professor Al Aynsley-Green, Nuffield professor of child health at Great Ormond Street hospital, to take up the post with immediate effect. His priority will be to spearhead the faster development of the first ever national standards for children's health services. Standards for children in hospital, including children with congenital heart disease, will be ready next year.

Secondly, the report calls for patients and parents to have a greater say in the NHS and in their own care. Informed consent must be a cornerstone of a modern health service. Today we are publishing information for patients and specifically for parents about the questions that they should ask before consenting to treatment for themselves or their children. Next month we will invite views on our proposals for increased public involvement in the NHS. By April next year, every trust will have a specialist patient advocacy and liaison service in place to help patients who are experiencing problems with treatment, as part of a wider programme to inform and empower patients within the NHS.

Thirdly, the report identifies a failure to act on concerns about services, not through a lack of data, because Bristol was awash with data. There was however, no single point where data were brought together for analysis, evaluation, dissemination, and, most important, follow-up action. For data on surgical outcomes to be published, of course, they need to be robust, rigorous and risk-adjusted. That will inevitably take time. The report does, however, recommend publication to give both NHS staff and the public accurate information. It recommends the establishment of a new independent office for information on health care performance within the Commission for Health Improvement to co-ordinate the collection and publication of data. We will action those two recommendations. In so doing, we will ensure that the new office works in tandem with the medical organisations that have been pioneering improvements on data collection about clinical outcomes.

Fourthly, the report criticises confusion in regulation and accountability in the NHS. It recommends the establishment of an overarching body—the council for the regulation of health care professions—to ensure that the individual professional regulatory bodies act in a more consistent manner. That is in line with a similar commitment that we made last year in the NHS plan. We will action that recommendation, following consultation, alongside our proposals to reform the General Medical Council in the NHS reform and decentralisation Bill later this year.

Fifthly, the concern is expressed in the report that NHS managers should also have responsibility for maintaining standards and protecting patients. It recommends the establishment of a new regulatory body for NHS managers. We will consider that proposal, but in the meantime, we will seek to develop a new code of professional conduct for NHS managers in conjunction with their professional associations. I will announce the further steps that we will take to strengthen safeguards for patients when we publish our full response in the autumn.

Professor Kennedy and his panel have provided us with a report that builds on what is now being achieved, but the ambition is bigger still: to build a new culture of trust, not blame, in the NHS—an NHS where there is greater partnership between patients and professionals; where lines of accountability are clear; where there is openness about mistakes; where services are designed from the patients' point of view; and where safety for patients always comes first.

None of that can ever make good the loss experienced by the Bristol parents. Throughout the inquiry, they have acted with great dignity and purpose. Their determination has been, as ours must now be, to see some good come out of the events at the Bristol Royal infirmary. As one parent put it to me earlier this week, "There are no winners from Bristol. We are all losers. I just hope that future generations can be the winners." I hope that through this report the families will gain at least some

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

consolation from the knowledge that, over time, the lessons learned from what went wrong for their children will help us to prevent it from happening again to any other children.

In framing its recommendations, the inquiry panel said that its aim was

"to build a bridge between the lessons of the past and the NHS of the future [so] Bristol will be remembered not merely as a synonym for tragedy but also as a turning point for the NHS".

It is for us—all of us—to ensure that is indeed the case. I commend the report to the House.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement today and for making a copy of it available to the Opposition in advance. I also thank the inquiry team for making the report available to us in advance and for all its hard work in producing such an excellent report. It would be verging on insulting its great effort to try to make any pretence of a definitive response this afternoon, yet very major issues are involved, and parents and professionals will rightly want them to be fully explored in Parliament. So I begin by asking the Secretary of State whether he will give an undertaking now that, having had time to reflect on those issues during the summer, the Government will make time available soon after the recess to debate them fully in the House in Government time.

The report says that learning from error, rather than seeking someone to blame, must be the priority to improve safety and quality. That is a much easier concept for hon. Members to accept than it is for many of the parents who have lost their children so tragically; but however understandable a part of human nature wanting to attach blame may be, it is our job to ensure that we minimise the risk of such events being repeated elsewhere. We need to determine which errors came from individuals, which came from specific systems and conditions in Bristol and which were endemic in the culture of the NHS. Of course, it very easy for us to do that with the benefit of hindsight.

The report says:

"At the time while the paediatric cardiac service was less than adequate, it would have taken a different mindset from the one that prevailed on the part of the clinicians at the centre of the service and senior management to come to that view. It would have required abandoning the principles which then prevailed, of optimism, of 'learning curves' and of gradual improvements over time. It would have required them to adopt a more cautious approach rather than muddling through. That this did not occur to them is one of the tragedies of Bristol."

We must not be too hasty in our judgment of them, or judge them by the massive advances in medical culture that have occurred in the past decade.

Clearly, however, some problems could and should have been recognised. Effective teamwork did not always exist at the BRI. The report says:

"All the professionals involved in the PCS service were responsible for this shortcoming.

Those in positions of clinical leadership must bear the responsibility for this failure."

We also had the problem of the split site, which meant that cardiologists, as opposed to cardiac surgeons, could not be effectively involved in intensive care. It is worth pointing out to the House that the cardiologists in Bristol were extremely well regarded by their fellow professionals and by parents throughout the south-west.

As the Secretary of State pointed out, it was not simply the outcomes in Bristol which should have raised the alarm, but the growing gap between Bristol and other centres. Between 1988 and 1994 the mortality rate at Bristol was roughly double that elsewhere in the UK for five out of seven years. That mortality rate failed to follow the downward trend in other centres. The Secretary of State mentioned statistics relating to children under one; the excess death rate was even higher for children under 30 days. It is clear from the evidence that there was no excuse for that on a case-mix basis. Around 35 more children died than might have been expected, and each individual was a tragic and irredeemable loss.

We will reflect on the responses that the Secretary of State has made today. Will he publish the job specification for the national director of children's health care services, so that we can all see exactly what is expected of him?

Will the Secretary of State think again about his proposals on consent and information, and go further? The report says that

"the sense is gained that informing patients and gaining their consent was regarded as something of a chore by surgeons."

I believe that that has changed dramatically in recent years, but surely in an ever more protocol-driven medical world, there is a strong case for introducing standardised consent forms at least for non-emergency procedures so that all patients and their parents will know in advance what to expect from surgery, what to expect after the operation, what the complications may be and what the likely outcomes are. As individual users of the health service, surely we have a right to know what to expect of it.

Will the Secretary of State consider going even further with his plans for a health care performance office? This country requires a truly independent academic institute able to develop a standardised methodology of determining outcome. If we cannot properly measure outcomes, we cannot make rational choices in health care in this country as in any other western country.

We will need more time to consider some of the more contentious recommendations: the abolition of clinical negligence litigation and the common terms of employment for doctors, nurses and managers, to name but two. It is worth the House bearing in mind the fact that, in the words of the report,

"The story of the paediatric cardiac surgical service in Bristol is not an account of bad people. Nor is it an account of people who did not care, nor of people who wilfully harmed patients.

It is an account of people who cared greatly about human suffering, and were dedicated and well-motivated. Sadly, some lacked insight and their behaviour was flawed. Many failed to communicate with each other, and to work together effectively for the interests of their patients."

Finally, in paying tribute to the courage and steadfastness of the parents of those patients—some in my constituency and many nearby—the greatest service that we can do them is to take Professor Kennedy's report away and reflect on it not in anger, but with the determination to make sure that those precious and irredeemable losses are not repeated elsewhere.

Mr. Milburn: I thank the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) for the content and tone of his

response. He is correct to say that the report is large. As he knows, the body of the report runs to some 500 pages and the annexes are much longer still. There are 198 recommendations. Some are small recommendations; some are fundamental and far reaching. They require proper scrutiny, and time is needed to enable us to study them as we should.

On the possibility of a debate, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments. I have no objection, but it is a matter for the business managers. If we can arrange a debate, clearly we should.

The hon. Gentleman makes an important point about looking back with the benefit of hindsight. Professor Kennedy and his panel reflect much on that in their report. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the norms and behaviour that were accepted then are at variance with the current position. It is also true that mistakes were made even within the norms prevailing then. As we discuss these issues, it is important to recognise how far things have moved on in just a short time. I welcome the attitude of individual doctors and the medical profession, and the recognition that the culture of the past can no longer pertain in the NHS of today.

With regard to cardiologists, the situation was even worse than the hon. Gentleman describes. At the time, no single paediatric cardiac surgeon specialising in that discipline was available. That may explain some of the difficulties that many of the parents subsequently encountered.

On the job specification for the national director, I am happy to write to the hon. Gentleman and let him know the details. On consent forms, we have already developed a model consent form which has been out for consultation. By 1 October this year we expect to have a finalised version in place. That is needed not just in some hospitals in the NHS, but across the entire NHS.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I join my right hon. Friend and the shadow Secretary of State in expressing my sorrow about what happened to the children, my concern for the parents, and my admiration for the steadfastness of the parents who struggled long and hard for the inquiry. I hope that they will find the outcome in some way satisfactory.

As both previous speakers have said, what happened was not the product of bad people. It involved good and caring people. That is a measure of just how awful the arrangements in the NHS were at the time for setting and monitoring standards of performance. There was no setting of standards nationally, locally, managerially or professionally, nor was there any monitoring of standards. That is largely why those events occurred. My right hon. Friend is no doubt as pleased as I am that the report states that there is cause for optimism because of changes that have subsequently been made to start establishing and monitoring standards.

My right hon. Friend rightly gave great prominence to the problem of the blame culture. The report makes it clear that if improvements are to be made, all the professionals and managers must be open and willing to report when things go disastrously wrong or when near-misses occur. They must accept that they may have been at fault, and they must apologise for what has happened and publish outcomes. All that will be necessary, but I am convinced, as the inquiry was clearly convinced, that it will not happen while the possibility of litigation for clinical negligence continues to exist.

I hope that when the Government have completed their consideration of the report, they will agree with the inquiry recommendations and rid the national health service of the threat of clinical negligence litigation, which does much harm and encourages the blame culture.

Mr. Milburn: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for his contribution. I should like to place on record my thanks, as well as those of the whole House and people in Bristol, to him for his courage in establishing the public inquiry. Let us remember that the decision was extremely controversial when it was made, but it has proved, with the benefit of hindsight, to be absolutely right.

My right hon. Friend was right about the setting of standards. In the report, Kennedy was extremely critical of a hands-off approach in the national health service. In fact, there were two lines of accountability in the NHS—clinical and managerial. As my right hon. Friend knows, because the two lines never met, problems relating to clinical outcomes and surgical mistakes were never gripped as one hopes that they would be nowadays.

My right hon. Friend was right about publishing outcomes, but he knows as well as I do that the science of ensuring that the data that we publish are rigorous is pretty rudimentary. There is an awfully long way to go to ensure that they command confidence not only in the professions, but—in a sense, this is more important—among patients. It is pointless to publish information that is inaccurate and gives a misleading impression.

Only yesterday, I had the pleasure of meeting the cardiac surgeons committee. I spoke to Mr. Ash Pawade from Bristol, who, as my right hon. Friend knows, is a surgeon who specialises in children's heart surgery and has a reputation that is not only national but international. Like the committee, I am convinced that great progress is being made in respect of the ability to publish rigorous data that will properly inform patients and professionals, and in which we can all have confidence.

On my right hon. Friend's final point, it now seems right to review the issue of clinical negligence and its operation. I have some sympathy with his comments. I am sympathetic to the position of ordinary doctors and of surgeons in particular. Day in, day out, while we talk so easily about getting rid of the blame culture, they face the threat of being dragged through the courts as part of a clinical negligence claim. In the end, it seems difficult to reconcile the idea of openness in the national health service with the threat of legal action. We must consider the matter and keep it under review. Indeed, I have asked the chief medical officer to chair a committee of experts to examine it. We will introduce a White Paper in the new year that will, I hope, make recommendations for radical reform.

Dr. Evan Harris (Oxford, West and Abingdon): I want to place on record my sympathy with the situation of the families from Bristol, and pay tribute to them and their action group for their persistence in setting up the inquiry and in continually contributing to it, thereby enhancing its status. I join the Secretary of State in commending his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Holborn and

[Dr. Evan Harris]

St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), for his foresight in setting up an inquiry which was not narrow but which had a very wide remit. I want also to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for North Devon (Nick Harvey) for his assiduous work in asking questions both locally and in this place.

I thank the Secretary of State and the inquiry for their courtesy not only in allowing me the opportunity to be shut in a room with the Conservative spokesman for an hour to read and digest a 500-page report with 11,000 pages of annexes, but for the extensive nature of the report and the wide-ranging recommendations that it makes.

We believe that credit is due to the Government for already having implemented some quality control mechanisms—and the Commission for Health Improvement and clinical governance. We welcome the steps that they have taken so far. However, my fear, which is reflected in the view of the inquiry team, is that the case is not isolated and that similar circumstances are arising elsewhere. As the Secretary of State so rightly said, it is a system problem. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept the figures suggesting that while 30 to 35 babies died unnecessarily in Bristol, as many as 25,000 avoidable deaths nationwide may have been caused by errors in medical care? Does the right hon. Gentleman therefore accept that a culture change is needed to tackle the macho style of medicine, which is based on individualism rather than team work? Does he also accept that protection for the whistleblower remains inadequate in a system where, for example, junior doctors rely on the patronage of senior doctors to get promotion?

I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State's response to the right hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, but will he go further? The report is clear about the impact of the recommendations on the tort system of medical negligence. It states:

"Clinical negligence litigation, as a barrier to openness, should be abolished."

It stresses that the NHS

"must promote openness and preparedness to acknowledge errors and learn lessons."

It also states that

"clinical negligence is part of the culture of blame. It should be abolished."

It recommends the introduction of

"an alternative administrative system of compensating those who suffer harm arising from medical care."

That is no-fault compensation. I hope that the Secretary of State will clarify that the expert panel's scope will include the ability to implement the recommendation for a switch to no-fault compensation for which my hon. Friends have previously called.

Does the Secretary of State accept the need for not only patient bodies but the public to

"be embedded in the structures of the NHS and for that culture to permeate all aspects of healthcare"?

Will he assure us that he will be able to deliver that after the abolition of community health councils and health authorities?

Providing misleading performance data in the absence of clarification is unhelpful. Does the Secretary of State acknowledge the role of referring clinicians and commissioners, who failed in the case that we are discussing to deal with patients' questions and check outcomes? How does he expect those roles to be tackled when local public health advisory functions are dissolved?

Does the Secretary of State accept the inquiry team's emphasis on public service ethos? Does he welcome the report's recommendation that continued extra funding is required because quality costs, especially consultant expansion? If that is understood, the children will not have died in vain.

Mr. Milburn: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's comments. On his last point, the report rightly acknowledges the contrast between previous under-resourcing and current investment. Professor Kennedy rightly calls for the investment to be sustained. That is music to my ears. I agree that it is the right thing to do, and I hope that we can achieve it.

Let me consider some of the hon. Gentleman's other substantive points. He mentioned a macho style and the merits of whistleblowing. Dr. Bolsin did people an enormous favour. However, the need for whistleblowers is a sign not of success but of failure. We want a national health service that can blow its own whistle if necessary, and be honest with people.

We, too, should be honest. It is easy for Members of Parliament to criticise. Professor Kennedy makes the important point when he reminds the report's readers that these heart operations are incredibly complex. When a baby's heart is operated on, it is the size of a walnut. Such an operation requires dexterity, expertise and skills at which most of us can only wonder. We must therefore be cautious when apportioning blame, although we must acknowledge that mistakes were made and that big cultural changes must be effected in the NHS. I hope and pray for a time when we do not need whistleblowers in the NHS because it publishes validated, rigorous information that commands confidence with the public and professionals. The report goes some way towards achieving that.

The chief medical officer's committee will consider the merits and disbenefits of no-fault compensation, which is not as straightforward as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Professor Kennedy is right about embedding the patient's and, indeed, the public's voice in the NHS. He explicitly makes the point that if patients are to be better informed, their voices need to be heard inside the NHS, not outside it.

Valerie Davey (Bristol, West): I thank my right hon. Friend for his important statement and welcome the report's in-depth study of complex circumstances. However, before we look to the future, I ask the House to join me and all hon. Members whose constituents have suffered in the tragedy in extending sympathy to the parents and families of those who died or were seriously disabled.

I ask my right hon. Friend to ensure that, as he continues with the Department to improve the NHS further, the experience of those families is never forgotten.

Mr. Milburn: I join my hon. Friend in extending the sympathy of the Government—indeed, of the whole House—to the families concerned. I also thank her for all

her work, which has been widely taken into consideration during the past few years in dealing with some of these issues. Yes, it is important that we do not lose sight of the families' expertise. We owe them a great debt of gratitude. It would have been easy for them simply to pursue a case against the national health service in court but, instead, they have quite legitimately raised concerns about the operation of the NHS.

When I met representatives of the families earlier this week, I was powerfully struck by the fact that, in the end, they wanted some fairly simple things: an understanding and an explanation of what had happened to their families and, most important of all, an assurance that it would not happen to other families. That selflessness is something that we can only commend.

Mr. Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale, West): Does the Secretary of State agree that, in reducing mortality rates for children's cardiac surgery, it is essential to have not only the best possible performance in the United Kingdom but the best performance that can be achieved? Will he tell the House how this country compares to other developed countries, whether we are near the top of the league, and whether there is anything that we can learn from overseas?

Mr. Milburn: There are, as always, lessons to be learned from elsewhere in the world. As I said earlier, we have some of the most world-renowned paediatric cardiac surgeons in this country. That is something that we should trumpet loud and clear. In many ways, we provide children's heart surgery that is up there with the best, and we must make sure that it continues to be so. That is why we must keep providing new investment, and ensuring that we take advantage of the way in which technology and treatments are moving forward. As I have said many times in the House, one of my personal top priorities is to ensure that heart disease services for children and adults improve. That requires not only more investment but certain changes to the way in which health care is being delivered, and we will continue relentlessly to pursue that in the years to come.

Jean Corston (Bristol, East): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement and for the prompt way in which he has responded to some of the recommendations made by Professor Kennedy and his inquiry team. I also reiterate the thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) for setting up the inquiry and, most of all, for making it a public inquiry, because that did so much to restore the confidence in the process that we were putting in place of the parents whose children so tragically died. I would also like to thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for confirming that the events surrounding this tragedy were entirely atypical of what goes on in the NHS in Bristol every day of the year.

Will my right hon. Friend pay particular attention to the role of the chief executive of a health care trust, and confirm that the chief executive should be the court of last resort for members of staff who want to raise concerns? They should be able to raise those concerns in an atmosphere free of stigma, and the final result should not end up involving shooting the messenger, as it did, sadly, in Bristol.

Mr. Milburn: I agree with my hon. Friend about the public inquiry. Public inquiries are not easy, as Professor Kennedy and his panel found, but they have conducted this one with great aplomb. They have written a report that is not only an easy read but extremely well considered, and I pay tribute to them once again.

It is absolutely right that the chief executive should be the court of last appeal, and the chief executive of the trust in Bristol, Mr. Hugh Ross, has introduced a new system for the reporting of concerns. There is a whistleblowing system in place, and a means of raising concerns at various levels in the managerial hierarchy. However, Mr. Ross has quite rightly retained the prerogative for individual members of staff who are concerned about raising an issue with their direct line manager to raise it with him personally. That is a good idea, and it speaks for the real progress that has been made in Bristol over the past few years.

Nick Harvey (North Devon): I commend the Secretary of State on his statement and the steps that he announced in it and echo the appreciation of the right hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who set up the inquiry. As one of those who campaigned for and gave evidence to it, I welcome its report, which I believe is of sufficiently broad scope to help those parents who feel that light needs to be shed on events at Bristol to enable them to understand and come to terms with what happened.

The Secretary of State drew a distinction between clinical and management accountability. He said, "The children were failed by the very system that was supposed to make them well," and that accountability was confused. On management accountability, will the right hon. Gentleman give further thought to how management at all levels of the NHS can be persuaded to understand that it must be open and accountable? When Members of Parliament such as the hon. Members for Bristol, East (Jean Corston) and for Bristol, West (Valerie Davey), myself and others started to ask questions on the affair, the shutters were pulled down and we were given misleading answers. Perversely, that caused me to take a far greater interest than I would otherwise have taken.

All areas of the NHS must be open for legitimate scrutiny from Members of Parliament, the media and elsewhere, or mistakes will turn into tragedies and tragedies will turn into scandals.

Mr. Milburn: I agree with some of those sentiments and I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his role in handling the consequences of the Bristol tragedy.

The hon. Gentleman is in many ways right about the way that managers behave. They have a pretty difficult job. They have to be accountable to me and, therefore, accountable to the House. That must be right in a public service. They are also accountable to their local communities and to representatives of local communities. That must be right too.

This is a two-way street. We sometimes talk pretty glibly about partnerships between patients and professionals and so on and so forth, as if rights and responsibilities flow only one way. They do not. If patients and professionals are to work more in partnership, that places a greater onus and a greater responsibility on the patient. If informed consent has been given, the patient has signed a contract with the professional. That changes some of the relationships. That is true, too, in terms of

[Mr. Milburn]

the relationship between Members of Parliament, public representatives and the NHS, but, in broad measure, I agree with what the hon. Gentleman had to say.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Like other Members, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on instituting the public inquiry. I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on making his statement to the House and responding so positively and quickly on crucial points.

My interest arose out of a tragedy that struck two families in my constituency and, listening to what has been said, I was reminded of the replies that I got from the trust, which amounted to saying, "Things are very difficult and great skills are involved, but, fundamentally, there are no problems." We know from the report that there were serious problems in Bristol.

I appreciate what has been said about paediatric services, but from my own experience and from what other Members have told me, I think that there is still a wider problem in the health service with accepting that there must be an entirely new approach to those problems. I hope that my right hon. Friend will undertake to bring together health service clinicians and those who are involved with these matters to talk through what is needed and ensure that such tragedies cannot occur—not just in paediatric and cardiac services, but right across the health service.

Mr. Milburn: I agree with my hon. Friend's comments, but he should not underestimate the extent to which there has been movement over the past few years. I met the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons yesterday and it is about to publish its latest outcome data, which are retrieved from its member surgeons. The society told me about a survey of its members on whether they support the open publication of outcome data so that those data are seen not just by the profession but by patients. Eighty per cent. of the cardiac surgeons surveyed supported open publication. That is a huge movement from where we were just four or five years ago. It expresses a recognition in the medical profession and among individual doctors that the closed world that epitomised Bristol during those tragic years will not do nowadays. Things have moved on. The important thing to realise is that it is not just the Government who have moved it on, but the profession.

Andrew George (St. Ives): I echo the appreciation of right hon. and hon. Members for the inquiry and the manner in which it was undertaken. I agree that the primary emphasis should now be on looking forward, learning lessons and taking action. I seek the Secretary of State's advice about the relevant cases that fall outside the reference period of the inquiry, such as that of Mr. and Mrs. Barnes in my constituency, whose son William died in 1983 following an operation by Mr. Wisheart. Like many others, they are anxious to find out more about what happened before the reference period. They seek the support of the Secretary of State and his officials to find out what happened outside that period. I should be grateful if the Secretary of State would advise on that.

Mr. Milburn: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. If it is helpful, I will contact the inquiry secretariat to see what information they have gathered during the inquiry, which has been going on for three years, and whether it is relevant to his constituents. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and let him know, and if he is unhappy with that, we can think about how best to raise the matter.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Are there not some important parallels between what happened in Bristol and the clinical problems that have occurred elsewhere? I am thinking in particular of the case of the surgeon Christopher Ingolby in my area. I know that my right hon. Friend is familiar with the case. Clinicians and managers were aware of serious problems for some time, but they were not made public. Patients and their families were kept in the dark. The Secretary of State has rightly mentioned key reforms, which have overtaken events and will markedly improve things, but one piece of the jigsaw is perhaps missing. Public involvement in and scrutiny of the health service could pick up some of the concerns that are known among professions, nursing staff and managers, but never see the light of day elsewhere. Could my right hon. Friend say a little more about public involvement?

Mr. Milburn: I agree with my hon. Friend. There are common factors in many of these horrendous cases, not just in Bristol but elsewhere. Usually, the common factor is that people in the hospital and the NHS environment around the hospital have known that there has been a problem, but the patients and their families have not known. We must change that.

I have heard people say that the problem in Bristol was that there were no data, so no one knew what was going on and there were no measures to assess how well a surgeon was doing against the national average. That is not true. Data were available, and had been developed by surgeons themselves. We must publish information more openly, so that the public, local GPs and the primary care trusts, as well as the doctors in the hospitals, know what is going on.

Two years ago, we published for the first time clinical indicators of death rates following surgery. The data are raw and rudimentary, but none the less are a significant step in the right direction and will make patients more aware of what is going on in their local health service. We must do more of that in the future, but we can only do so in conjunction with the medical profession.

On the issue of public scrutiny, Kennedy is pretty clear and explicit that that is where we must make changes. We must not just open up the national health service to make information more available, but get the public in at the heart of the service.

Kennedy comments on the existing structure of community health councils and on our proposals in the last Parliament for patient forums. We shall return to that shortly, but I think there is an important lesson to be learned from all this: if we are genuinely to have a national health service that is focused on the needs of patients, we must have more power for patients.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston): My right hon. Friend rightly points out that we need to learn for the future from inquiries such as this, so that such mistakes are not made again. He also draws attention to the availability of data, and the way in which they were analysed.

I understand that the report reaches strong conclusions about the number of operations that have been performed in a safe environment. Before too long my right hon. Friend will have to make a decision about the future of heart transplant centres, and part of those data will no doubt influence it. May I urge him not just to look at the number of individual operations performed by an individual surgeon, but to pay due attention to the needs of the team work involved and the collective activity that provides the necessary expertise? Will he treat the data holistically, rather than in a mechanistic way?

Mr. Milburn: My hon. Friend has raised an extremely important point, which I know is of great concern to her constituents and those of many other Members—not just in Birmingham but, as she will know, in Sheffield and Manchester.

Real dilemmas are involved. There is, for instance, the dilemma of having to choose between maintaining a local service—to which Kennedy refers explicitly—and ensuring that patient safety comes first. My accountability to the House means that I must ultimately be accountable for patient safety, and patient safety must come first in the reaching of these difficult decisions.

My hon. Friend is aware of the state of play. I assure her and others that no final decisions have been made, and that before any are made there will be open and full consultation.

Dr. Howard Stoate (Dartford): My right hon. Friend has pointed out that it was not so much a lack of data as a lack of monitoring that led to the tragic events in Bristol. That extends well beyond surgical outcomes. Dr. Harold Shipman managed to kill many of his patients; data must have been available, but no one had monitored the fact that many more patients were dying in his surgery than in any other surgery in the land, because it is extremely rare for a patient to die in a doctor's surgery.

Has my right hon. Friend given any thought to how monitoring might be extended well beyond surgical outcomes, across the whole range of primary care services? Has he given any thought to what sort of data might be published and how they could be made accountable and meaningful, so that patients could judge the whole range of NHS services rather than just surgical outcomes?

Mr. Milburn: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. There is a huge amount of data around; the problem is that those data are often pretty rudimentary, and are not integrated.

The hospital episode statistics data that we collect identify deaths in hospital, particularly deaths following surgery. What we do not have in the NHS is a means of collecting data relating to deaths outside hospital, so we give a rather false impression when we publish some of the statistics. However, some of the information is available through the Office for National Statistics, and we are engaged in a project to establish how we can best integrate ONS and HES data to give a rather more rounded picture of mortality rates.

I support the Kennedy recommendation for all the responsibility to be put "offshore" from the Department of Health and, in a sense, from the medical profession, but for work to be done in conjunction with the profession through the new office in the Commission for Health Improvement. That will co-ordinate collection and publication of information.

Julie Morgan (Cardiff, North): I welcome the report and the recommendations, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that the responsibilities of the new national director of children's health services cover England alone? If that is so, can he ensure that the director liaises with the National Assembly for Wales? I am sure my right hon. Friend is aware that children in Wales who need heart surgery must travel to centres in England—in many cases, to the one in Bristol—whereas the cardiological investigation will take place in Wales. It is important that there be no loophole. Can my right hon. Friend ensure that the new national director liaises closely with the National Assembly for Wales?

Mr. Milburn: I can certainly give that undertaking. My hon. Friend is right that the new national director applies to the NHS in England. There are other arrangements for Wales but given the flow of patients from Wales to England it is important that there be contact between the two organisations.

Mr. Stephen McCabe (Birmingham, Hall Green): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement on this sad affair. Given that the report by the National Specialist Commissioning Advisory Group predates the findings of the inquiry by quite a considerable time, will he give an assurance that he will not make any decision on the findings of the NSCAG report until the full implications of the inquiry have been properly considered? Will he make the NSCAG and inquiry reports available to hon. Members, so that we can consider the findings in tandem before crucial consultations and decisions are arrived at?

Mr. Milburn: On NSCAG, I have nothing much to add to what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart): clearly, we will need to ensure that the implications of Kennedy are understood before we make any decision. That must be right. All I can say is that final decisions on the matter are some way off.

On the report from NSCAG, I will write to my hon. Friend.

Points of Order

4.32 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. During Prime Minister's questions, I asked about the Government's intentions with regard to the east coast main line franchise. The Prime Minister appeared not to know, but I subsequently discovered that at 3.30 this afternoon the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions issued a press release extending GNER's east coast main line franchise for only two years. That is a significant departure from the recommendation that I understand he received from the Strategic Rail Authority, which apparently recommended that GNER be given a new 20-year franchise.

Surely the matter is of such importance to hon. Members, and we are so near the summer recess, that the Secretary of State should have come here to make a statement, so that we could ask him why the Government have done that. They have shunted the upgrade of that important strategic route into the sidings for at least two more years, and thrown into complete uncertainty not only passenger use of the line but the whole future of the east coast railway.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): Statements are, of course, the responsibility of the Minister concerned, but I am sure that hon. Members are aware that Mr. Speaker has made it plain that he likes important statements to be made in the Chamber.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members to bring mobile phones into the Chamber? In the middle of the important and serious statement by the Secretary of State for Health, the mobile phone of the hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Johnson) went off—I am afraid that he has now left the Chamber. Given that there is a place for him to hang his sword, could not a place be provided for him to hang his mobile phone before he comes into the Chamber—and if not, could instructions be given for the tunes that we hear in the middle of such serious statements to be less annoying?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The ruling on the use of mobile phones is clear: if they are in the Chamber they must be switched off.

BILLS PRESENTED

Marine Wildlife Conservation

Mr. John Randall, supported by Mr. Peter Atkinson, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Andrew Bennett, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. Colin Breed, Mrs. Helen Brinton, Mr. John Gummer, Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, Mr. Andrew Robathan, Mr. Anthony Steen and Dr. Richard Taylor presented a Bill to amend the law relating to nature conservation and the protection of wildlife in respect of the marine environment; to provide enforcement powers for marine wildlife conservation purposes to competent marine authorities; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 26 October, and to be printed [Bill 8].

Patents Act 1977 (Amendment)

Mr. Ian Liddell-Grainger, supported by Mr. Keith Simpson, Mr. Oliver Letwin, Hugh Robertson, Mr. Michael Jack, Mr. Mark Prisk, Mr. David Heath, Mr. Jonathan Djanogly, Dr. Andrew Murrison, Mr. Paul Goodman, Mr. Hugo Swire and Mr. Andrew Turner presented a Bill to amend the Patents Act 1977 to enable a court to award exemplary damages in an action for infringement of a patent: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 November, and to be printed [Bill 9].

Age Equality Commission

Ms Candy Atherton, supported by Jim Knight, Andrew George, Linda Perham, Roger Berry, Linda Gilroy and Mr. Ian Liddell-Grainger presented a Bill to make provision for the establishment of an Age Equality Commission to advise the Government on discrimination issues in relation to older people: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 23 November, and to be printed [Bill 10].

Home Energy Conservation

Dr. Desmond Turner, supported by Mr. Don Foster, Sir Sydney Chapman, Dr. Ian Gibson, Mr. Alan Simpson, Mr. David Drew, Mr. David Chaytor, Matthew Taylor, Joan Ruddock, Mr. David Lepper, Mr. Martin Salter and Llew Smith presented a Bill to make further provision about energy conservation in relation to residential housing; to make further provision about the eradication of fuel poverty; to provide for the establishment of registration and licensing schemes for houses in multiple occupation; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 30 November, and to be printed [Bill 11].

Pension Annuities (Amendment)

Mr. David Curry presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the purchase of annuities in respect of private and personal pensions, defined contribution and additional voluntary contribution pension schemes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 11 January 2002, and to be printed [Bill 12].

Employee Share Schemes

Mr. Mark Lazarowicz, supported by Mr. John McFall, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Linda Gilroy, Ms Meg Munn, Mr. Mark Hendrick, Jim Dobbin, Mr. Ian Davidson, Mr. David Miliband, Mr. Tony Lloyd, John Barrett and Mr. Andrew Love presented a Bill to make provision relating to employee share schemes; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 18 January 2002, and to be printed [Bill 13].

Industrial and Provident Societies

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas, supported by Andy Love, Mike Gapes, Doug Naysmith, Gillian Merron, Ken Purchase, Phil Hope, Andy Reed, John McFall, Ian Davidson, Paul Goggins and David Taylor presented a Bill to enable the law relating to societies registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 to be amended so as to bring it into conformity with certain aspects of the law relating to companies; to amend the procedure whereby such a society may convert itself into, or amalgamate with or

transfer its engagements to, a company; to permit a registered society whose business is conducted for the benefit of the community to provide that its assets are dedicated permanently for that purpose; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 25 January 2002, and to be printed [Bill 14].

Food Labelling

Mr. Eric Pickles, supported by Mr. David Drew, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Mrs. Ann Cryer, Mr. David Curry, Mr. Bill Rammell, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. Ian Davidson, Alistair Burt, Mr. Nigel Jones, Mr. John Hayes and Mr. Owen Paterson presented a Bill to make further provision for relevant information about food, including information about the country of origin and standards of production of that food, to be made available to consumers, by labelling, marking or in other ways; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 November, and to be printed [Bill 15].

Legalisation of Cannabis

Mr. Jon Owen Jones, supported by Ms Diane Abbott, John Austin, Tony Banks, Jeremy Corbyn, Paul Flynn, Dr. Ian Gibson, Mr. Mike Hancock, Dr. Brian Iddon, Lynne Jones, Austin Mitchell and Dr. Jenny Tonge presented a Bill to legalise and regulate the sale, supply and use of cannabis for recreational and therapeutic purposes; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 26 October, and to be printed [Bill 16].

Copyright, Etc. and Trade Marks (Offences and Enforcement)

Dr. Vincent Cable, supported by Richard Burden, Bill Cash, Brian Cotter, Ed Davey, Ian Liddell-Grainger, Paul Marsden, Andrew Miller, Austin Mitchell, Lembit Öpik and Nicholas Winterton presented a Bill to amend the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 in respect of criminal offences, search warrants, powers of seizure and orders for forfeiture; to amend the Trade Marks Act 1994 in respect of search warrants and powers of seizure; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 23 November, and to be printed [Bill 17].

Housing (Wales)

Mr. Simon Thomas, supported by Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, Adam Price and Hywel Williams presented a Bill to enable the National Assembly for Wales to make provision about registration and licensing schemes for houses in multiple occupation, about planning regulations, registration schemes and rates of council tax applicable to second homes, about building regulations in relation to older dwellings, and about the exercise by tenants of their right to buy; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 30 November, and to be printed [Bill 18].

Children With Disabilities (Play Areas)

Mr. Adrian Sanders, supported by Mr. Anthony Steen, Mr. Robert Syms, Paul Flynn, Nick Harvey, Richard Younger-Ross, Mr. Gordon Prentice, Mr. Nigel Jones and Mr. Colin Pickthall presented a Bill to require local authorities to provide facilities suitable for use by children with disabilities when they upgrade play areas or construct new play areas: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 11 January 2002, and to be printed [Bill 19].

Public Right of Planning Appeal

Mr. Nigel Evans, supported by Mr. Laurence Robertson, Lembit Öpik, Mr. Lindsay Hoyle, Mr. Desmond Swayne, Mr. Robert Marshall-Andrews, Miss Anne McIntosh, Mr. John Bercow, Mr. Bill Wiggin, Mr. Robert Syms, Mr. David Borrow and Mr. Mark Hendrick presented a Bill to introduce a right of appeal against the grant of consent for planning applications for certain persons and in certain circumstances; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 18 January 2002, and to be printed [Bill 20].

Football Spectators

Mr. Roger Godsiff presented a Bill to amend the law on the licensing of premises for the admission of spectators to football matches; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 November, and to be printed [Bill 21].

Animal Sanctuaries (Licensing)

Mr. Ian Cawsey, supported by Mr. David Amess, Norman Baker, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. Mike Hancock, Mr. Tim Loughton, Mr. Eric Martlew, Shona McIsaac, Dr. Nick Palmer, Mr. Martin Salter and Mr. Gerry Steinberg presented a Bill to make provision for the licensing and control of animal sanctuaries: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 11 January 2002, and to be printed [Bill 22].

Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons)

Rachel Squire presented a Bill to permit, without infringement of copyright, the transfer of copyright works to formats accessible to visually impaired persons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 15 March 2002, and to be printed [Bill 23].

Tobacco Disclosure

Mr. Frank Dobson, supported by Mr. Kevin Barron, David Taylor, John Robertson, Miss Anne Begg and Dr. Phyllis Starkey presented a Bill to require the disclosure by companies selling tobacco products in the United Kingdom of full details of all scientific and market research carried out by or for them or associated companies; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 18 January 2002, and to be printed [Bill 24].

Commonwealth

Mr. David Willetts presented a Bill to amend the law with respect to the Commonwealth Institute; to make provision in connection with the admission of Cameroon and Mozambique to the Commonwealth; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 25 January 2002, and to be printed [Bill 25].

Firearms (Amendment)

Mr. Jonathan R. Shaw, supported by Mr. Vernon Coaker, Mr. Robert Marshall-Andrews, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. David Amess, Mr. Mike Hancock, Norman Baker and Mr. David Hinchliffe presented a Bill to make provision for the regulation of the purchase of air weapons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 30 November, and to be printed [Bill 27].

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

[3rd Allotted Day]

Considered in Committee [Progress, 17 July].

[Sylvia Heal *in the Chair*]

New Clause 4

Political parties at European level (No. 1)

'Her Majesty's Government should lay before Parliament an annual report setting out the funds received by political parties at European level of which political parties represented in UK Parliament are members, pursuant to Article 2, paragraph 19 of the Treaty of Nice.'.—*[Mr. Spring.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.39 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (West Suffolk): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sylvia Heal): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Amendment (a) to the proposed clause, in line 1, leave out "should" and insert "shall".

New clause 5—*Political parties at European level (No. 2)*—

'Regulations governing political parties at European level and rules regarding their funding adopted under Article 191 of the Treaty establishing the European Community as amended by Article 2 paragraph 19 of the Treaty of Nice, shall not have legal effect in the United Kingdom unless approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

Mr. Spring: New clauses 4 and 5 relate to an issue of fundamental importance to the House and to the future development of the European Union—the funding and regulation of pan-European political parties. The treaty of Nice allows the Council of Ministers to lay down regulations governing political parties at a European level and, in particular, rules on their funding. I am aware that Ministers may point to the statement in declaration 11 claiming that there is no transfer of competence to the European Community. Currently, however, article 191 makes no mention whatever of the funding or regulation of parties.

The treaty of Nice amends article 191 on political parties. It adds:

"The Council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 251"—

which deals with co-decision making—

"shall lay down the regulations governing political parties at European level and in particular the rules regarding their funding."

The existence of a treaty base under article 308 for the proposed draft party statute is by no means universally accepted. Indeed, the House's European Scrutiny Committee declined to clear the document for precisely that reason.

Therefore, Ministers signed up at Nice to placing in the treaties for the first time the power to regulate and fund political parties. They then went a step further and agreed

that relevant measures would be decided by qualified majority voting. The Opposition believe that those decisions were wrong and that they merit a serious discussion in Committee and a detailed explanation from the Minister for Europe.

Our new clause 5 provides that specific parliamentary approval is needed before party political regulations can take effect in British law. New clause 4 provides for openness concerning the amount that different parties are receiving. If Labour Members intend to vote against our new clauses, the Committee should be told why they regard the proposals as unacceptable.

The Committee may be aware of the background to the developments. Currently, groups in the European Parliament receive funding from the Parliament. The Court of Auditors, however, has criticised the so-called leakage of those funds, which are intended for Members of the European Parliament but go instead into the hands of the European political parties themselves. Of course, we all support calls for more transparency in funding, but we believe that it is possible to achieve that objective by ensuring that such leakage stops.

All too typically, the European Union institutions intend to tackle the problem by becoming involved in an entirely new sphere. The idea is not only that groups in the European Parliament would receive funding, but that pan-European parties themselves would be funded directly by the EU taxpayer, and that with that funding would come the power for the EU to regulate. We believe that that is totally unacceptable.

First, it is wrong in principle for the EU to regulate political parties such as the European People's party, the party of European Socialists and the European Liberals, Democrats and Reformers.

Secondly, it is wrong for the EU taxpayer to be told that he or she has to pay for those political parties. To reiterate, we are talking not about contributing to the cost of the parties' work in the European Parliament, which is provided for separately, but about subsidising the parties themselves.

Thirdly, those provisions have the potential to discriminate systematically against non-integrationist political parties both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Fourthly, the ability to decide the regulations and funding not by unanimity but by QMV further increases the chances of the measures being used in a harmful and negative manner.

We are concerned about the draft statute for pan-European parties, which is proposed under current treaty bases and has been subject to lengthy discussion. Initially, 7 million euros are to be made available for party funding, divided between the five existing European political parties. It may be said that that is not a huge sum, but 7 million euros is 7 million too many in our view. There is potential for the amount to rise in future—that may even be inevitable—and its distribution may be discriminatory.

In advancing its proposal earlier this year, the Commission said:

"holding political views favourable to European integration is not a precondition to obtaining the status of a European political party, nor for receiving Community financing."

I am sure that we are grateful for that. However, our concern is that giving the money to pan-European political parties means that, in Britain and elsewhere, the effect is exactly the same in practice.

4.45 pm

Unlike Labour and the Liberal Democrats, the Conservative party is not a member of a pan-European political party. That is the distinction. Prior to the Nice Council, the former Foreign Secretary seemed to think, when he appeared in front of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, that we were members of the European People's party. We are not. Conservative MEPs are allied to the European People's party-European Democrats group in the European Parliament, but that is not a political party. Our party is not a member of the EPP itself, which is such a transnational party. We are not the UK branch of the EPP in the way that the Labour party is the UK branch of the party of European Socialists or the Liberal Democrat party is of the ELDR.

It is true that declaration 11 states that funding provisions shall apply on the same basis to all the political forces represented in the European Parliament. But if the second-largest national force in the European Parliament—namely the United Kingdom Conservative party—is not a member of any of the organisations receiving the funding, how can that principle be honoured?

It is also true that the draft party statute states that a union of European political parties may register a statute of a European political party for these purposes. The Conservative party is a member of the European Democrat Union, which is a centre-right grouping, encompassing a range of parties across the European continent. But as far as I understand it, the EDU wishes to remain as a union, and does not intend to register as a political party. And why should it?

Angus Robertson (Moray): Why is the hon. Gentleman asking a Government Minister of another party for guidance on how the Conservative party should find friends in Europe, just because no one is prepared to serve in the same group with it?

Mr. Spring: If the hon. Gentleman believes that that is the basis of our relationship with the EPP, he is classically misinformed.

As matters stand, even under the existing proposal and before the new treaty base is introduced, there may be discrimination in funding against organisations of which the main Opposition party in the UK is a member.

We are not alone. In France, the Gaullist RPR is not currently a member of a transnational party. Thus, the main centre-right parties in two of the four larger member states of the EU would lose out under these proposals. That may be an indication to the hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) that we are not alone. This is not a coincidental effect. It is obviously more likely that a party that favours much greater European integration will want to sign itself up as part of a pan-European party.

Indeed, Labour politicians were reported in January as welcoming the fact that the Conservative party would be disadvantaged as a result of our non-integrationist political views. It serves us right, was the gist of what

[Mr. Spring]

they said. Yet we are talking about taxpayers' money, paid by people with a wide range of views on European integration.

Any regulations introduced under the new part of article 191 will be agreed against the backdrop of the provisions of article 191 that already exist. They state that political parties at a European level are important because they are a

"factor for integration within the Union"

and

"contribute to forming a European awareness."

Does the Minister really believe that the powers now being introduced to regulate and fund European parties under that article will not be used systematically to further those aims? That is the explicit intention on the face of the treaty. How can it be right to use taxpayers' money in that way? That is the simple question that needs to be answered.

Declaration 11 makes it clear that national parties will not be funded under this article. However, the pan-European parties—and the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties are full members of that group—would be so funded. That will boost those parties' ability to promote their case, and it may also mean that the national parties benefit from having to pay lower subscriptions.

It is possible that the wording of the existing draft statute will be clarified during the course of the discussions to ensure that the EDU and other organisations will qualify.

Mr. John Bercow (Buckingham): Does my hon. Friend agree with the verdict reached in the 19th century by the great philosopher John Stuart Mill, that peoples who lack fellow feeling and who speak and read different languages cannot achieve the common public opinion necessary for representative government?

Mr. Spring: As always, my hon. Friend brings a welcome sense of erudition and historical perspective to our debate.

Who is to say that future measures introduced under the Nice treaty will not reintroduce such discrimination? Who is to say that regulations on matters other than funding will not be introduced that disadvantage pan-European parties with non-integrationist views, or that start making reference to some of the more controversial aspects of the charter of fundamental rights—such as the right to strike—as a condition for recognition? Safeguards on the non-funding aspects of regulations are not covered at all by declaration 11.

Future Governments, in the UK or elsewhere, may not be able to block such measures. Does that not illustrate the sheer folly of abandoning unanimity in this area?

That brings me to the most fundamental point of all. Even if there were no chance at all of discrimination against non-integrationist parties, we would still not support this article. It is a matter of principle. The EU institutions simply should not be getting involved in this area; it should not be their business.

It seemed for a long time that the Labour party agreed with us, at least on the changes proposed at Nice. Prior to Nice, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Maples) put the following point to the then Foreign Secretary, who is now the Leader of the House. At the sitting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of 21 November 2000, my hon. Friend said:

"Article 191. It is proposed it deals with political parties, which it says are a good thing, and it goes on that the amendment is that the Council acting by QMV should lay down regulations governing political parties in Europe and in particular rules regarding their funding."

The right hon. Gentleman replied:

"You will be intrigued to hear that it is missing from the Foreign Office list, by which I take it that we are not wildly enthusiastic about it . . . I personally am not aware of having given a view whether or not it should be QMV."

I hope that the Minister will explain what happened at Nice to ensure that the Government signed up to a measure about which they were not enthusiastic. The familiar pattern of build-up, muddle, contradiction and lack of direction is evident again in relation to this matter.

It was also reported in January that both UK Commissioners opposed the draft plans for a party statute. In *The Times* of 25 January, Neil Kinnock reportedly objected for

"reasons of democracy and political common sense."

In fact, there seem to be so many arguments against this new treaty provision that, on the face of it, it is difficult to see why it should be proposed. However, a further look at what the Commission has been saying makes its longer-term intentions clear.

In its report entitled "Adapting the Institutions to Make a Success of Enlargement", published in January 2000, the Commission stated:

"The Union would greatly benefit from having a number of members of the European Parliament elected on European lists, presented to all European voters throughout the Union."

The report goes on:

"Organising the European elections in this way would encourage the development of Europe-wide political parties and produce members who could claim to represent a European constituency rather than a purely national one."

By endorsing the measures in the Nice treaty, the Government are encouraging further steps to be taken down that path that, frankly, most people in this country would find unacceptable.

The two new clauses would not even stop article 2.19 of Nice being incorporated into United Kingdom law—that has already been voted on as part of amendment No. 1. They would simply provide for certain safeguards. I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members listening objectively to what I say will understand the need for such safeguards.

New clause 5 would provide a chance for scrutiny by the House of any regulations adopted under this paragraph. That would stop the issue being swept under the carpet. If the measures are as harmless as the Government claim, they have nothing to fear from new clause 5. They would have even less to fear from new clause 4, which would merely provide for openness about the amount that the different parties receive. There would be an annual report from the Government, and what could be more open, transparent or fair than that?

Following the report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the House has provided for new levels of openness and scrutiny in the funding and regulation of

UK political parties, including public disclosure of contributions. There was substantial debate on the measures contained in that report.

It is vital that the measures on EU-wide political parties should not be allowed to slip through without similar scrutiny. I believe that it is owed to the House of Commons and the people of Britain that those standards are upheld and maintained on this basis. The Commission and others want this to be an area of growing activity in years to come. If it is, it will have a growing impact on the work of the political parties represented in the House. I therefore look forward to cross-party support for the important safeguards contained in the new clauses. They have everything to do with parliamentary accountability and the role of national Parliaments, and we intend to press the matter to a vote in due course.

Mr. Mark Hendrick (Preston): I am not surprised by the comments of the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring). The debate on the treaty has been going on for a few days now, and it is clear that Conservative Members are opposed to any form of co-operation or integration with our European partners, even where political parties in their own part of the political spectrum are concerned.

I wish to deal with a few of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. Political parties in Europe already receive funding through the European Parliament to promote activities on behalf of their political groups—not their national parties—which share interests across national boundaries. That is legitimate activity, and as the hon. Gentleman said, it includes parties such as the PPE, the PES and the ELDR. I believe that the Conservatives were fairly close to the PPE at one time but, given that they have moved further to the right, they might not be accepted into it, even if they wished to be.

More than 100 political parties sit in the European Parliament. If decisions are to be made and groups are to work cohesively, they need resources and funding, and unless they are made available, we will see a sclerosis in the European Parliament that will bring the whole place to a halt. That is why funding has been made available in the past and needs to be made available in the future.

5 pm

There was talk about non-integrationist parties. That means perhaps parties that do not want to join one of the political groups. They are perfectly free to hold that position; they can receive funding to support their views even though they do not wish to integrate with other parties in the European Parliament. So that point needs clearing up. Just because the Conservative party does not wish to join the PPE does not mean to say that it is not eligible for funds.

Mr. Bercow: How does the hon. Gentleman square the observation that he has just made with the contents of the Schleicher report and specifically its emphasis on the importance of European political parties being instrumental in securing public support for the European integration project?

Mr. Hendrick: I am sure that the report has been passed since I left the European Parliament in 1999. I know Mrs. Schleicher well; I was friendly with her. Given the preponderance of right-wing parties in the European Parliament, her view is not necessarily held by parties such as mine. To answer the question directly, the hon. Gentleman supposes that any funding received centrally, albeit out of taxpayers' money, would necessarily be unpopular among the general population. A poll has never been taken to see whether that is the case. It is merely the assertion of the Conservative party.

Any non-integrationist party, as the Conservative party would presumably call itself, would be eligible for funding. If it chose not to receive it—to my knowledge, the Conservative party has not done so in the past—it would be perfectly entitled to do so.

Let us look at the figures. The hon. Member for West Suffolk mentioned 7 million euros. Given that we are looking at a Community of more than 350 million people, and that that could rise to 500 million people, 7 million euros—roughly £5 million—is chickenfeed. To make out that the cost will be a major burden on the European taxpayer and that the money that is being provided is immoral is a travesty.

Let us look at the facts about the Conservative party in Europe. It is not a member of the PPE—

Mr. Bercow: EPP.

Mr. Hendrick: In French, it is PPE. I am happy to correct the hon. Gentleman. Conservative Members often mention the European Democratic Union. There are some very right-wing organisations in that group. We have seen associations between the Conservatives and the Alleanza Nazionale in Italy and Forza Europa. It is clear which way the Conservative party is moving, and it is not towards mainstream European political activity.

If the Conservative party is not integrationist, I find that strange for a party that supposedly wants to stay in the EU. A union, by its very name, means that one wants to come together to co-operate and integrate. It is strange that the Conservatives are not coming clean with the electorate, as they should have done before the general election. All the sham about renegotiating treaties is just a front for withdrawal. Conservative Members want to withdraw from the EU.

Mr. William Cash (Stone): This is an interesting point. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has heard about amendments to the intergovernmental conferences that take place from time to time. The very Bill that we are debating is the product of renegotiation. If we are renegotiating the treaty of Amsterdam to turn it into the treaty of Nice, is that calling for withdrawal?

Mr. Hendrick: Of course it is not. The hon. Gentleman knows well that that is not the case, because the Government are approaching the negotiation positively. We know that the Opposition oppose not only the Nice treaty, but the Amsterdam and Maastricht treaties. They want to unravel decades of European development and our agreements with European member states, which have kept the peace for many years in Europe. They want to wreck the treaties, stretching back to the first treaty at Messina.

Mr. Bercow: I am exceptionally grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way because he is over-reaching himself. He is in danger—I put it no stronger than that

[Mr. Bercow]

because it is a matter for you, Mrs. Heal—of straying from the confines of new clause 4 in the broad historical sweep in which he has just engaged. Does he seriously contend that opposition to the proposals on the funding of pan-European political parties is somehow a byword for withdrawal? That is an absurd proposition, even by his standards.

Mr. Hendrick: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his usual entertaining intervention, but it does not get away from the fact that the proposal on pan-European political parties is just one of many that, as we have seen during the past few days, the Conservative party want to introduce to wreck the Nice treaty.

The hon. Member for West Suffolk made the point that the RPR is not a member of—I say it again—the PPE. Of course, it is not, but the UDF—another centre-right party in France—is a member, so the presumption that, because there is an exception, Conservative or right-wing parties do not necessarily have to be members of the PPE and, therefore, that they are not integrationist is not the majority view. The majority of Conservative and Christian Democrat parties are members of the PPE, and it says more about the Conservative party in this country than it does about its sister parties in Europe that it opposes such measures. Let us be honest: the Conservative party is not interested in the European Parliament or the European Commission; it is not interested in a European Union.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (North-East Fife): That was a partisan contribution to our deliberations—perhaps a little more partisan than some that we heard earlier in the Committee's consideration of such matters, and I shall try, so far as I can, to be a little more objective.

Of course, it is worth reminding ourselves that, under article 190(5), there is a move towards qualified majority voting on the general conditions and regulations that govern the performance and duties of Members of the European Parliament, but that taxation remains the subject of unanimity. I understand that that was one of Her Majesty's Government's stipulations that was accepted as part of the discussions in Nice. It is also worth saying that the EU Court of Auditors has consistently called for a statute to regulate European political parties and to ensure transparency in funding, and I shall return to that in a moment.

From what I have said so far, the House may have deduced that I support the changes made in articles 190 and 191, but notwithstanding that fact, I have considerable sympathy with new clause 4, and if it is pressed to a Division, my hon. Friends and I will most certainly support the official Opposition in the Lobby. Whatever one's analysis—we heard one from the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) and another from the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Hendrick)—I do not understand how one could possibly resist the suggestion that there should be openness and transparency in scrutinising the use of taxpayers' funds to enable democratic politics to be undertaken at European level.

I should be interested to hear what compelling arguments the Government have on new clause 4, because I should have thought it precisely consistent with those principles of openness that have become much more readily part of our political system. Those principles may require further development, but we are being open about financial contributions to political parties and their sources, and there is absolutely no difference in principle in being similarly open about precisely what sums have gone to the political parties represented in this Parliament under the proposed arrangements for political parties in the EU.

Angus Robertson: Following that logic, would the right hon. and learned Gentleman support the proposition that Members of the Scottish Parliament should be able to scrutinise the dissemination of moneys to political parties represented in this House?

Mr. Campbell: What lies behind that intervention is an attempt to make the Scottish Parliament the equivalent of the Westminster Parliament. We understand that that is the raison d'être of the Scottish National party, but it is the United Kingdom that is a member of the European Union, and it is the United Kingdom Parliament that has the responsibility for ensuring that Britain's relationships with the EU are proper and that the necessary supervision is carried out. I do not agree that those matters should become the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. They might do some day, if the hon. Gentleman's prayer is answered and Scotland becomes independent, but that day is a long way off, and for the moment I see no reason why the Scottish Parliament should be invited to intervene in an issue that is essentially one for the Westminster legislature.

My party has long called for a statute to regulate the affairs of MEPs. It seems that 25 years after the European Parliament was first directly elected, the current system of expenses, including travel expenses, and reimbursements remains, to say the least, complex, opaque and, in many respects, indefensible. It is fair to say that British MEPs have, on various occasions, sought to argue the case for a system much more akin to that in this Parliament, and MEPs of all parties are to be supported and congratulated on having done that. However, that view has not prevailed.

It seems to me, echoing the theme of openness once again, that if we are concerned in our domestic politics to be open and subject to scrutiny, not only should the Government accept the notion of a report of the kind identified and embraced in new clause 4, but the European Union should make a clear statement of the terms and conditions for all Members and their salary, travel and office expenses. We are all concerned about the connection between the electorate and Parliament, and in particular between the British electorate and the European Parliament, and a statute of the kind that I am suggesting would make a substantial contribution to that. There is no doubt that the European Parliament ought to have more power to hold other EU institutions to account, but with an extension of such power must come responsibility, and with an extension of responsibility must come more transparency.

I shall conclude with an observation about the European Parliament which I suspect will get some support from most quarters of the House. It is increasingly difficult to justify the ludicrous state of affairs whereby the Parliament is required to decamp from Brussels to Strasbourg for a week every month. There are those who

have estimated that the savings made by ending that procedure would be some £100 million a year. I simply cannot see the justification for continuing it. I do not for a moment minimise the difficulty of persuading the French to give up what they see almost as an inalienable right, but if we are serious about reforming the European Union, that seems to me to be one of the more obvious reforms, and one that would make instantaneous financial savings.

The changes in articles 190 and 191 are perfectly reasonable, and they should be supported. New clause 4, which would introduce the transparency and scrutiny to which I referred, is similarly worthy of support and I repeat that if the matter is pressed to a Division, I will invite and advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to support it.

Roger Casale (Wimbledon): I shall make a short contribution to this important debate about article 191 of the treaty of Nice, which creates the legal base for the Council to introduce a statute to regulate European political parties. I emphasise the word "regulate", because anyone listening to the debate might think that as a result of the measures that we will pass this evening, we are creating some new beast in the European jungle, in the form of transnational parties, that will threaten our country's well-being and independence.

5.15 pm

Of course, as my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mr. Hendrick) pointed out, transnational parties have existed in Europe for some time. There are a number of such groupings in the European Parliament representing the Christian Democrats, the Liberal Democrats, the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Communists. The fact that the Conservative party has decided not to participate in such transnational groupings does not mean that they do not already exist. Let us remind ourselves of the important function that they perform.

In a world increasingly conditioned by international flows of money, international movements of labour, and regulations and directives passed in co-operation with other European countries in an international context, it is right that there should be a parallel process of the formation of democratic will across civic society. That is one of the important functions that political parties in our country and transnational European political parties can perform.

Transnational parties can help the people of Europe to think about the policies that they want for Europe, to the extent that those policies will be decided at a transnational level in the future. Transnational parties provide a valuable tool for putting forward such policies and finding out the common ground across European peoples and societies, parallel to the way in which political parties do that in our own society.

Mr. Bercow: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has helpfully confirmed a suspicion that has been fuelled in my mind for some time. Will he put it on the record so that it is clear beyond peradventure that he accepts that the flow of funds to European political parties as currently proposed will necessarily and inexorably increase the pressure for more supranational legislative activity? If that is what he wants, it is not dishonourable, but I think it is wrong.

Roger Casale: I do not accept that that will give rise to inexorable pressure. The hon. Gentleman's comment is a further example of a knee-jerk reaction to any proposal in the name of European co-operation. As regards funding, we need to know about the flow of funds into European political parties and the source of those funds. That needs to be properly regulated by statute at a pan-European level, which is exactly what article 191 of the treaty of Nice seeks to achieve.

Mr. Spring: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is inadvertently supporting the cause of the Opposition. He says that he wants transparency. The place to air such issues in relation to British political parties is in the House of Commons.

Roger Casale: I shall deal with the detail of the new clauses later. The point of article 191 is to provide a legal foundation for the Council to introduce a statute to allow for the regulation of European political parties. Opposition Members seem to be suggesting that the treaty of Nice will allow the development of such parties. One can see why some of them think that a bad thing. They do not like Europe or the idea of Governments-let alone political parties-getting together. They think that they have found a hint of conspiracy and have removed themselves from any co-operation or participation in transnational groups of the centre right. It is clear why they would be against such political formulations, but it is also clear that article 191 does not establish them, as they already exist. I am in favour of the article because it provides a basis for the regulation of European parties.

I am proud to be a member not only of the Labour party, but of the party of European Socialists. I think that we have much more in common than we realise with some of the members of our sister parties in the European Union. It is a common feature of debate in this House that hon. Members berate the European Union or attack various member states. As soon as the summer holidays arrive, however, many of them set off to Europe. When they do so, perhaps they should try to meet some of their colleagues in other European parties. If they talk to those people, they might discover that one can have a lot in common with colleagues in national Parliaments abroad.

The point of European political parties is to allow and promote such exchanges, so that as we build a European institutional architecture, we can discover that what we do together is based on a common set of values and, to some extent, on common aspirations. The process should be advanced through the European Parliament and political parties, and the existence of European political parties assists its progress. My strong recommendation to Opposition Members is that, although their party will not participate as a European political party, they should meet their colleagues from other European countries individually. They might find that they like such meetings and learn something from them.

Mr. Peter Duncan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale): Will the hon. Gentleman accept our simple point, which is that although we are delighted that he feels so at home

[Mr. Peter Duncan]

with his socialist friends in Europe, we do not believe that the British taxpayer should be required to pay for that interaction?

Roger Casale: That has been a common theme at every stage of our debate. Opposition Members are sometimes good enough to recognise that Britain's membership of the European Union has benefits, but they want to have them at no price. I am afraid that that view, which has been repeatedly expressed during our deliberations, is unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman must decide whether he is against the existence of European political parties in principle, as his party seems to be, or whether he merely does not want to pay for them.

I can understand why the Opposition do not like the measure, as they are clear about what they do not like. They like neither the European Union nor the idea of political parties within it. That is why they refuse to join the European People's party. It parallels their reluctance to be involved in Europe. The article provides the opportunity for the Council to introduce measures that will regulate the purpose and funding of European political parties. It will introduce more democracy, accountability and transparency to the funding of political parties. Since the European political parties will receive funds, it will also make clear the criteria for recognising them.

Mr. Spring: The difficulty of examining such issues in the clear light of day in the House of Commons is not clear to me. We talk about the disconnection between the people of Europe, their Parliaments and European institutions and the funding for them. We now have an opportunity to give uncontentious support to enhancing the House's scrutiny procedures. If the hon. Gentleman were impartial, he could not object to that.

Roger Casale: If the hon. Gentleman believes that political parties can reconnect people with the political process, he should support the concept of European political parties. He claims that he objects to it.

The amendments deal with the role of the House of Commons in scrutinising European Union measures. Time and again, Conservative Members have tabled amendments to provide for further debate in the House on any new initiatives from the European Union. Yet we already have a good and effective scrutiny mechanism for European legislation: the European Scrutiny Committee.

At a meeting of that Committee this morning, we held a debate about the statute to regulate European political parties. The hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) referred to the work of the European Scrutiny Committee at an earlier stage in our deliberations, when article 191 was discussed. The Committee scrutinised it and we discussed it again this morning. We decided that we were happy to lift the scrutiny reserve on the draft statute. It is therefore wrong to claim that, without the amendments, no scrutiny of any statute to regulate the work of the European Parliament will occur.

Mr. Cash: I regret that I was unable to be present at the meeting this morning. Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that the Committee believes that the article does not require debate? Did we refer it for debate in Standing Committee or on the Floor of the House?

Roger Casale: We decided that we would not refer it for debate because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, that would handicap the Government in progressing with negotiations on the statute.

Mr. Bercow: How inconvenient.

Roger Casale: If the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) had been present at this morning's meeting, he could have made his point. However, we discussed the matter and, as he knows, the Committee does not refer for debate every item that comes before it.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We are straying wide of the new clause. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will now confine his remarks to it.

Roger Casale: I am grateful for your advice, Mrs. Heal. We debated the matter in the European Scrutiny Committee this morning.

5.30 pm

In conclusion, what lies behind the new clause is the usual cocktail of great fear and anxiety about the European Union, and an unwillingness fully to participate in any aspect of European integration, including the formation of transnational parties. That fear is not justified. There is a need for proper regulation of political parties, and that is provided for in the statute that will be created following the ratification of the treaty. There is also a need for proper scrutiny, and that is effectively carried out by the European Scrutiny Committee. For those reasons, I will not support the new clause.

Mr. Cash: We have just been treated to a pretty astonishing series of admissions. We have been told by the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Roger Casale) that the European Scrutiny Committee did a good job this morning in ensuring that there would not be a debate on the regulation to which we are supposed to be referring. If that is scrutiny, I should like to know what is not.

This regulation creates serious problems.

Mr. Wayne David (Caerphilly): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cash: No, he will not. Not a chance. I have not even started yet.

The regulation is extremely important in relation to the manner in which political parties and groups are differentiated in the European Parliament and, therefore, the European Union. It is disappointing that so few people are attending these debates. One could understand the reason for that yesterday, with all the euphoria and depression colliding in various parts of the Palace of Westminster, but there is no excuse for such a poor attendance today.

I am standing here opposite the distinguished Minister for Europe, a member of another political party. I strongly approve of the fact that we have a party political system

in this country, but the rainbow arrangements—the totally chaotic alliances—that are created in the European Parliament have no clear philosophy underpinning them to enable anyone to know what they are voting for. This debate is about an increase in the functions of a so-called Parliament and a so-called European Union based on an extremely uncertain course of navigation.

The Minister for Europe (Peter Hain): I assure the hon. Gentleman that the reason why there are relatively few Members on the Government Benches is that there is still a great deal of euphoria among Labour Members at the result of the election yesterday.

Mr. Cash: I have no idea how all that will pan out in due course. All I can say is that I am confident that my Learned Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) is going to do extremely well and, in my opinion, win. Then, Labour will discover some serious opposition to the sort of proposals coming from its Front Bench. I am just doing my best, at the moment, to supplement some of the arguments that I have been developing over a long period. My hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) has done a marvellously urbane job in speaking to the amendments and I pay tribute to him as a dear friend and colleague. Sometimes, however, I think that we could go a little bit further in some of the decisions that we take when voting on these matters.

That is one of the reasons why I tabled my amendment (a) to new clause 4. I say this with great respect to the shadow Foreign Secretary, whose name heads the list of those tabling the new clause: I entirely agree with most of it, but I believe it would provide us only with an annual report, as opposed to the serious opposition that is required, for the reasons that I shall give. It says:

"Her Majesty's Government should lay before Parliament an annual report".

I shall be kind and assume that that is supposed to mean something a little more emphatic, although I very gently tabled a little amendment to leave out "should" and insert "shall". I do not want to make a great issue of that, but with respect to new clause 5, the business of the regulations is much more serious. I do not want to draw nice distinctions between new clause 5 and my amendment, but the new clause says that the regulations

"shall not have legal effect in the United Kingdom unless approved by resolution of each House of Parliament."

I suggest that we leave out "have legal effect in" and insert

"be incorporated in the domestic law".

There is a nice distinction there, but I do not want to press it too much, because I know that my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk and his colleagues took the right approach—or at any rate had the right intention. There is a bigger problem. When the treaty goes through by way of incorporation in domestic law, it follows—*[Interruption.]* Although my dear and hon. Friend has to speak to the usual channels in the usual way, would he be kind enough to pay a tiny bit of attention to the point I am about to make?

If a treaty is to be incorporated in the domestic law of this country by way of an Act of Parliament, regulations must subsequently be made that deal with, in this example, political parties. However, there is a problem with new clause 5, which would not allow regulations through unless they were

"approved by resolution of each House of Parliament."

The little problem is section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972, which invokes the Court of Justice and, indeed, the implementation of laws followed by their absorption in our own legal bloodstream. Once that has happened, it will unfortunately not be possible for us then to pass a resolution disapproving those regulations.

I very much agree with the sentiment behind the new clause and I am glad to say that my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk has, perhaps peradventure, raised a serious point. Indeed, many Opposition Members have wanted to raise it emphatically for a long time: the House of Commons will not be dictated to by legislation that comes from another source in the EU. We say that there is a residual sovereignty in the House as a result of which it is incumbent on us—let alone the fact that we want to do so—to ensure that in respect of matters as fundamental as what a political party is, we in this House should not be overridden.

You and I, Mrs. Heal, and all other Members are voted for in our constituencies in relation to political parties which would not be recognised under the regulations. I hope that Members of the House, though few are here today, appreciate how invasive the provisions are. That goes not only to the mechanics of political parties or groups, but to what people believe in and what they vote for. As I have said over and over again in several debates in the past few weeks, this is their Parliament—the Parliament of the people. The political parties represent different points of view that are reflected in the people's choice, which is the essence of democracy and the freedom that goes with it.

If the regulations are introduced and passed, we shall be unable to reverse them. The Court of Justice would rule any such resolution of the House invalid and we would find ourselves roly-poly absorbed in the new arrangements being prescribed by the EU.

Mr. David: Would the hon. Gentleman be kind enough to give us an explanation of this roly-poly process?

Mr. Cash: It is called roly-poly pudding, and it means that we will get rolled up somewhere in the attic, like Samuel Whiskers in Beatrix Potter, and left there for a long time unless we are lucky and someone comes along to save us. Someone must save the Conservative party and the country from these arrangements. That is the problem. Believe it or not, the Labour party is also caught up in this, but it has not twigged yet. It will not be able to differentiate itself from the Conservative party under the principles that will be laid down in the regulations. Sooner or later it will wake up.

I want to pay tribute to a good friend and colleague of mine, Roger Helmer MEP. He wrote an important article called "The Brave New World of European Political Parties" in *The European Journal* published by the European Foundation, of which I happen to be the chairman. It was published in June, so it is pretty well up to date. I shall send it to the Minister, because I am sure that he will be extremely interested to read it.

[Mr. Cash]

The article says that the launch of new pan-European political parties has been on the agenda since at least 1996 when the Tsatsos report was prepared by the European Parliament's Committee on Institutional Affairs—in fact, it was going on some time before that. It is essential to distinguish political parties from political groups in the European Parliament. Most national political parties represented in the European Parliament form part of a parliamentary group. For example, Labour MEPs sit with the PSE, which is the party of European socialists, and the Tories are associate but not full members of the EPP/ED, which is known as the European People's party and the European Democrats group.

As Roger Helmer cogently explains,

"European political parties, on the other hand, exist outside the parliament. Clearly, where both a group in the EP and a corresponding political party exist, there will be close links between the two, as is the case in the UK between Westminster parties and national parties, but they are plainly not the same thing. European funding already exists for both MEPs and political groups in the EP. The proposals now on the table, and especially those outlined in the report prepared by . . . Ursula Schleicher, MEP"—

who was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow)—

"which is currently before the EP, are for European political parties, not for groups in the EP."

Roger Helmer goes on to say:

"The definition of a European party is clearly set out."

That is where the difference is and where the real problem lies. He gives the definition.

"Such a party must have representation in the European parliament, or in national or regional parliaments, in at least five member states, or have achieved at least 5 per cent. of the vote in at least five member states at the last European elections."

Surprise, surprise—the Conservative party does not qualify! Isn't that a funny thing? This is quite dangerous, and I am interested to know how the Minister will reply. Apart from anything else, this is a serious attack on democracy in the United Kingdom. I would love to know what my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk thinks about all this. Back Benchers are speaking in complete unison on such matters. I hope that I have not missed anything my hon. Friend said, but I also hope that he, like me, thinks that this represents a dangerous invasion and annihilation of the funding arrangements for the Conservative party. That is a fairly dramatic thing to have to say.

5.45 pm

We must ask what is behind all this. My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham quoted John Stuart Mill, and others have expressed similar sentiments. This is, in fact, about the whole idea of European democracy: it is about why, under these arrangements, which are much more important than they seem at first sight, European democracy is a non-starter and European political parties unnecessary.

As if we did not already know, as a result of all these debates, that we are moving towards full-blown political union, let me ask the Minister a specific question: does he really appreciate that that is what is going on? I see his advisers scribbling away; I hope that they can rush something to him. I trust that they recognise that this question will, or ought to, concern a good many Conservative Members, because we are in the middle of a leadership election.

Some years ago, a former contender for the Conservative party leadership rang me to ask whether I would vote for him. I said no. He asked why not. I said "What is the point of being Prime Minister of nothing?" He said "You cannot say that to me." I said "Yes I can. Et tu, Brute," and put the phone down.

Mr. Peter Duncan: We can't work it out, Bill. Tell us who it was.

Mr. Cash: I shall have to tell the hon. Gentleman later. It will all emerge in due course.

The plain fact is that we already have a European flag, passport and anthem, and we now have the brave new world represented by the call for European political parties. As if all that were not enough, a proposed amendment to the Schleicher report requires assent to the so-called charter of fundamental rights as a criterion for funding.

No doubt the Minister knows all this. He has not been in his job for long, but there are some real crackers here, and I am sure he has caught up with them by now.

To obtain consent for funding under the proposals, including those in the Schleicher report, it would be necessary to express agreement with the charter of fundamental rights—which, as we all know, we are not even allowed to debate. That is a very unfair arrangement: we are not allowed to stipulate the basis on which we would be prevented, under the proposals in the report, from receiving funding that would enable us to exist as a political party. That would rule out the Tory party at a stroke.

The report contains some superficial reassurance in regard to whether a Euro-realist party could exist in the European Parliament. It says:

"Parties need not necessarily"—

I think this is wonderful—

"be advocates of European integration; Euro-sceptical parties may also be supported if their policies focus on issues of European integration"—

at which we all say "Hurrah! Isn't this wonderful! We are allowed to focus on issues of European integration." As the Minister and others may know, I have been focusing on those questions for the best part of 16 years, and I have no intention of giving up.

Mr. Bercow: I always applaud my hon. Friend's careful study of the minutiae of these matters, but does he not agree, on a broader level, that the very notion of pan-European political parties is transparently absurd, given that they have no demos to represent? Does he not agree that they would only cease to be absurd and become meaningful if there were among the peoples of Europe a common identity, a common purpose and a common willingness to make equal sacrifices to achieve that purpose? As none of those conditions exists, what is the point of such parties?

Mr. Cash: Excepting one or two minor matters that have arisen recently, which I am glad to say we have now put behind us, I always agree with my hon. Friend,

particularly on the issues that are before us. Three cheers for the fact that he is here fighting with us on this particular issue! That goes to prove that we really are a political party—and we will remain one, by the way.

Hurrah, hurrah that we are allowed to focus on issues of European integration! As I have said, however, the reassurance is very thin. The report goes on,

"They"—

that is, the Euro parties—

"are seen as instrumental in securing public support for the European integration project."

As Mr. Helmer points out,

"So that's all right then. And remember it will be either federalist 'wise men' or the federalist EP—

European Parliament—

"which will decide on eligibility."

A curious thing went on in the European Parliament. It just goes to show what can go on when serious arguments are brought up in that strange body. As Mr. Helmer pointed out,

"We decided to fight back. The Schleicher report was the subject of an extraordinary procedural ambush in the Strasbourg plenary on 16 May 2001, planned and executed by a group of committed Euro-realist Tory MEPs".

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is wandering rather wide of the new clause.

Mr. Cash: I will only say that the Tory MEPs managed to ambush the project, but the triumph did not last long: it was all over the next day following a procedural motion.

The proposal raises some important questions. As I have said, the British Conservative party clearly does not qualify under the arrangements proposed in the regulations. *[Interruption.]* Would the Minister be kind enough to intervene? Perhaps he will be able to help me as I come to my peroration. He does not want to. He wants to deal with the point during his winding-up speech.

Mr. Mark Francois (Rayleigh): The Minister has his notes.

Mr. Cash: Indeed. I saw a lot of frantic scribbling going on over there. I trust it is accurate but we will find out later.

I have to confess that I had something of a tiff with—is he Lord Patten, Sir Christopher Patten or Mr. Christopher Patten? I cannot remember. At the time, I had a few words of disagreement with him upstairs over the question of the European People's party and our application to join it—it lasted about an hour and a half.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I fail to see the relevance of the hon. Gentleman's argument to the new clause.

Mr. Cash: It is absolutely relevant and I say that with great respect, Mrs. Heal. The European People's party is in fact a group in the European Parliament. It is absolutely relevant to the question of where the money will go. I think that that is a fair point. It is bang slap wallop within the arrangements that are stipulated by the regulations.

That was some time ago. We have heard from the Conservative Front-Bench spokesman that we are rather loosely connected with that strange body, the EPP. It would be strange if we were fully connected with it. After all it is exclusively federal. I am glad to get that reassurance from my hon. Friend.

This is a matter of considerable importance to the Conservative party for many reasons. If we ask the question in Conservative party terms, "What is a political party?" we go back to the great dictum of Edmund Burke, the greatest exponent of the philosophy of the Conservative party and a person of whom we should all be inordinately proud. He said that a political party is a body of men—of course now he would say men and women—who are joined together in the national interest and on a particular principle on which they are all agreed.

That raises an important question. There is no doubt that the present proposal is not in the national interest. It is in the European interest. That is the big difference. The definition of a political party is a body of men and women who are all agreed on a particular principle. That raises a fundamental question about who governs. There are big issues here.

It was Disraeli, one of our greatest Prime Ministers, who said that the Tory party is a national party or it is nothing. He did not say nationalistic and his remarks referred to the democratic nation state. I wish that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) were here. I would like him to hear some of the debate because I know that he is in favour of the Nice treaty; he is in favour of all these arrangements.

Against that background, I would like the Minister to answer the questions that I have posed, and some of my colleagues to do likewise.

Mr. David: May I correct a misapprehension that was suggested earlier with regard to the sitting of the European Scrutiny Committee this morning? The reason why the Committee decided not to discuss this subject was that we knew full well that this debate was taking place this afternoon; it was as simple as that.

Every hon. Member would surely agree that in the European Union there is a huge democratic deficit. There are many ways in which we can reduce that deficit, and one of the key ways is by ensuring that far more scrutiny and attention are given to European issues—and, indeed, to the House. We also need to think about how all the European Union institutions function and relate to each other. A debate is about to begin on governance in the European Union and how we define subsidiarity in determining where power can and should lie in the EU.

It is important that we consider how the European Parliament develops as an institution. One of the positive things about the Nice treaty is that it gives extra, albeit modest, powers to the European Parliament. We need to ensure that the European Parliament, along with the member states, can monitor the European Commission effectively and hold it to account.

That could incrementally reduce the democratic deficit in the EU, but it is important to recognise that there is another way to do that: ensuring that there is sufficient debate, discussion and policy formulation among political parties at European level. That is vital. Only when we encourage debate at European level will we have proper

[Mr. David]

control over European Union institutions. They cannot exist in a political vacuum. That is why, gradually over time, political parties have developed.

Hon. Members have referred to a number of political parties. I am proud to be a member of the party of European Socialists as well as of the Labour party. The pan-European parties have come together naturally, voluntarily and out of choice. People have decided that it is necessary for them to come together to advance a political perspective.

It is up to the Conservative party whether it wants to be part of that process, but it should not try to impede the democracy and development of others simply because it does not want to be part of it. That is its choice. Equally, it is our choice. It is undemocratic of people to try to undermine what they do not agree with.

6 pm

As I said, the process has already begun. It is evident not only at a European level, but at other levels of administration and governance. There is also a parallel with events inside the United Kingdom, such as devolution to Scotland and to Wales. It is significant that in my own country of Wales, for example, with the advent of devolution, a Welsh Labour party and a Welsh Conservative party have developed. Although not many people vote for the latter party, it is there. That is a recognition that there is a tier of governance in Wales. The same type of development is occurring at European level, and that development is perfectly natural and sensible.

Amended article 191 will not simply reduce the democratic deficit and recognise the new political reality: it will achieve greater transparency and greater financial probity. I say that as one who was a Member of the European Parliament for 10 years. In that time, I saw—this is not a party political point—that the pan-European parties were being indirectly funded by the seepage of European Parliament resources. The Court of Auditors pointed out that reality, and the Labour party has strongly supported the Court's observations and recommendations. Article 191 has been amended because we want to ensure that everything is done properly, above board and with the utmost transparency and probity.

In view of the rhetoric of Conservative Members, who always tell us that they want to reduce any suggestion of maladministration or lack of probity in the European Union, I should have thought that they would support the Bill. It is a step forward in ensuring greater accountability and transparency, which is a very sound argument for supporting it. The democratic argument and arguments for greater probity support the Nice treaty.

We have heard much today about Edmund Burke and his definitions of democracy. I remind Conservative Members that we should not forget other great political thinkers, such as Thomas Paine, who said very clearly in the 1790s that we should never forget that, ultimately, democracy rests with the people.

Mr. Cash: We are well versed in Tom Paine. All I can say is, was he not extremely lucky to get away without being guillotined? Was he not a lucky man?

Mr. David: Yes indeed, he was very lucky. It is lucky for us, too, that he was not guillotined, because we can all learn a great deal not only from his thesis on democracy but from his internationalism. However, I do not want to stray from the point.

Mr. Francois: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman, a Labour Member, has chosen to quote a republican political philosopher.

Mr. David: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the Labour party is a broad church.

We should recognise that ultimately, in any civilised civil society, sovereignty rests with the people. Ultimately, it is a matter of choice whether people wish to associate across national boundaries in political entities and political parties. In a mature democracy, sufficient resources should be found for that other sort of democracy to flourish. We want a European Union that will once again express the genuine aspirations of the people of Europe.

Angus Robertson: I shall not take up much of the Committee's time, but I want to touch on two very specific points: the funding of transnational political parties, and the level of democracy at which scrutiny should be exercised over such an enterprise.

It is rather curious that most of the time taken up by the official Opposition at Westminster in considering the Bill has focused on the Conservative party's funding arrangements and its interrelationship with, or semi-detachment from, its colleagues on the centre right. Every political party has to make choices about who its friends are at a European level. My party, the Scottish National party, had to make that choice and is part of the fourth largest group in the European Parliament, the Greens/European Free Alliance. However, although we all have to make choices about who our friends are, it is absolutely mind-boggling that it is beyond the wit of the Conservative party to find like-minded colleagues.

It is regrettable that that should be the most substantive and time-consuming matter for Conservative Members in considering the Bill. I listened very closely to the speeches by the hon. Members for Stone (Mr. Cash) and for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring), and they seemed to spend most of their time on it. However, their argument did not hold water. Although the hon. Member for Stone raised more serious issues that should perhaps be addressed, the problem of finding colleagues at a European level does not constitute a substantial objection to the proposals.

The hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Duncan) seemed to be opposed to the funding of political parties by taxpayers, but I suspect that that was probably because he prefers the support of big business. Again, I do not think that that is a substantive argument.

It is unfortunate that the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) has left the Chamber. I should have thought that he—as a man of note in the Scottish legal profession—and the Liberal Democrat party would support the notion that, at least in Scotland's case, the people, not Parliament, are sovereign. That is a very established tradition. It is strange that the Liberal Democrats chose not to support the idea that scrutiny—if indeed we need more scrutiny—should be exercised in the Scottish Parliament, not in this House.

The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow) often talks about subsidiarity and proportionality. I believe that democracy should be scrutinised at the level closest to the

people, which is why I shall not support new clause 4. The devolved level is the right place for such matters to be decided.

Peter Hain: I assure the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) that his persistent arguments do indeed lead to a great deal of scribbling by Foreign Office officials. The legendary "JB"—the Foreign Office official who was outed yesterday morning on the "Today" programme—is doing nothing but scribble, because of the formidable points made by the hon. Gentleman. I am told that JB may even have to cancel his annual holiday to respond to the detailed submissions, which we await with enthusiasm, that the hon. Gentleman promised me last week.

The right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) very courteously told us that he would have to leave the Chamber briefly, but I can tell him that I am very sorry that we lost his general support for the Government's position on the treaty and the Bill. He has advanced some extremely compelling arguments.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked me what the compelling arguments against new clause 4 were. The first argument, in reply to one of his points, is that the statute for Members of the European Parliament is different from the statute on the European political parties. For two and a half years we have been negotiating a statute for MEPs' terms and conditions under article 190(5) of the treaty, but we cannot reach agreement with the European Parliament. There is also no chance of ending the division between the European Parliament's sites. Sometimes, the Parliament meets for plenary sessions in Strasbourg and for committees in Brussels, whereas the secretariat meets in Luxembourg. The French will not agree to a sensible resolution of the sites issue. That whole question depends on achieving the very unanimity that Conservative Members always invite us to endorse, and sometimes that stops sensible progress of this kind.

New clause 4 is not necessary. Parliament has a highly effective scrutiny system—as my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Roger Casale) pointed out—in the European Scrutiny Committee, of which the hon. Member for Stone is a distinguished member. I wrote to the scrutiny Committees yesterday with details of the proposals from the Belgian presidency on the dossier, which were discussed in the presidency working group last Friday.

The letter covered presidency proposals—not final regulations, as I must explain to counter some of the hot air from the hon. Member for Stone and his colleagues—covering registration, verification, legal personality, expenses, financing and control. The last will be of interest to the Committee. Money must be accounted for in accordance with the rules applicable to the general budget of the EU and the financial regulation on the basis of an annual certificate by an external and independent auditor to be transmitted to the European Parliament and the European Court of Auditors. In other words, the proposals contain rigorous procedures for accountability and transparency.

Mr. Cash: I have been familiar with these procedures for some time. On what date is it intended that this matter will be put through? Is it a matter of urgency?

Peter Hain: It is a presidency proposal, which will be put to the forthcoming General Affairs Council.

Mr. Cash: When?

Peter Hain: In October, I think. We will continue to keep the Committees and the House informed on the issue.

In response to the points made by the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife, it is worth remembering that the arrangements to be negotiated for EC funding will require a public statement of accounts by each European political party. All the necessary information will be available publicly, and that is why the new clause is not necessary.

New clause 5 requires Parliament to approve the EC regulation before it comes into effect. This is not acceptable; the statute, once agreed, will have immediate legal effect in the UK, under the terms of the European Communities Act 1972. But Parliament has a highly effective system for scrutinising European Community documents, and scrutiny Committees can request a debate on the draft statute before its adoption.

I enjoy sparring with the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring). For a Conservative, he is a pretty straight and decent guy. But his speech was full of puffed-up and contrived anger on a series of specious points that were not relevant to the issue. I am not sure whether the kind of speech that he made will be good for his career if the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) becomes leader of the Conservative party. As someone who is concerned about his career and wants to see him do well, I urge him to show caution and prudence on this point.

Nice provides a new legal basis for a measure to regulate European political parties, and in particular, their funding arrangements. It is important to dwell on the facts for a moment. Parties such as the PES and the EPP are not new; indeed, they were first recognised by the Maastricht treaty, which was signed by the right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude), who is the boss of the hon. Member for West Suffolk. His boss signed the treaty that set up the system, and the hon. Gentleman is now having a go at it; that is very ill-disciplined.

It is right that people should be able to form parties at European as well as national level, if they want to. Several British national parties are affiliated to European political parties, as my hon. Friends the Members for Preston (Mr. Hendrick), for Caerphilly (Mr. David) and for Wimbledon pointed out. Those parties are not inherently evil, as some Conservative Members seem to suggest. It is revealing that when my hon. Friend the Member for Preston said that if the political groups within the European Parliament did not have funding provided as it is here, it would gum up the workings of the European Parliament, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow) and some of his colleagues said, "Good," as if their objective was to create chaos in the European Parliament. That was a revealing reaction.

6.15 pm

Mr. Bercow: I was rather perturbed by the Minister's unsubtle attempt at censorship of the views of my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Mr Spring). In the context of the funding and operation of political parties,

[Mr. Bercow]

may I put it on record for the House that in the event of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) becoming leader of my party, I for one intend to express my views about European political parties as forcefully in the future as I have in the past?

Peter Hain: And a jolly good thing too. I do not imagine that the hon. Gentleman will be doing so from the Front Bench.

Mr. Bercow: No.

Peter Hain: Exactly. I am anxious to see the hon. Member for West Suffolk—a very able Front Bencher—continue to sit on the Opposition Front Bench for as long as possible; I am concerned about his career.

There is a problem with the situation as it has developed over the years. The political groups within the European Parliament receive money from that Parliament's budget for their day-to-day organisation, and that can leak through to the European political parties. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly, who knows what he is talking about because he has been in the European Parliament.

To put it in simple terms—as is often necessary for Conservative Members—it is as if some of the so-called Short money in the House of Commons leaked from the parliamentary Labour party to the Labour party, or from the parliamentary Conservative party to the Conservative party. We do not allow that, and with the new procedures, we want to build in exactly the same bars in the European Parliament as we have here.

We must regulate to ensure that the funding of European political parties is fully transparent and properly audited, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly argued so convincingly. That is why the regulations recommended by the European Court of Auditors will combat financial mismanagement. I would have thought that we would have the wholehearted support of Conservative Members in that. That is why the principle of such regulation is supported by the PES and the ELDR, to which the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats respectively belong. It is also supported by the EPP, to which the Conservative party is allied—and to which, if the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe becomes leader, it will become affiliated. That is why member states are negotiating suitable regulation that will stop financial abuse. They are doing so under the provisions in article 308 of the EC treaty. We support that, and we want action as soon as possible to clean up such funding.

Mr. Cash: Will the Minister come to the question of the definition and the criteria that enable people to qualify for those arrangements? The key question is what one stands for; if one stands for something outside European integration, one is clearly at risk.

The Minister shakes his head, but that is the burden of the Schleicher report.

Peter Hain: The hon. Gentleman is erecting false phantoms. A report is a report; in the end, this is a matter for negotiation between Governments. The Nice treaty, by means of amended article 191 of the EC treaty, provides a specific new treaty base for such measures. Qualified majority voting will ensure that the provisions governing European political parties' funding are agreed, or, as necessary, updated speedily. No single member state will be able to block much needed reforms. That is important.

The Opposition have made various charges, and I shall demolish them one by one.

Mr. Francois: Does the Minister agree that it is possible to summarise the way in which parties would qualify for the money by saying that although it is not necessary to be fully in favour of European integration, it certainly helps?

Peter Hain: The hon. Gentleman is new, so I shall be charitable to him—but the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Stone applies to his question, too.

The Opposition claimed that the measure would finance national parties. It will not. We secured at Nice, in explicit language, the condition that no European Community money going to European political parties would be transferred, directly or indirectly, to national political parties. Not a penny will go to the Labour party or to any other domestic British political party.

The hon. Members for Rayleigh (Mr. Francois) and for Stone implied that the measure amounted to "funds for federalism". It does not. There will be no discrimination against parties on the grounds of their attitude to European Union integration. European political parties that oppose the EU, or its further integration, will be just as eligible as those that think the opposite. In the Nice treaty negotiations, the Government secured explicit language covering that matter too. We protected the interests of Opposition Members, and we ought to get a bit of credit for that for a change.

The Nice treaty and the proposed regulation will not, as was suggested, give the EU the power to ban political parties. That is a ridiculous suggestion. It will not transfer power to the Community. The declaration that we agreed at Nice states:

"The conference recalls that the provisions of Article 191 do not imply any transfer of powers to the European Community and do not affect the application of the relevant national constitutional rules".

Opposition Members have claimed that the treaty would discriminate against the Conservative party. It will not. The measure is to do with funding European political parties, not national ones. I am sorry that the Conservatives have not found a European political party that shares their agenda on Europe. That may change after the leadership election. The French Gaullists' decision to join will leave the Tories as the only major right wing party outside the group of the European People's party. That is their choice, and we do not quarrel with it. They can choose to join a European political party, or to form a new one that meets the objective criteria which will be laid down in the measures to be agreed. It is up to them. They can form their own party and qualify in exactly the same way that other parties do. There is no discrimination in that.

The measure will improve financial accountability and rigour, and end abuses in the financing of European political parties. That is something that we would have expected the Opposition to welcome. The proposal to

regulate European political parties is another plank in our European Union reform strategy. That is why we support it, and reject the amendments.

DEFERRED DIVISIONS

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Alan Haselhurst): Order. I have now to announce the result of the Divisions deferred from a previous day.

On the motion on section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, the Ayes were 318, the Noes were 179, so the motion was agreed to.

On the motion on Social Security, the Ayes were 324, the Noes were 178, so the motion was agreed to.

[The Division Lists are published at the end of today's debates.]

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Further considered.

Mr. Spring: First, I thank the Minister of State for his kind words about my political future. He is a shining and living example of life after death as a Foreign Office Minister, and I congratulate him on his ability to survive.

The hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) spoke about the funding of political parties. In practice and by definition, the prejudice will be against a national political party that does not wish to subscribe to an integrationist agenda and which thus escapes being cemented to a political grouping. The Minister understands that perfectly well.

I can tell the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. David) that we accept that there has been leakage. The idea that article 191 must be extended to deal with that leakage is absurd overreaction. There are very simple ways of dealing with leakage, and we would support them entirely. However, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that we encourage debate among all political groupings in the EU.

Sadly, the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Hendrick) is not here, but he made some interesting contributions to the debate. He said that 7 million euros was a piffling amount of money, yet what is at stake is not the amount of money but the principle. In any case, the amount of money can be increased.

I can tell the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Roger Casale) that we have no objection to the formation of political groupings. People have a democratic right to form such groupings. We are anxious to ensure that there is proper parliamentary scrutiny of this important matter, which has been such a flashpoint in the EU. I am happy to pay tribute to the European Scrutiny Committee and all its members, but the hon. Gentleman is wrong to think that the Committee will be adequate when it comes to studying the measure. There should be total transparency with regard to finances, and nothing should be opaque.

On scrutiny, I believe that, given the difficulties in the EU and the controversial aspects of the proposal, the debate about the measure should take place on the Floor of the House of Commons. I remind the House that new clause 4 states:

> "Her Majesty's Government should lay before Parliament an annual report setting out the funds received by political parties at European level of which political parties represented in UK Parliament are members, pursuant to Article 2, paragraph 19 of the Treaty of Nice."

The House exists to debate exactly such matters. Hon. Members should debate the difficulties that exist with regard to the public's attitude to the financing of political parties, and to the money associated with Members of Parliament and with Members of the European Parliament. The House is the place for that debate, and I am dismayed that the Minister has not supported such a non-controversial proposal.

The new clause would strengthen the clarity of the EU. It would abolish the opacity that to a large extent causes the disconnection between the peoples of Europe and the institutions of the EU.

[Mr. Spring]

I shall unhesitatingly press the new clause to a Division.

Mr. Cash: I just want to say, by way of conclusion, that the matter is as serious as my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) said. The Minister has tended to underestimate its seriousness.

We shall pursue the matter, both here and in the European Parliament. The measure is a direct attack on free speech, and an attempt to ensure that the Conservative party is put at a disadvantage, both in this House and in the European Parliament. We will continue to fight it.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 194, Noes 360.

Division No. 32] **[6.28 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(E Surrey)*
Allan, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bacon, Richard
Baker, Norman
Baldry, Tony
Barker, Greg
Baron, John
Barrett, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bercow, John
Beresford, Sir Paul
Boswell, Tim
Brady, Graham
Brazier, Julian
Breed, Colin
Brooke, Annette
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Malcolm
Burns, Simon
Burstow, Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cable, Dr Vincent
Cameron, David
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Carmichael, Alistair
Cash, William
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chidgey, David
Chope, Christopher
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Collins, Tim
Conway, Derek
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Cotter, Brian
Cran, James
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Donaldson, Jeffrey M
Doughty, Sue
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Peter
Evans, Nigel
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flight, Howard
Flook, Adrian
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
Garnier, Edward
George, Andrew *(St Ives)*
Gibb, Nick
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Gray, James
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Gummer, Rt Hon John
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hammond, Philip
Hancock, Mike
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harvey, Nick
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver
Heath, David
Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Hendry, Charles
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Holmes, Paul
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson, Boris *(Henley)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keetch, Paul
Kennedy, Rt Hon Charles *(Ross Skye & Inverness W)*
Lamb, Norman
Lansley, Andrew
Laws, David
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Liddell-Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Loughton, Tim
McIntosh, Miss Anne
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mates, Michael
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Moore, Michael
Moss, Malcolm
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Norman, Archie
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Öpik, Lembit
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paisley, Rev Ian
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prisk, Mark
Pugh, Dr John
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, Laurence *(Tewk'b'ry)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Sanders, Adrian
Sayeed, Jonathan
Selous, Andrew
Shephard, Rt Hon Mrs Gillian
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Keith *(Mid-Norfolk)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Streeter, Gary
Stunell, Andrew
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Syms, Robert
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Thurso, John
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyler, Paul
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Walter, Robert
Waterson, Nigel
Webb, Steve
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Rt Hon Miss Ann
Wiggin, Bill
Willetts, David
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Willis, Phil
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George
Younger-Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Luff and
Mr. John Randall.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Rt Hon Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atherton, Ms Candy
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, John
Bailey, Adrian
Baird, Vera
Banks, Tony
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Begg, Miss Anne
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Best, Harold
Betts, Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Borrow, David
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bryant, Chris
Burgon, Colin
Burnham, Andy
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Cairns, David
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Caplin, Ivor
Casale, Roger

Caton, Martin
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chaytor, David
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Coleman, Iain
Colman, Tony
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis–Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Drown, Ms Julia
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Annabelle
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Gilroy, Linda
Godsiff, Roger
Goggins, Paul
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grogan, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hanson, David
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Heppell, John
Hesford, Stephen
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hood, Jimmy
Hope, Phil
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Joyce, Eric
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
Killoyle, Peter
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lammy, David
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Llwyd, Elfyn
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDonald, Calum
McDonnell, John
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWalter, Tony
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall–Andrews, Robert
Martlew, Eric
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Morgan, Julie
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norris, Dan
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Sir Raymond
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Price, Adam
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Reid, Rt Hon Dr John *(Hamilton N)*
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Roy, Frank
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Jonathan
Sheridan, Jim
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Simpson, Alan *(Nottingham S)*
Singh, Marsha
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
Weir, Michael
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*

Wills, Michael
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wray, James
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Graham Stringer and
Jim Fitzpatrick.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 6

REPORT ON OPERATION OF ARTICLE 137 TEC, AS REVISED

'Her Majesty's Government shall make a half-yearly report to Parliament on the implementation of Article 2, paragraph 9 of the Treaty of Nice, setting out the United Kingdom legislative and employment implications of Article 137 TEC, as revised.'.—*[Mr. Spring.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Spring: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

It is now four years since the Government abandoned the opt-out from the social chapter. It is time for an assessment of its impact. New clause 6 would provide for just such an assessment on a regular basis.

The treaty of Nice further extends the social chapter in article 137 TEC by adding two new fields to the list of those in which the Community

"shall support and complement the activities of Member States".

The

"modernisation of social protection systems"

is a new item. It is already reflected to an extent in the existing provision on "social protection of workers". However, crucially, that is decided unanimously. The new provision is different because it will be decided by QMV.

The Government point out of course that QMV under the new provisions is limited to co-operation between the member states, and that harmonisation of their laws and regulations is explicitly excluded. Yet this will encourage the EU to put pressure on Governments to conform to so-called best practice when social protection systems are not considered "modern" enough.

New clause 6 would not prevent the new provision from being implemented. It would, however, provide for a regular report on the evolution of the social chapter as a whole. If the Government are as sanguine as they claim about the social agenda in the EU, they presumably support the new clause. It would, after all, provide them with another opportunity to set out all the beneficial, deregulating measures that they claim that Europe is introducing. We wait for that with bated breath.

A brief look at how the social chapter has developed over the last four years highlights why Opposition Members have serious concerns. We were told that signing the social chapter, with the attendant loss of the UK veto, simply did not matter. In 1995, the Prime Minister, then Leader of the Opposition, told the Confederation of British Industry that each piece of legislation under the social chapter would be judged on its merits. He said that he had

"no intention whatever of agreeing to anything and everything that emerges from the EU".

That was in November 1995.

On Second Reading of the Bill to ratify the Amsterdam treaty, the then Foreign Secretary reassured the House about the effect of signing up to the social chapter. He said:

"there is no danger of a flood of prescriptive, unrealistic regulations from Europe. There is a changed tone in Europe."

He was particularly at pains to reassure the House about the then draft proposals for a general framework for informing and consulting employees—the so-called national works councils directive. On this, he said, the Government would

"take our seat and make sure that the directive is amended in ways that reflect our thinking."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1997; Vol. 300, c. 913-14.]

That was his promise in 1997. Repeatedly, in recent months, the Government have reiterated both their opposition to the works councils directive and their confidence that they would be able to block it. Then, days after the general election, at the Employment and Social Policy Council on 11 June, the Government had to give in. Of course Ministers claim that the amendments that they achieved on issues such as the transition period mean that the text is now acceptable. So much for the principle that such issues are not for the EU to decide.

6.45 pm

In reality, of course, the Government had no choice but to accept the directive, because their blocking minority had melted away—at the end of what the Department of Trade and Industry briefing to MEPs euphemistically described as "long and difficult negotiations". With that experience presumably fresh in the collective ministerial mind, is it not inexplicable and inexcusable that they are about to make the same mistake again, both with a general extension of QMV at Nice and specifically in relation to social measures? Does that not underline the need for regular reports on these matters? Instead of agreeing to extend the social chapter, as they did at Nice, the Government should be assessing the damage that is being caused by the articles already agreed.

Does the Minister agree that the momentum on social policy continues to grow? Belgium's note on its presidency priorities states that it will

"include a strong social dimension and will pay special attention to the development of the European social model. Special emphasis will be put on quality of work, larger participation of employees with regard to economic mutations, equal opportunity, modernising social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and the sustainability and re-financing of pensions".

In the light of concerns expressed by employer organisations and others, bland Government assurances are no longer sufficient. It is time for a clear, open and honest assessment of the effects of the social chapter at times of economic downturn as well as of growth, and of new measures such as national works councils agreed under it.

At Lisbon, the Prime Minister made a speech in which he painted a picture of a modern, outward-going Europe. He talked about benchmarking and the future of high technology, and of a Europe that was open to competition in a liberalising and deregulated way. The following week, that vision was rejected by the French Prime Minister, who talked about reinforcing the social agenda. The social agenda and the ethos that obtains now in the

EU is out of date in a modern economy. I ask therefore that the Minister make clear to the Committee the implications of that.

Peter Hain: I apologise for missing the first moments of the hon. Gentleman's speech. New clause 6, which calls for a twice-yearly report to Parliament, is unnecessary. Both this House and another place already have arrangements for scrutinising legislative and other proposals that come from Europe, including those under article 137 of the treaty establishing the European Community. That is why we reject the new clause. Scrutiny procedures are already more than adequate.

Social policy matters. It makes sense to work together where we can improve the lives of our citizens. That is why the treaty establishing the European Community includes provisions that allow for that. I remind the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) and the rest of the Opposition that since Britain, under this Labour Government, signed up to the allegedly job-destroying, uncompetitive social chapter, we have created more than 1 million jobs in this country.

Mr. Spring: The Government did?

Peter Hain: The Government have produced the macro and micro-economic conditions in which more than 1 million jobs have been created. In comparison, unemployment rose to more than 3 million when the Tory Government were in office.

Mr. Spring: I hesitate to intervene, but the extent of job creation under the last Government was greater than during the last Parliament, under Labour. That is a fact.

Peter Hain: I am not sure whether we should go too far into that matter under your chairmanship, Sir Alan, but the truth is that unemployment rose to a record post-war high of more than 3 million during the 18 years when the Conservative Government were in office. I do not deny that unemployment started to decline towards the end of that period, but we now have an excellent record of falling unemployment. Employment has risen to an historic high in Britain while the social chapter has been in force.

Mr. Cash: Will the Minister give way?

Peter Hain: Not at the moment; I shall make a little progress, then I shall happily give way if there is time.

On social policy issues, the Nice treaty essentially reordered the Amsterdam treaty. Voting by unanimity was retained in the following key areas: social security and the social protection of workers; protection of workers where their employment contracts are terminated; representation and collective defence of the interests of workers and employers; and conditions of employment for third-country nationals who legally reside in the Community.

One new provision is the addition of a reference to the modernisation of social protection systems, which can take place by qualified majority voting. Such action is limited to the adoption of measures designed to encourage co-operation between member states and does not include legislation—for example, national action plans that involve the exchange of best practice among member states along the same lines as the social exclusion action plans.

The Conservative party says that it is worried about expenditure, but changes that involve more national expenditure on such issues can be made only under article 137(1)(c) on social security and social protection of workers, which is still subject to unanimity and on which Britain can use its veto. Those are the old social chapter provisions and the Commission has yet to introduce any proposal under that article. Pay, the right of association, and the right to strike or to impose lock-outs continue to be excluded from the provisions of article 137.

Article 137(4) has been amended to make it clear that any proposals agreed must not affect the right of member states to define the fundamental principles of their social security systems and must not significantly affect the financial equilibrium of national systems—an important and welcome clarification.

As I am in a generous mood, I happily give way to the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash).

Mr. Cash: I want to deal with the allegation that the Conservative party was somehow responsible for massive unemployment. Of course, the Minister will remember that one of the reasons why we got into serious difficulties with unemployment was the fact that we went into the fateful exchange rate mechanism. We have now left the ERM and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) was responsible for creating economic stability out of the ERM, but this Government will guarantee a return to it, because they are in favour of the principle of monetary union, and they will reincur the very problems that we managed to avoid only by withdrawing from that ridiculous system.

Peter Hain: The Chancellor has made it clear that no entry into the ERM is planned, and it was, of course, a Conservative Government, supported by the hon. Gentleman, who took us into the ERM—a ridiculous policy when the value of the pound was ridiculously high, which caused many of the problems. I should correct the hon. Gentleman in a crucial respect: the massive increase in unemployment under the Thatcher Government occurred before we went into the ERM. The record high of more than 3 million people unemployed and the destruction of manufacturing jobs occurred in the early 1980s, well before the ERM. I shall go no further, except to say that the social chapter—which gave rise to the little tirade of the hon. Member for West Suffolk, and about which I had to correct him on several matters—is an important provision that has been to Britain's advantage and strengthened our competitiveness. The new clause is unnecessary, and I hope that the Committee will reject it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I, too, believe that new clause 6 is unnecessary. The social chapter conferred on working people certain rights that they ought to have had in any event in well managed companies. In particular, the works councils directive allows consultation, and for employees to understand how companies work, which is entirely consistent with what modern business and management practice should be. Liberal Democrats have long supported works councils and the involvement and commitment that necessarily arises from the fact that

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

employees are more directly involved and understand the nature of the company for which they work and its problems.

It is worth remembering that we think that EU countries are blighted by over-generous social provision, but the United Kingdom's gross domestic product per capita is only 10th in the EU. Our living standards are 10th out of 15. Productivity in France and Germany is a fifth higher than in Britain. Given that reference has been made to the ERM, it is worth noting that since the launch of the single currency, employment growth in the eurozone has been twice as rapid as in Britain or the United States. Since 1997, in the eurozone, 4.7 million net new jobs have been created in economies that those who proposed the new clause would regard as being over-subject to social protection. With respect, the case in support of the new clause has not been made.

Mr. Bercow: The Minister deployed his mellifluous tones and issued soothing bromides to the Committee in a fairly blatant bid to lull it into a false sense of security. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will not be taken in by the sedulous propagation of his case. There is no reason why we should be becalmed by his words, because we do not have to look into the crystal ball when we can read the book. The Minister made an entirely spurious point about the social chapter's introduction coinciding with an increase in employment as though there were a causal link. He should understand—we shall seek to educate him so that he is aware of this in future—that the increase in employment has taken place not because of, but in spite of the contents of the European social chapter.

Peter Hain: The burden of the hon. Gentleman's and the Opposition's case against the social chapter is that it stops employment growth, and prevents companies from succeeding and the economy from growing, but precisely the opposite has happened. I suggest not that the huge rise in employment or fall in unemployment has taken place because of the social chapter, but that it has not stopped it happening and that it has, in fact, assisted the country's well-being while it has happened.

Mr. Bercow: The Minister's ill-informed view is typical of the complacency that is the hallmark of the Government's attitude. I shall have the concurrence of my right hon. and hon. Friends when I suggest that we are far too unambitious in this country. We could have done much better. We could have grown faster and employed more people and we could have had a more thriving small and medium-sized enterprise sector in this country and throughout the EU were it not for the depredations of the social chapter in particular, and of overarching, over-zealous regulation by the EU in general. For example, if we consider the parental leave directive, we see what the costs to businesses are. If we consider the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, we recognise, as small business leaders do, how damaging they can be.

On informing and consulting workers, the Minister must make the conceptual leap from believing that such measures are good to contending that there is a case for their imposition on this country by the EU. Such matters should be for individual businesses to determine or, alternatively, for democratically elected Members of this legislature to agree; they are not the proper business of the busybodies in the EU.

It being Seven o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN, *pursuant to Orders [4 and 11 July], put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question accordingly negatived.

THE CHAIRMAN *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

New Clause 7

WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION AND NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION

'This Act will not come into effect until Her Majesty's Government has laid before Parliament a report showing the implications for the Western European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, for the future functioning of these organisations, and for the United Kingdom's role therein, of Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Nice Treaty, revising Article 17 TEU, and Article 1, paragraph 5 of the Nice Treaty, revising Article 25 TEU.'.—*[Mr. Spring.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 141, Noes 398.

Division No. 33] **[7 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(E Surrey)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bacon, Richard
Baldry, Tony
Barker, Greg
Baron, John
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bercow, John
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Worthing W)*
Brady, Graham
Brazier, Julian
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cameron, David
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chope, Christopher
Clappison, James
Collins, Tim
Conway, Derek
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Cran, James
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Donaldson, Jeffrey M
Duncan, Alan
Duncan, Peter
Evans, Nigel
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flight, Howard
Flook, Adrian
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Fox, Dr Liam
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
Garnier, Edward
Gibb, Nick
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Gray, James
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Gummer, Rt Hon John
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hammond, Philip
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Hendry, Charles
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Horam, John
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson, Boris *(Henley)*
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Liddell-Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Loughton, Tim

Luff, Peter
McIntosh, Miss Anne
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Moss, Malcolm
Murrison, Dr Andrew
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Prisk, Mark
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, Laurence *(Tewk'b'ry)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ruffley, David
Sayeed, Jonathan
Selous, Andrew
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Keith *(Mid-Norfolk)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Streeter, Gary
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Syms, Robert
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Robert
Waterson, Nigel
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Rt Hon Miss Ann
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Randall and
Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Alexander, Douglas
Allan, Richard
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Rt Hon Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Atherton, Ms Candy
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, John
Bailey, Adrian
Baird, Vera
Baker, Norman
Banks, Tony
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Begg, Miss Anne
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Hilary
Bennett, Andrew
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Best, Harold
Betts, Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Borrow, David
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brooke, Annette
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryant, Chris
Burgon, Colin
Burnham, Andy
Burstow, Paul
Cable, Dr Vincent
Cairns, David
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Caplin, Ivor
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chaytor, David
Chidgey, David
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Coleman, Iain
Colman, Tony
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Corston, Jean
Colter, Brian
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtle–Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Doughty, Sue
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Drown, Ms Julia
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Annabelle
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Andrew *(St Ives)*
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Gidley, Sandra
Gilroy, Linda
Godsiff, Roger
Goggins, Paul
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grogan, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hancock, Mike
Hanson, David
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Harvey, Nick
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Heath, David
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Heppell, John
Hesford, Stephen
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Holmes, Paul
Hope, Phil
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Joyce, Eric
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Keetch, Paul
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Rt Hon Charles *(Ross Skye & Inverness W)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lamb, Norman
Lammy, David
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laws, David
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Llwyd, Elfyn
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonnell, John
MacDougall, John

McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWalter, Tony
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall-Andrews, Robert
Martlew, Eric
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moore, Michael
Moran, Margaret
Morgan, Julie
Morley, Elliot
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norris, Dan
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Öpik, Lembit
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Sir Raymond
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Price, Adam
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Pugh, Dr John
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Reid, Rt Hon Dr John *(Hamilton N)*
Rendel, David
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Roy, Frank
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sanders, Adrian
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Jonathan
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Simpson, Alan *(Nottingham S)*
Singh, Marsha
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Stunell, Andrew
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Thurso, John
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tyler, Paul
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
Webb, Steve
Weir, Michael
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Willis, Phil
Wills, Michael
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wray, James
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek
Younger-Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Graham Stringer and Jim Fitzpatrick.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 12

REFERENDUM (No. 1)

'This Act shall not take effect prior to the laying before Parliament of the draft of an Order in Council making provision for ascertaining, by means of a referendum, the preponderance of national opinion with respect to the provisions of the Treaty signed at Nice on 26th February 2001, provided that the Order shall not be made unless separate provision has been made by Parliament for defraying out of public funds any expenses to be incurred by a Minister of the Crown or Government Department in carrying the Order into effect.'.—*[Mr. Spring.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Spring: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Alan Haselhurst): With this it will be convenient to consider the following: New clause 37—*Referendum (No. 3)*—

'This Act shall not take effect until the laying before Parliament of the draft of an Order in Council making provision for ascertaining, by means of referendum, the preponderance of national opinion with respect to the provisions of the provisions of the Treaty signed at Nice on 26th February 2001 amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, provided that the Order shall not be made unless separate provision has been made by Parliament for defraying out of public funds any expenses to be incurred by a Minister of the Crown or Government departments in carrying the Order into effect.'.

New clause 44—*Referendum (No. 4)*—

'.—This Act shall not take effect prior to the laying before Parliament of a draft Order making provision for the ascertaining by the Government of the preponderance of national opinion with respect to the Nice Treaty by means of a referendum (providing that the Order shall not be made until provision from public funds has been made by Parliament in respect of expenditure incurred in the undertaking of such a referendum).'.

7.15 pm

Mr. Spring: New clause 12 calls for a referendum on the treaty of Nice, which would put to the test the direction in which the European Union is heading. At the beginning of the Committee stage, the question was posed whether the Bill would assist the development of an enlarged, diverse Europe that enhances the security and prosperity of the peoples of Europe. We believe that the treaty of Nice fails that test.

How can the European Union on the verge of enlargement think that the right course is to become ever more integrated? Surely trying to squeeze a continent of nations in all their diversity into a rigid straitjacket of conformity and uniformity is a recipe for discontent,

disunity and disharmony. What was needed at Nice was a Government with the leadership required to press for an alternative approach resulting in a modern, reformed, flexible Europe.

There is a fundamental difference between the Government and the Opposition on the direction in which Europe should be heading. That difference is crystallised in the treaty of Nice. We believe that it is time to let the public have a say on the matter. Instead, as Europe moves further down the integrationist path, there seems to be an ever-growing gap between the views of the public and the leaders of the European Union. That view was endorsed by the newly plain-speaking and born-again Minister for Europe, so there can be no controversy about it.

The gulf cannot be allowed to continue to develop. We have all witnessed the undercurrent of discontent around the EU, which is highly regrettable. The EU cannot afford to remain impervious to the trends of change across the world and expect to succeed. Through the low turnouts in European elections and failing support in opinion polls, the people of Europe have sent a clear message to their Governments. That message is that real unity cannot be imposed by integrationist treaties and diktat, thereby disconnecting European institutions and structures from the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of Europe.

Last September the Danish people made their views clear when they voted no to membership of the euro. Then, in March, the Swiss rejected early membership of the European Union by a ratio of 4:1. Whatever the merits of the case for Swiss membership, the result ought at least to give those of us who are members of the EU cause to pause and think why it came about.

Does the Minister agree that the EU's reaction to the Irish referendum speaks volumes about the extent to which EU leaders have become detached from their citizens? Why did the Foreign Secretary, days after the referendum, sign up to the General Affairs Council conclusions, which stated that the Nice treaty would remain unaltered? What do the citizens of Europe need to do to get their leaders to listen?

Does the Minister agree with the diplomat who was reported as saying:

"If there had been a referendum in every country, half would have voted against it. The Irish were acting as proxies for the rest of us and his needs to be handled with care"?

Does the hon. Gentleman have sympathy for the Irish Republic's Minister of Finance, Mr. McCreevy, who described the Irish rejection of the Nice treaty as a "remarkably healthy development", or for the Irish Republic's Attorney-General, who said:

"We have as much right as any member state, or indeed the commission, to develop and articulate and advocate our view of the future architecture of the European Union"?

It is time for the United Kingdom Government to show the same respect for the views of the British people on the Nice treaty. Following the Foreign Secretary's recognition of the fact that the Nice treaty is not legally or technically necessary for enlargement, the last remaining fig leaf for the treaty has been removed. Indeed, further integration will make enlargement more difficult, not easier.

If Ministers think that the Nice treaty is as popular as they claim, why are they so reluctant to put it to the test? Perhaps the reported comments of the Belgian Foreign Minister last week give us an indication. His remarks were specifically directed at Austria but clearly have wider application. He said:

"I personally think it is very dangerous to organise referendums when you're not sure to win them."

That attitude of mind is deeply regrettable. When European Union leaders are not sure that they can win over the people on the benefits of a treaty, surely it is time to question the treaty itself, rather than the idea of giving the people a say.

In the past two days, the Foreign Secretary and the Minister for Europe have set out what has been reported as a fresh Government approach to Europe. We welcome that, but the Nice treaty takes Europe in precisely the opposite direction of that in which they want to go. The Minister said that he wants a Europe of the people and not elites, but the treaty takes power away from the people and the Governments whom they elect and transfers it to the EU level. It increases the number of occasions on which the minority can be overridden by qualified majority voting. It enhances the role of the European Court and of the Commission and its President—a matter that we did not have time to discuss yesterday. Community competence is extended in commercial policy and the remit of the court is increased.

The Minister says that he wants Europe to modernise and that its economy should be reformed, and yet the treaty reinforces the social chapter, signalling further red tape and regulation. That is the very approach that has caused Europe to lag behind in terms of job creation and the economic outlook of eurozone countries. The treaty represents a failure even on the Government's terms.

Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East and Washington, West): The hon. Gentleman will recall that he voted against the idea of a referendum on the Maastricht treaty on 21 April 1993, when the matter was debated in the House. Presumably he did so because he supported the powerful arguments against a referendum that were advanced by the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Hurd. Which of Lord Hurd's arguments does he no longer support—and why, given that the Maastricht treaty was more far-reaching than the Nice treaty?

Mr. Spring: I thank the right hon. Lady for giving me the opportunity to clarify the situation. The past eight years have seen a remorseless and one-way process of political integration. Nice provided an opportunity for the Government to begin to reverse that process. I am sure that the right hon. Lady agrees that the great challenge for the European Union is to connect with the peoples of Europe and to deal with the so-called democratic deficit. One of the clearest ways of doing that would be to return powers to the national Parliaments. In the intervening eight years, the process of integration has advanced remorselessly. We want to draw a line at this point and to involve the peoples of Europe. The right hon. Lady will acknowledge that acceptance, appreciation and support of the European Union is now low in most countries and is still ebbing away. All hon. Members will accept that that is regrettable. It is now time to incorporate the peoples of this country and Europe into the process.

Mr. David: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that less legislation is now coming from the European Union than was coming from it four years ago?

Mr. Spring: We are dealing with the treaty of Nice and its implications. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has listened carefully to the Committee's debates. We have discovered not only that the Government repeatedly changed their mind before Nice, but that, as the Minister's answers have shown today, they simply did not think through the implications of what they agreed to there. That is the point about this Committee stage.

The Minister has said that he wants Europe to modernise and reform its economy, but the treaty represents a failure even on the Government's terms. The loss of the veto is far wider than they envisaged. Indeed, they originally opposed the measures on enhanced co-operation. The treaty increases the size of the European Parliament beyond the limit that they set for themselves. Steps have been taken towards the regulation and funding of Europe-wide political parties, but the Government originally resisted them. A bad scene was set earlier, when relevant new clauses were rejected and Labour Members declined to allow adequate scrutiny of that process to occur in the House of Commons. I believe that the Government will regret following the route that they have taken.

By contrast, where in the treaty is the evidence of the positive and determined engagement with our European counterparts for which the Minister is now calling? He says that he is a practical European, but where are the practical measures that he supports? Where is the signal that Europe will involve itself less in our daily lives? Where is the reform of the common agricultural policy, which Lord Haskins calls "one policy fits all" and is clearly the biggest single obstacle to enlargement? Where is the call for a multi-system Europe and real flexibility, which should move in a non-integrationist direction?

The lack of leadership from the United Kingdom Government means that even further integration is likely to be agreed upon at the next intergovernmental conference in 2004. As was clear in the Prime Minister's speech at Warsaw, the Government have lacked any clear vision of the architecture and structures that would enable the European Union to reconnect with the British people and the peoples of Europe. The idea that a second Chamber will achieve such a reconnection is absurd. Indeed, that was pointed out by Liberal Democrat MEP Nick Clegg in his pamphlet, which dealt with the matter very effectively.

At the Nice Council, European Union leaders agreed to discuss the status of the charter of fundamental rights, although British Ministers had tried to claim that the matter was settled. They agreed to discuss what would, in effect, be a written constitution for the European Union. Does not that alone illustrate the Government's complete failure to provide leadership in setting out an agenda that is right for a modern Europe and which reflects the wishes of the British people?

The Minister has emphasised in his recent statements the need for the European Union to start the process of reconnecting with the citizens of its member states. There could be no clearer signal that the Government mean what they say than putting the treaty to a referendum. It is time for the British people to have their say. I see from new clause 44 that that principle has support on both sides of the House. I welcome that support. The issue transcends the party political divide, as it is crucial to incorporate the people of this country into the process. I commend the new clause to the Committee.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I rise to speak to new clause 44, on which I welcome the concluding comments of the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring). Indeed, I am sure that the Opposition so welcome it that he will seek to withdraw the motion on new clause 12. In the same way, the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) will doubtless decide not to press new clause 37, and we will instead have the opportunity to vote on new clause 44, which provides a small test of how much Opposition Front Benchers genuinely seek agreement across the Floor of the House.

Mr. Haselhurst, I oppose many aspects—

Mrs. Anne McGuire (Stirling): Sir Alan.

Mr. Field: I am sorry. I almost feel that I should genuflect, Sir Alan. As always, I am grateful for the guidance of the Front Bench on these matters. Sir Alan, I think—

The Chairman: Order. I do not want to make the right hon. Gentleman uncomfortable. The phrase "Mr. Chairman" would do.

Mr. Field: Too many people have taken the poetry out of life, Sir Alan. I think that calling you Mr. Chairman would in some way detract from our proceedings.

7.30 pm

I oppose aspects of the Nice treaty. In it, this country surrenders the sovereignty that it currently holds over 39 areas. However, I may be wrong, and if the British people wish to surrender that sovereignty, it would be proper for the House to agree that approach. Some of my constituents who take an interest in such matters know that the argument that the Nice treaty will halt integration is bogus. The Amsterdam treaty grants the authority for introducing the next round of likely candidates. To question the Nice treaty is not to question the wisdom, the speed or the ultimate aim of including many new member states.

New clause 44 raises profound questions about this country's future and that of Europe. I, like my hon. Friends, speak as a citizen and friend of Europe and someone who knows that our destiny is bound up with the continent of Europe, as it has been since Tudor times. We also appreciate that those who began the journey in the early post-war years did so for the best of motives. They had witnessed two world wars—many had fought in both—which wrought havoc on the structure not only of their lives but of their country. In the 1940s, setting up a European Community was a most noble project. However, if we listened carefully to our constituents during the last European election campaign, we would know that their image of Europe is different from the objectives of the founding fathers all those years ago.

I want to repeat some of the phrases that my constituents used about the great journey on which we have embarked. They believe that we are on a juggernaut

which has an automatic pilot. Its controls were set in the 1940s; it has no brake and no steering wheel. For those reasons, those of us who are friends of Europe, but critical of current developments in the European Community, support new clause 44.

There is a case for greater co-operation. Making it divides us into two camps on our perception of the nature of politics. Some believe that it is a technical process, which can be gleaned from books, and that one can write treaties and make policies in that way. Others believe that, although the technical process can play a part, successfully achieving our long-term political objectives requires understanding of the political culture in which one works and that of other countries with which we are increasingly integrated.

I want to emphasise the importance of natural developments, which the Nice treaty ignores. *The Guardian* produced a recent opinion poll of readers' views of European policy. It illustrates the divide that I mentioned. It showed huge scepticism about the single currency. Voters do not understand the reason for the way in which the project is presented, or the endgame. However, the same group of voters supported sharing sovereignty on issues such as the environment so that the policy in Europe could be more comprehensive. Such policies cannot be bound by the old nation states.

I tabled new clause 44 as a friend of Europe. However, I am not prepared to take just anything from a project that was conceived in the 1940s, no matter how noble the objective. During my vain efforts to persuade my constituents to vote in the European elections, the worst comments revealed that they viewed Europe as a thieves' kitchen. They notice that, for example, when the Danish people are consulted about the euro, they reject it, and that when the Irish people are asked about Nice, they reject the treaty. However, they also notice that when such votes are allowed in a small minority of countries, the machine tries to get the project on the road again by dismissing the voters' views.

The machine decides that the euro will be reconsidered in Denmark, and that, in time, the Danish people will accept it. The President of the European Commission has made absurd statements about the way in which Ireland will ultimately submit to his plans. To an enemy of the European Community, the President of the European Commission is worth every euro or penny we pay him, because we could not have a worse ambassador. He spells out his views of what other people's opinions should be.

New clause 44 goes to the heart of what the Prime Minister describes as the Government's approach in Europe. In a recent speech, he rejected the top-down approach. He perceived its limitations and failures, and said that the Government would adopt a bottom-up approach. How does that accord with pushing through the Nice treaty without giving the people of this country an opportunity to say whether they support its main ideas? Although the Prime Minister's name is not on new clause 44, I have tabled it in his spirit.

Our approach to Europe has entered a new age. The old brutal approach whereby a small group of people could ram diverse traditions into a technical process, conceived 50 years ago, should be rejected. If we are serious about reconnecting with the voters, and if that phrase is not simply the latest bit of cant served up to appease them, Labour Members will vote for new clause 44.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Rochford and Southend, East): I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman's excellent speech, which has impressed me. I am worried about his initial comments. He referred to the possibility of the Opposition withdrawing new clause 12 in favour of new clause 44. What was the reason for that suggestion? It would be appalling for the Opposition to withdraw a new clause on such a fundamental issue. Was the right hon. Gentleman joking? We are not good at understanding jokes. However, perhaps he meant it. That has worried me throughout his speech, which I have thoroughly enjoyed and with which I agree.

Mr. Field: I am not sure whether that was a double bluff. The Opposition's position is well known. They believe that, from now on, the people of Europe, or at least of this country, should be consulted about any major rearrangement of the furniture of Europe. They do not need to make a point. They say that they wish to get past point scoring and standing on precedent—an approach that bores the voters—and I therefore believed that they would respond to a genuine appeal, which was based on nothing other than hope. My constituents hope that we shall cease to play the silly game of party politics on big issues, and try to be as grown up as them.

Mr. Cash: If the right hon. Gentleman is expecting the official Opposition to withdraw their new clause or, indeed, me to withdraw mine, will he give us an assurance that, if we were to vote on his new clause, the Government would reverse the situation that pertains at the moment and give us a referendum on the Nice treaty? It seems that the right hon. Gentleman is simply asking us to do something without having the capacity to deliver it.

Mr. Field: I have no capacity to deliver anything. We would have to win the vote before there could be any instruction to the House. I have spent most of my parliamentary life on the Opposition Benches, as part of a party that could not win elections, although, thankfully, we now can. But even in those dark days we realised that if we were trying to maximise a vote, it was always sensible for the Opposition to group behind any movement by the Government rather than, as a point of principle or for some kind of textbook reason, tabling their own new clause.

Mr. Cash: I am interested in the national interest and in having a referendum. If I thought that there was a genuine opportunity to defeat the Government, as we did on the issue of Select Committees a couple of days ago, I would be happy to withdraw my new clause in favour of the right hon. Gentleman's. Will the right hon. Gentleman give us some tangible evidence that, if I did that, it would do some good?

Mr. Field: Either the hon. Gentleman is trying to extend this debate until the crucial hour at which we all wish it to end, or he is genuinely confused about this matter. There is no way in which I can give him that assurance. The only way we can try to influence Government opinion is to pass a new clause tonight. The Government would then have to try to reverse it. All I am

[Mr. Field]

suggesting to the right hon. Gentleman is that the likelihood of winning that vote will be increased if we vote on new clause 44 rather than on those tabled by the Opposition or by the hon. Gentleman. It is in the spirit of doing what is best for this country that I have tabled new clause 44 and I hope that, between now and 9.30pm, sense will prevail on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I, too, followed with great interest the thoughtful speech of the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), but I regret to say that I disagreed with almost all of it. I feel buttressed in the correctness of that conclusion by the fact that we have just fought a general election campaign in which one of the main political parties offered a referendum to the people of the United Kingdom on the treaty of Nice, and that party was comprehensively defeated.

Mr. Frank Field: May I suggest to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the Conservative party could not win the election and, therefore, whatever the party in government was proposing would have been approved? It would be dangerous for Labour Members to assume that voters were not interested in lower taxation or in the euro. They did not think that those issues should feature in the general election because they did not think that the group of people masquerading as Her Majesty's Opposition was fit to be elected.

Mr. Campbell: As a result of that intervention, the right hon. Gentleman may find it more difficult to persuade the official Opposition to abandon their new clause and vote in support of his. In reaching my conclusions on this matter, I have started from a quite different place from the right hon. Gentleman, and we shall have to accept that.

I am sure that there is amazement on the banks of the Liffey, astonishment in Galway and surprise in Sligo that the decision taken by the Irish people should have been elevated to such an extraordinary level of importance by a party that still, in some parts of the United Kingdom, describes itself as the Unionist party. Irish politicians will be astonished that they have now achieved the status of prophets—in this debate, if not in their own land—because of observations that they have made about the consequences of what happened in Ireland as a result of a referendum that arose out of an entirely different constitutional settlement from the one that obtains here in the United Kingdom.

7.45 pm

I do not believe that the decision of the people of Ireland should be allowed to intrude on the decision-making processes of the people of the United Kingdom. The fact that the people of Ireland decided that they did not want the treaty of Nice to be ratified in their constitutional arrangements may be a matter of some procedural consequence to the ultimate ratification and acceptance of the treaty by all the members of the European Union. However, it should not form any part of an argument in this Parliament, or in this country, about whether the treaty requires the endorsement of the British people through a referendum before it can be ratified.

I go back to the recent general election campaign. It seems like a long time ago; in fact, it was only about eight weeks. The position of Conservative Members, who have tabled the new clause, was that their party would have refused to sign the treaty of Nice and it would have gone to Gothenburg immediately after the general election in the confident expectation that it could renegotiate the terms of the treaty.

No great constitutional issues are raised by the treaty of Nice. Taxation, social security and defence remain firmly in the intergovernmental sphere, and firmly subject to unanimity. There will be a great constitutional step for this country to take if the Government of the day ever recommend that we join the single European currency. That will be a decision not only of economic management but of political and constitutional significance. That is why the former leader of my party, whom we must now learn to call Lord Ashdown, was the first to say that it was an issue of such importance that it ought to be the subject of a referendum, and that we should not join without the endorsement of the people of the United Kingdom. That will be a decision of a quite different degree and different substance from those on the procedural issues—the housekeeping issues, as I have previously described them—that are embraced by the treaty of Nice.

The claim for the need for a referendum was a catch-all—quite legitimately, one might argue, in the context of a general election campaign. It was something behind which all the Conservative candidates could cluster. It was a form of protection and of defence. However, one of those who was a prominent participant in the leadership contest and who is now to seek the verdict of the Conservative membership in the country holds a view of the treaty that is entirely consistent with the view that I have just expressed.

A referendum should not be used as an act of party politics. It should be employed sparingly in circumstances in which there are principled issues of constitutional consequence. There are no such circumstances in this case. I return to a point that I made on Second Reading. Where are the people besieging the House of Commons saying, "You should not be allowed to pass the legislation on the ratification of the treaty of Nice unless you ensure that we, the people, have a referendum on the matter"? As I said before, people have been breaking into Menwith Hill and protesting against national missile defence. Our postbags are filled with arguments about that, about health and about education. The notion that there is an unsatisfied popular demand out there for a referendum on the treaty of Nice is certainly not supported by my experience. Furthermore, I have not yet heard convincing arguments from others who have spoken in this debate or on previous occasions that their own experience mirrors an unsatisfied demand that this legislation should not pass into law unless it contains the provision for a referendum.

Mr. Spring: If such a referendum took place, what does the right hon. and learned Gentleman think the outcome would be? I know what I think it would be and that answers his question.

Mr. Campbell: If there were a referendum on the treaty, it would return a substantial verdict of affirmation—a verdict of yes that supported ratification—

because we would have had the opportunity to conduct the argument in an intelligent and civilised way to which people would respond.

I have to tell the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) that, in my judgment, one of the consequences of the indiscriminate use of the referendum in a representative parliamentary democracy is an undermining of the very principle of parliamentary democracy, unless we can point to an issue that is of such fundamental constitutional importance that it requires Parliament to go to the people to seek their endorsement. The treaty justifies neither euphoria nor hysteria. It provides a framework for enlargement, which Members on both sides of the House support.

Mr. Cash: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that it has been made clear as a result of discussions and altercations with Romano Prodi when he was in Ireland that the decision taken by the Irish people has nothing to do with enlargement and that the Nice treaty itself has nothing to do with enlargement? Enlargement could take place under the Amsterdam treaty.

Mr. Campbell: That issue was fully canvassed on Second Reading and during the speech of the Foreign Secretary. Yes, the EU could be enlarged without the Nice treaty, but what sort of enlarged EU would it be? We would create a monster in which every country would be entitled to two Commissioners and the veto would be available to even the smallest country with the smallest population and the smallest gross domestic product.

If we are to have an enlarged Union, we must have a Union whose procedures allow for the effective management of that Union, subject, of course, to qualifications for the protection of countries such as ours and the smaller countries. An enlarged EU could be achieved without the treaty, but I venture to suggest that were there to be such an enlarged EU, the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) would be the first to declare it unmanageable, far too large and having reached a point at which it served no further purpose. Let me conclude—

Mr. Bercow: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: I must sit down. The hon. Gentleman may succeed in catching your eye, Sir Alan.

This is a framework treaty for a sensible enlargement and I believe that it should be ratified as soon as possible.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I want to make my own arguments in favour of a referendum on the treaty by drawing mainly on comments made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Europe in his article in *The Independent* at the beginning of the week. He is absolutely right to say

"this is an appeal for plain speaking on Europe. No political spin, no media hype, no pejorative prejudice. Just an honest, straight discussion of difficult but momentous issues."

That is the context in which we ought to approach the issues raised in the treaty and how it connects to the treaties that preceded it, because momentous consequences follow from it. We do ourselves and the public a great disservice when we suggest that it is a leftovers treaty—a tidying-up exercise of no great import either to the United Kingdom public or the future shape of Europe, the costs of it, and the political consequences that will be experienced by Europe. The British public have a right to be part of that informed debate.

The Minister's article continued:

"I am up for a robust debate and I respect different views, sincerely held, about Europe's future. But we need an intelligent debate about what is really happening—not a debate trapped in a time-warp caricature of doughty Britons versus fiendish foreigners."

Again, I endorse that wholeheartedly. We have to address how we achieve that informed debate and how we take the public with us. This is the important point. When I was elected to Parliament, I understood that that mandate was conditional and that the party that won the majority of seats in the election had a mandate to govern, but that it had to be renewed. The mandate was not eternal; it was not unconditional.

Each time a period of office runs out, a Government have to present themselves to the public in another form of referendum—one on their competence to form a Government who govern in the public's name. The presumption was always that Governments who made a mess by introducing unpopular policies could be thrown out by an electorate who were fed up with them. Throwing out the Government of the day was a channel whereby people could reject the policies of the day that they found so objectionable. The important point about the succession of European treaties that we have been presented with is how many of them have stripped from Governments the ability to offer the electorate any such choice.

There are genuine dangers for the democratic process if we are saying to people, "Why vote when you can replace a Government, but not the policies that they will inflict on you? The same policies, acceptable or otherwise, will be pushed down your throat whoever is in power." The credibility of the House, the institution of Parliament and the democratic basis on which Parliament gets a conditional mandate is seriously undermined as we strip from ourselves the rights of the public to make those choices.

Mr. Bercow: With reference to the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell), does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is no great public clamour for a referendum on the Nice treaty because the debate on the subject has thus far been characterised by waffle, verbiage and obfuscation? That is why, there is no great public demand. Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman is so confident of the strength of his arguments and that public opinion is with him, he should be prepared to put his view to the test? If he is not, we can draw our own conclusions.

Mr. Simpson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to say that the ultimate test of our confidence in the public is to allow them to make choices for themselves. That is precisely what we have not done on a succession of European treaties. It is a perverse form of logic and justification to say, "We never gave the public a choice on Amsterdam and we never gave them a choice on Maastricht, so we had better not give them a choice on Nice either." That is like saying, "We never fed the kids yesterday or the day before, so we may as well not

[Mr. Simpson]

feed them tomorrow." At some point, we must take responsibility for feeding the democratic process. If we do not, we will have to take responsibility for the withering away of that process.

Mr. Campbell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, as he has referred to me if not directly, then at least by implication. Would he care to tell the House on what criteria he would base a decision as to whether to require a referendum in any particular case before the ratification of any treaty relating to our membership of the EU?

Mr. Simpson: The question is one of reversibility and amendability. The public have a right to decide on any decision we make that is irrevocable, or irrevocable unless colossal upheavals throw the institutional arrangements in Europe into crisis.

Parliaments have a right to make decisions within the conditionality of the mandates that they receive. Those mandates are renewable, not disposable. My fear is that Parliament has drifted down a path whereby it is treating temporary authority given to it by the public as though it has the right to dispose of the public's right to change their mind.

8 pm

Dr. Stephen Ladyman (South Thanet): Although I do not agree with my hon. Friend, I commend him on his thoughtful speech. I agree with him that reversibility and amendability are good criteria for holding a referendum, but I do not see what in the treaty is not reversible, if that were decided in the future. Joining the euro is irreversible and requires a referendum, but can my hon. Friend tell me what in this treaty is not reversible?

Mr. Simpson: I should be delighted to answer that point, because that is the substance of my argument. If the public are to have confidence in Parliament, we must have confidence in them and ensure that they are the deciders rather than the decided for. Two central issues of the treaty have been misunderstood: one relates to an aspect of enlargement and the other to the move to qualified majority voting.

There has been a lack of clarity about the costs of enlargement. Germany made an incredible commitment to meet the costs of unification. Amazing transfers of cash from west to east were made to pay for a unifying, inclusive future in which all German citizens would have a place, a future, a sense of security and identity. I have enormous admiration for what Germany has done, but it has not come without a cost. So far it has cost the German public £150 billion. They have just signed up to an extension of the solidarity taxation to 2020, so have voluntarily levied on themselves a further £100 billion in taxation to pay for inclusion.

The economy of the former East Germany is stronger than those of any of the applicant states that will be part of the enlargement process, apart, perhaps, from the Czech Republic and Poland. Yet the costs of their transformation will not be met by additional resource transfers.

If we want expansion on the current model, we must be honest with ourselves and the public, and acknowledge what the costs will be and where they will paid from.

Mr. Hendrick: I suggest that my hon. Friend is misrepresenting what took place in Germany. At the time, there was an exchange rate of DM1 to OM1, which was totally unrealistic. The experience of German reunification led to the Maastricht convergence criteria. Deficits, interest rates and inflation were used as criteria to be brought to bear before a currency union could take place. Does my hon. Friend agree with me that, our having had that experience and having established the Maastricht convergence criteria, the instability caused by German reunification in no way compares with or relates to the currency union that has taken place in the European Union?

Mr. Simpson: Absolutely not. The issue was not the disparity between the deutschmark and the ostmark, but the physical, practical, structural and huge economic disparity between east and west.

Mr. Hendrick: Convergence does that.

Mr. Simpson: No. Convergence requires the collapse of economies. Demands are being made on applicant states that will result in the collapse of their economies in order to meet the convergence criteria, and they will be left with increased poverty and an increased need for social, financial and structural transfers. I do not want to duck the issue. If that is the price we must pay to build a cohesive European future, it may be worth paying, but we must be honest about it. At the moment, we are having an Alice in Wonderland debate. We are pretending that enlargement can take place, and that the eastern European applicant states can be required to collapse their economies. We are not acknowledging that stability will have to be delivered in an expanded EU by huge resource transfers from west to east or we will face huge population movements from places where jobs and wealth have disappeared to places where people presume they are located. We owe it to the public and to ourselves to be clear about the consequences, and allow the public to make a choice.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is making an extremely powerful case. Way back during the debates on the Maastricht treaty I said that I could not believe that my own Government were deliberately creating unemployment. Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) made a powerful speech on the relationship between enhanced co-operation and prospective taxation, which Hans Eichel has said must be one of the necessary ingredients of these arrangements. The plain fact is that the hon. Gentleman is right that there is huge deceit, and the only way to resolve the problem and to make resources available for this fateful European Union—I do not agree with the manner in which it is being developed—is with the consent of the voters, on a properly informed basis.

Mr. Simpson: That is precisely the case that I am trying to make. I am giving examples to show why it is important for the public to have the right to decide these issues. It is critical that we address these problems not in a spirit of isolationism but, perhaps perversely, out of a sense of solidarity.

I was contacted by organisations in Poland that work in conjunction with the Polish farmers union, which represents 3 million Polish farmers. It argues that, so as to meet the convergence criteria, Poland is being asked to accept the imposition of huge reforms to its agricultural system, which will put 2 million of the 3 million farm workers out of work.

Mr. Cash: Where is the money coming from?

Mr. Simpson: That is one of the questions that the Polish farmers union asked me to raise here. It also wanted us to consider whether this model of expansion is genuinely sustainable.

Mr. David: Surely my hon. Friend is not suggesting that we should be in favour of maintaining east European command-style economies with their huge, unpredictable practices.

Mr. Simpson: I am not making that case. There is a positive alternative on offer to Polish agriculture. My hon. Friend may not be a great fan of Polish agriculture, but it feeds itself, has a strong basis of family farming, a huge infrastructure of local markets, food accountability and a biodiversity that does not fit with the demands being made on it by the European Union to take a leap into a future based on industrial agriculture.

Many global environmental movements are forewarning us of the colossal dangers if the demands of industrial agriculture that are being foisted on the European Union and on countries through the World Trade Organisation are a condition of enlargement. What the Polish people were asking me is this: why can we not have a debate about enlargement on different terms? Why can the British people not make a positive decision that is in favour of a European sense of solidarity, rather than a retreat from it?

The general election manifesto on which I understand at least half the Polish parties are campaigning asks us in the existing EU member states to support their claims for

"a conscious policy . . . to protect and promote the values of the Polish countryside, in opposition to rapidly spreading globalisation."

It wants us to

"recognise that the way in which to ensure optimum public and environmental health is through promoting a diet based on high quality local foods, and a countryside rich in natural bio-diversity."

What in that agenda is so unacceptable to us? Why should we not engage with it? Why can we not offer that to the public as a positive choice when it comes to a model of expansion? At present there is no choice, but a given, defined model that has been foisted on us. I fear that that is the direction in which we are being taken.

There is another fundamental problem that requires a referendum and the public's right to vote. I am talking about the counter side: alongside the physical expansion of EU membership is a clear democratic contraction, not just in the context of qualified majority voting. I do not subscribe for a moment to the argument that QMV is a grand German plot for the domination of Europe. That is a gross insult to the German people's integrity, and their commitment to European stability. My objections, which I consider central to the British public's right to make a decision, are based on the fact that QMV is not really about the weighting of votes in favour of politicians or political parties from different countries. The real, fundamental shift is not from a decision made in the House of Commons to a decision made in the Council of Ministers; it is the decision-making process that will be hijacked by the European Commission.

There is an important background to this, which the House and the country need to understand. There has been a continuing dispute between the Commission and the Council of Ministers about the Commissioners' prerogative to make decisions on everyone's behalf. It goes back to the 1994 Uruguay round, when the Commissioners argued that they alone were competent to negotiate on European matters on our behalf.

At the time our Ministers, and other Ministers, argued that that was not so. They said that trade in services and trade in intellectual property were areas of what was described as mixed competence, rather than Community competence. The significance of that argument was this: in areas of mixed competence, our Ministers are part of direct negotiations on policies that affect our citizens—international negotiations. Many such negotiations have been thrown into turbulent conflict in the World Trade Organisation, in Seattle and beyond. None of us should pretend that those are not some of the big conflict areas with which our society must deal in the future.

We shall be left with this question: when the public are clamouring on our doorsteps or letters pour into our postbags, on how many of those areas will we be able to make any decisions ourselves? How many, under the treaty, will we have signed away, so that we have no competence? Surely the public should have the right to choose which areas of competence to cede.

8.15 pm

I want to illustrate what this means in practical terms, and so explain how it affects issues raised by members of all parties and their constituents. Those will be the issues on which there will be conflict in the future. Even in the short term of this Parliament, the Government have embarked on a robust and interesting debate about the role of the private sector in public services. We have been told that none of the arrangements involved in the GATS—general agreement on trade in services—negotiations would automatically apply here, because we can choose what we will not be a part of. However, as the issue moves into the sphere of Community competence, two things happen.

First, our Ministers have no relevance in the negotiations; they are conducted solely and exclusively by the European Commissioners. The Nice treaty offers the Commissioners a wonderful resolution of something that really cheesed them off following the Uruguay round. They took their case to the European Court of Justice, which ruled that countries had ceded the right to negotiate in the trade in goods but not the right to negotiate in the trade in services, and that the arrangement did not apply to commercial aspects of intellectual property rights.

The Nice treaty has tied things up nicely for the Commissioners. They win the battle for the sole right to negotiate on everyone's trade terms, because we decide to give them that right. The mechanism of qualified majority voting will be much easier to manipulate than an arrangement giving individual countries the right to say no. That is profoundly important to those with an interest in environmental sustainability. In the Montreal convention, we set out the right of countries to apply the precautionary principle—to say no when they did

[Mr. Simpson]

not know. Handing over the negotiating rights for all trade leaves us one step short of being told by the Commissioners that we no longer have any such authority.

The Welsh, who have fought hard for Wales to remain a zone free of genetically modified organisms, may well be told that they have no right to restrict the planting of GM crops there, because that would constitute indirect interference with trade. The patent rights that the biotech companies have acquired are followed by rights to plant, grow and sell. For those with environmental concerns, it is just tough luck. They no longer have authority to make decisions in their own right in areas in which they have ceded decision-making and negotiating rights to the European Commissioners.

If we wanted warning of that, we should have paid attention to the role that Pascal Lamy attempted to play as trade negotiator in Seattle. We were saved by the role played by some of our own Ministers, who flatly stated that they would not reach an agreement with the biotech corporations. Pascal Lamy is on public record as saying, "I will go and negotiate an agreement." Only the fact that he had not the authority to do so stopped the process, and allowed us to make those decisions. We will have to explain to the British public why we no longer have any authority to implement policies on which they feel passionately.

The right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) asked where the postbag was. The postbag will bypass us if we hand over the pass on the right to make responsible decisions relating to our stewardship of those people's environment and the shape of their society. As for services, a remit will be extended to the Commissioners to address rail services, postal services, health services and education services.

We should not kid ourselves that we can have a debate here that presumes that we can make decisions. Perhaps we should remind those in Downing street that the party stands for a strong commitment to public delivery of public services; but even if we do that, Downing street may tell us, "You can say what you like, but the policies are no longer made here. We now have obligations that are determined at European level, rather than prerogatives that can be determined at national parliamentary level."

Provisions on intellectual property rights will extend to the whole domain of our policies in respect of GMOs. On sustainable trade, when we seek to deal with climate change and to impose payback economics—pay back to the planet, not just to shareholders—we are likely to find that that is in breach of the decision-making authority that we have handed over to the European Commissioners, who will conduct the negotiations.

On environmental protection, I have a particular interest in the notion of producer liability. There is a desperate cry for the UK to introduce legislation that will at least define who is liable for genetic contamination of the environment in respect of GM crop trials. Farmers, supermarkets and local communities want to know that. There is huge pressure on us to bring in producer liability legislation.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Simpson: May I finish the point?

Europe is discussing producer liability legislation. People are already saying, "It is an interesting idea, but why don't we leave it and see where the European roundabout takes us?" The reality is simple. The biotech corporations have been working hand in glove with European Commissioners, saying, "We do not want any liability regime that would make us legally responsible for the damage that we do, so spin it round for the decade and then come out with a policy that is anodyne and useless." If we sign up to the measure, we will sign away any ability to say, "No. It is an inadequate resolution of a real environmental threat and the ducking of a legitimate environmental liability."

Mr. Cash: There is a lot of talk about product liability, directives and so forth in the European Union. I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. He had not got on to the producer liability directive when I tried to intervene. That is the problem. Everything is being subsumed.

Mr. Simpson: Fundamentally, it comes down to the right of the British public to decide. They may feel that there is a greater good to be had in going down the path along which the Nice treaty takes us one step further. I doubt it. After an informed debate, we would not wish to sign up to that model of an inclusive European future. There are better models. It is just that we have not had the right to address them. We face a fundamental test of our long-term credibility. If we deny the public the right to a say, it takes us one step closer to defining ourselves as of no relevance to the big issues that confront their lives. That is why I do not welcome the measure.

Whatever disagreements we have on policy issues, there is an imperfect virtue about the nature of parliamentary democracy. It gives the public and parties the right to change course, to change positions and to be changed. If we surrender that, we have to accept responsibility for increasing numbers of the public saying that, as an institution, we have less and less relevance in determining the issues that affect their lives, and they will look elsewhere.

There is a danger that the European project has already become hijacked. Ten thousand corporate lobbyists permanently besiege Brussels to ensure that their policies are the ones that become EU directives. There is an agenda there. The priorities of corporate Europe are directly at odds with the long-term interests of civic Europe. If we do not deliver on-going democratic accountability, the danger is that we will prepare the ground for citizens legitimately to conclude that parliamentary democracy has become a farce or a facade, and that change will have to come through a direct challenge by citizens to corporate greed. There is huge instability in any country's going down that path. If we do not make a stand to defend the rights of citizens to decide, they will decide to do so themselves in other ways.

Mr. Cash: I would like, as it were, to begin at the end of the debate, by taking up the point made by the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). He invited us to withdraw our new clauses and to allow him to go ahead with his. They are substantively the same—there is no real difference between the three new clauses—but I asked him whether he had any tangible evidence that that would deliver the type of result that I would, obviously, want. I believe passionately that we should have a

referendum on this treaty, as we should on the whole treaty on European Union. Another new clause that I tabled to that effect was not selected, but that was because it was outside the scope of the Bill, not because it did not have any intrinsic merit.

I am not inviting the right hon. Gentleman to give the same answer as before. I merely point out that no useful purpose would be served if the position that some of us have consistently adopted in principle over a long time—that matters that come within the ambit of the treaties should be referred to a referendum—were adopted by a relatively small number of rebels on the Government Benches. In the heady days of Maastricht, the dividing line was narrow enough for us to be able to press matters to some effect. Therefore, although I will be guided by the Front-Bench team, I do not see any reason why we should not press the matter to a Division on our own account.

I welcome the speech made by the right hon. Member for Birkenhead and the thoughtful speech made by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson). I do not agree with all his arguments, but I agree emphatically with the underlying idea of the necessity, in principle, to obtain the consent of the electorates. This treaty, like the consolidated treaty on the European Union, is of increasing and vast importance for the daily lives of our constituents.

I have said repeatedly that every time we deal with a line in the treaty, if we implement it in our domestic law we are doing the equivalent of what would otherwise require a Bill which could take as long as six months to consider. We are conducting a monumental exercise.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South talked about Poland. In my travels with the Select Committee I have been all over central and eastern Europe. I have noticed over the past few years that since negotiations for accession began, those countries have been required to change and consolidate virtually every page of their statute books so that they become consistent with the acquis communautaire. That is the blackmail deal being conducted.

I know from my discussions with Members of Parliament and members of the public in those countries that they are deeply disturbed by the extent to which their elite have driven the legislation through their respective Parliaments. Charts supplied to me through the European Scrutiny Committee and given to me by the prospective member states show that they have complied with certain chapters of the acquis communautaire. It has been a relentless process of attrition. However, the key point is that there has been no consent from the people. Slice by slice, they have had their intrinsic democracy taken away by negotiations conducted on their behalf by their elite. As far as I can make out, that has taken place without any reference to the people or any information about what is going on.

8.30 pm

On Second Reading, I referred to the impact that I thought that would have on the springtime of nations, which we may remember from 1988-89. At that time we were all elated by the way in which, with great courage, those countries disentangled themselves from the Soviet Union. We were all exhilarated by those events. However, I fear for those countries, as I do for the United Kingdom, in respect of our democratic principles and the forum of the House of Commons. For the reasons that I have given in the many debates on the Nice treaty in which I have participated, I believe that this House is being reduced day by day—not only by the attitude of the Prime Minister and the Government Whips but by a whole series of forces, including those which require Select Committees to be nominated by the Whips, and the refusal to accept the Liaison Committee report. That is all part of a process, and that is why I am a vigorous and enthusiastic member of the Parliament First group.

On the day we returned after the election I saw the draft of the Parliament First group motion. I said that if I were the Prime Minister, in the aftermath of a landslide victory, what would worry me most would be the fact that hon. Members from both sides of the House—many of them highly respected—were combining to put Parliament back in its proper place. In order to achieve that, given the encroachment of legislation such as this, which is about European government and emanates from the treaties of Nice, Amsterdam and Maastricht, it has become increasingly necessary for parliamentarians to take a stand.

This will be a test for the Leader of the House, to see whether he can deliver anything meaningful. I spoke to him recently, and during an exchange in a debate, he said that he would be prepared to meet some of us to discuss the implications of the need to increase the power of Back Benchers. When we make a stand of that kind, we are standing up for the voters of this country, which is what it is all about. The bottom line on all these European questions is democracy and accountability.

I wrote a pamphlet a few months ago entitled "Associated but not absorbed". It calls for an associated European area, which would mean that if the current member states were not prepared to listen to the arguments for renegotiation of the treaties, the associated countries could gather together and form their own treaty. That would effectively outflank the process of so-called irreversible integration. As with the great battles of the 19th century, such as those over the corn laws and the Reform Act of 1867—as the hon. Member for Nottingham, South seemed to suggest if I read his mind correctly—reversibility can be achieved only by people making it clear that when there is no response in their interest from Governments or elites, it is up to them to ensure that their freedom and democracy is preserved. Only time will tell what the exact mechanism for doing that will be. That process is dangerous. There is a disconnection.

I have heard for very many years about the democratic deficit. However, the continuing process of integration has been accompanied by a refusal to do anything about that democratic deficit, which everyone acknowledges exists. Although the riots in Gothenburg, for example, certainly did not relate exclusively to the Nice treaty, they did occur at a European Union summit and were symbolic of people's determination to have their views heard. I deeply regret the fact that anarchists and others have become involved in all those processes, and I believe profoundly that it is essential that protest should be peaceful, but I also say that Governments create such circumstances, by carrying on as if voters were unimportant or did not matter at all.

[Mr. Cash]

A short time ago, as hon. Members may recall, I said that a fateful decision was taken when the Danish referendum was disgracefully rejected by the Danish Government, and John Major's Government agreed to allow another referendum to be held. I strongly objected in the House to that decision. The following week or so, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung published an editorial saying that elections are becoming a form of protest, and that that is very dangerous and must be stopped. Such language shows an attitude of mind that is not only extremely dangerous but has continued ever since.

Those who hold such views do not seem to have discovered that sooner or later, people refuse to put up with those views. They rely greatly on the fact that people do not know what is going on. Does anyone have the foggiest idea of the implications of enhanced co-operation? If so, I defy them to explain them to me.

Yesterday we had a debate on the formulae, philosophy and provisions of enhanced co-operation. Hon. Members can judge for themselves the outcome of that discussion, much of which was between the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) and me. We discussed the range and depth of enhanced co-operation, the manner in which it is creating gravitational pull, the way in which it is moving towards direct taxation and the fact that it is centred on eight member states, regardless of the Union's enlargement to 27. We also discussed many other matters, although I shall not repeat them as they are set out in the report of that debate. However, I defy anyone who has not become a serious political analyst—or, I am sorry to say, a lawyer—to explain the precise consequences of enhanced co-operation. It has a vast impact.

The right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) implied that he thought that the treaty was unimportant in many respects, by saying that he could not see any constitutional implications in it. He therefore questioned our tabling a new clause providing for a referendum. As I know him to be a man of great distinction and perception, I am astonished that he could not see the constitutional implications of enhanced co-operation. Moreover, enhanced co-operation is only one of the treaty's provisions.

Given the small number of hon. Members attending this debate—there are only two Conservative Back Benchers in the Chamber—

Sir Teddy Taylor: Two very good ones.

Mr. Cash: I shall leave my hon. Friend to say that; I make no claims for myself.

I am trying my best to put the facts on the record, and to some extent I have succeeded. However, no information is going from this House to the public on the subject of enhanced co-operation.

The communication between ourselves and the public depends on the media. I am grateful that some of my comments on defence matters were referred to in the national press this morning, but some columnist, commentator or worthy journalist should be prepared to reduce the complexity of these matters by writing an article for one of the great national newspapers to enable more people to understand what is going on.

We are individual Back Benchers, but journalists have access, through the prints, to up to 3 million people and can warn them of what the treaty contains. The same applies to radio and television. During the debate on the Queen's Speech, I spoke about constitutional implications, including the reform of Parliament. In that speech I referred to the BBC and the broadcasting authorities generally, and suggested that their research departments and commentators might take an interest in the treaty. Perhaps I am a wishful thinker, because I will be surprised if there is any reference to this debate on the radio or television. I hope that I am wrong, and I will continue to try my best.

As for the Irish and Danish referendums, the Irish people were presented, through their referendum commission, with a paper that was delivered to every household, summarising in simple language the implications of the Nice treaty. I will not be told by anybody, no matter how self-important they may seem, that the Irish people did not know what they were doing. They received information and formed the judgment on which their decision was taken.

There were other issues, such as the McCreevy speech—there were also problems involving Mr. McDowall—around the time of the referendum. But there is no doubt that the Irish people made their decision, by a substantial majority, in the light of information made available to them. It is irresponsible for anyone to suggest that they did not know what they were doing.

Mr. David: Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the turnout in the referendum was only 35 per cent.?

Mr. Cash: No doubt the hon. Gentleman will remember the degree of cynicism and apathy generated by the continual driving through of this process by the elite, which was reflected, for example, in our turnout for the European elections of no more than 23 per cent. The failure—by Europe's elites, establishments and Governments—to inform people properly has led to much of the apathy and cynicism that exists, so I do not take the hon. Gentleman's point very seriously.

8.45 pm

I campaigned in the Danish referendum, and I appeared on platforms with French leaders during France's Maastricht treaty referendum. I did so because the matters under discussion, as they applied in those countries, affected Britain. Decisions reached by majority vote in the Council of Ministers, or by Governments at intergovernmental conferences, are part of the constant movement towards political union. They have an impact on us because laws are transferred to this country by section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972.

Britain therefore has an intrinsic interest in what is going on in other countries, and it is essential for us to take an active interest in referendums held elsewhere. However, we must do so with a degree of circumspection, depending on the country involved and whether its Government want us to participate in the referendum process.

Mr. David: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. He did not attach much significance to my earlier intervention, but I hope that he will to this one.

Does he accept that Denmark is not having a referendum on the Nice treaty because it does not consider it sufficiently significant?

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman clearly anticipates a riposte from me, and he shall have it: Denmark is not holding a referendum on the Nice treaty because the Danish Government are frightened that they might lose. That is borne out by the history of referendums in that country—a history that I know well.

The Danish people voted no in the first referendum, and then were badly let down by the British Government and others. Another referendum was held, and during that campaign companies blackmailed people by threatening to close factories. People voted yes in the second referendum, but deeply regretted it. I remember being in a café in Copenhagen, and a young woman sitting with her boyfriend next to me started to cry. When I asked her why, she told me that she had voted in favour of the proposal set out in the referendum, and now wished that she had not. People were frightened. The next referendum in Denmark was on the euro, and they voted against it. I therefore base my answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. David) on facts, not conjecture or speculation.

Referendums should obtain the consent of a country's people—in deciding, for example, who should govern them, and how. They should not be used indiscriminately, but they are appropriate when vast tranches of power are being engineered by the elite. That is what is happening with the Nice treaty, for which no referendum is planned.

The Government stand accused of refusing to give the British people the right to have their say on the Nice treaty. The same thing happened with the Amsterdam treaty, in connection with which I tabled an amendment similar to new clause 37.

Moreover, I organised and ran the Maastricht referendum campaign. I am glad to say that I was supported by Bryan Gould, a member of the Labour party, and by the hon. Member for North Devon (Nick Harvey), from the Liberal Democrat party. They were my joint chairmen. We ran the campaign together, and obtained 500,000 signatures to the demand for a referendum from our own Government.

On 11 June 1996 I introduced the Referendum Bill. I was hauled into the Chief Whip's office and given a roasting, which made no impact on me whatever, for daring to introduce a Bill that was supported by no fewer than 95 right hon. and hon. Members, about 98 per cent. of whom were from my party. I pay tribute to several Labour Members, too, and I remember from the Division list that the distinguished and right hon. Member for Llanelli supported the proposal.

I gave my reasons for objecting to our not having a referendum. I do not think it necessary to go into the speech that I made on that occasion, because it dealt with matters that are now history. However, the rather pathetic attempts to haul me over the coals for daring to bring forward that Bill—an action that has proved entirely justified, in the light of further moves towards greater integration, which I predicted at the time—make me think that at least I did the right thing for the right reason.

Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): How does the hon. Gentleman expect the conversation to go when the Chief Whip in a future Conservative party led by the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) wishes to discuss the same matters with him? I would be interested to know whether he has any thoughts about that.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Michael Lord): That may be a most interesting question, but I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman did not pursue it.

Mr. Cash: I will take that up one day with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), as I did with the former Conservative Prime Minister, John Major.

In introducing the Referendum Bill I said:

"A federal Europe involves surrendering the levers of national democratic government to central unelected officials and a remote and unrepresentative European Parliament . . . A proper referendum is required of those who will be most affected—the voters themselves. The judgment of the people is now required."—[*Official Report*, 11 June 1996; Vol. 279, c. 118-119.]

I said it then and I say it again now. As far as I am concerned, Members who vote for the new clause will be doing the right thing by the people of this country, for the right reason. I just wish that the information in these debates would be made available to the people at large.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington): I wish to speak in support of new clause 44 but will vote for new clause 12.

It is important that Labour members preface our remarks on Europe so that people are aware that we are not xenophobic little Englanders. In fact, from the late 1960s and early 1970s, many of us have pursued a policy of a united socialist Europe. I do not suppose that there will be many Institute for Public Policy Research booklets or research pamphlets on that for the time being. During that debate, we learned that if we were to build a socialist Europe—a Europe in the interests of working people—we would need to take people with us, fully engage them all the way through the process and secure their support step by step.

That is why the Irish referendum is a lesson for us. I have some anxieties about how it has been depicted. I know that a number of issues were brought to the fore in that referendum, but there is an element of patronising racism in some of the comments that have been made about that debate. I hope that we can call a halt to that.

The right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) entered into a wonderful alliteration around the Irish debate—surprise in Sligo and so on. To follow that theme, there were doubts in Dublin and worries in Waterford and there was downright chagrin along the Shannon. The Irish people came to a clear view about the overall European project, not necessarily about the treaty of Nice.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that the general election was a referendum on the treaty of Nice. There was certainly a commentary about Europe throughout the election, but the detail of the treaty was not a key issue in the pubs and clubs of my constituency, although it may have been in his. He also argued that people were not demonstrating against the treaty, but that does not mean that there is tacit support for it either. There are no people marching in the streets in favour of it.

[John McDonnell]

The key question—one to which I do not yet have the answer—is what triggers a referendum in a country with no written constitution. There was no referendum on Maastricht or Amsterdam, and we do not propose one on Nice. Yet for other political decisions it is almost as if we have taken a referendum diuretic. We have had referendums not only on Wales and Scotland but on a mayor for London. We are promised referendums on regional assemblies. We demand referendums on the reform of councils—whether there should be a mayor and cabinet, a leader and cabinet or a leader and chief executive. A referendum has been called for on parish councils. There was a referendum on the Good Friday agreement. A range of referendums has been established, but not on this issue.

I understand why people say that the criteria for referendums are whether something is reversible or amendable, but without a written constitution, the main criterion has been that a debate has taken place in the House on a matter on which there is a certain level of political sensitivity so that the political will exists to consult the people. Often, to be frank, that has been politicians wanting to consult the people, hear what they want and confirm their prejudices.

The political sensitivity about the treaty of Nice is that although it contains some significant elements—my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) made the most eloquent and detailed speech about the implications of the treaty—people from all parties are concerned that we are embarked on creeping, incremental constitutional change, treaty by treaty. At some stage, we have to confront the need to put the creeping centralisation of the EU to the people. My hon. Friend pointed out some of the key issues in the treaty, and other key issues will arise in subsequent discussions. They are about choice. The treaty of Nice and enlargement raise questions about how those policies will be paid for and what policies the EU will pursue to ensure a balance between centralisation and diversity as the new countries enter the EU.

There should be an open debate about whether we are going for a centralised state or some form of confederacy. At some stage, we have to draw the line. I know that the argument is put before us that, with the intergovernmental conference coming up in 2004, we need to encourage a debate. I agree with that, but we have not said that we will hold a referendum on the future of Europe either before or after the IGC.

At this stage, it would give some of us, and many of those whom we seek to represent, comfort if we made a very explicit statement that we will have a debate on the future of Europe and that, if we do not have a referendum on the treaty of Nice, there will be a referendum on Europe. Some argue that the euro is just a financial matter that does not involve constitutional change, but I disagree: it is about the overall future direction of Europe.

9 pm

One view is that, with the treaty of Nice, we are going one step further towards undermining representative democracy. We used to talk about the military-industrial complex; we now talk about the corporate-bureaucratic complex of the EU. We should open up such a debate, and as we approach the 2004 IGC, we should at least assure people that, after a full and thorough debate, a referendum will take place on the future structure of Europe. That involves not only the euro, but the EU's political direction, its funding, the taxation base, the mechanisms for taxation and, above all, the mechanisms of political and representative democracy.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I hope that this will not be regarded as offensive, but I want to tell the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and his two colleagues that I have a huge regard for what they are doing. They know very well the problems they will have in supporting democracy and referendums, probably against their party's wishes. They will be faced with all kinds of problems. They will get no credit from anyone, and hardly anyone will pat them on the back because, by and large, the general public have not a clue what the treaty of Nice is. They know that what they are doing is absolutely right. Many hon. Members presented with such a choice would simply not bother to do anything because they would have all kinds of troubles if they did. They would not get on to Select Committees or get promoted, and they would probably be undermined in their constituencies.

It is easy to keep quiet and do nothing, and the majority of people take that view, but the right hon. Gentleman and his two colleagues are not going that way; they know that it is vital to stand firm. As someone who has been in trouble and who knows how important the issues are, I have a high regard for them. When the time comes and they face their maker or look back on history, they will know that they have done the right thing for the right reasons. In all sincerity, I have the highest regard for them.

What about a referendum? Opposition parties usually like referendums, but Governments do not, unless they think that they will win them. Basically, there should be a referendum if the power entrusted to us by the people might be given away irreversibly. We as an institution should manage that power and look after it. If people entrust us with money, power or anything else and we decide to give it away irreversibly so that it can never come back, they should be entitled to a referendum. I wish that both the main parties could reach an agreement so that if we might irreversibly hand away the power entrusted to us by the people, the people would be given the right to say yes or no. That should apply throughout the whole EU, but of course it does not.

Although some hon. Members may laugh, as they always do in European debates, they should accept the simple point that with every European treaty that we have passed, including the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act—I have voted against them all—the Government have said that it was different, that it represented a step forward and that it was good. Those then on the Conservative Front Bench told me time and again that the Single European Act did not involve handing over power to majority voting, that it was simply intended to encourage free trade, that it would help Britain and our industries and jobs and that I was trying to frustrate such help. It was obvious from the treaty that, in fact, it would involve handing over masses of democratic power, but we were told not to worry. The general public were not worried at all and, of course, they were blatantly misled.

At the time of Maastricht, our Liberal Democrat friends, and others who are always great enthusiasts for Europe, told us that there was nothing to worry about and

that everything was okay. They told me that the treaty had positive aspects that would benefit everyone. People were blatantly misled. The same is happening with the treaty of Nice—we are being told that it is nothing to worry about.

As Labour Members know, receiving one of those ridiculous objective 2 grants is rather like winning the cup final. A colleague spoke about them in the Adjournment debate last night. Some colleagues will probably know that, for reasons that I do not understand, my constituency is the only one in the whole of Essex to get objective 2 money. We applied for grants for only three out of our six wards, but it was decided that five wards should receive funds, so we got more than we asked for. Vast sums will pour into the constituency, and everyone is very happy. When I look around at the unusual projects that such grants are spent on, however, I wonder whether they are a good thing. People in other constituencies are upset and think that the decisions are unfair because there are European rules on unemployment, and my constituency does not have a terribly high unemployment rate. My constituents and those of many Labour Members think that objective 2 is wonderful because money is pouring in to be spent on exciting projects. Our high street will get new lamp posts and trees, which is fantastic.

Hon. Members should ask themselves what will happen to all those grants when, under the Nice treaty, the membership of the EU is extended. How many Labour Members' constituencies are receiving objective 1 or 2 funding? The plain fact is that in 2006 we will start over, and I believe that there will be hardly any objective 1 or 2 funding for the United Kingdom because, inevitably, all that money will go to eastern Europe. I challenge the Government to prove me wrong.

I turn now to the ridiculous common agricultural policy, which everyone knows is the biggest protection racket ever devised. It wastes a vast amount of money. Farmers thought that it was wonderful at first because they got higher prices and guarantees. In the same way, fishermen thought that the EU was wonderful until everything went wrong. What on earth will happen to the CAP when we extend EU membership? Romania and Poland have the potential to grow enough food for the whole of Europe. At present, we spend most of the money from the policy on dumping or destroying food. It will be a nightmare when EU membership is extended, and eastern Europe is covered by the CAP. The Government have said, as did the previous Government, that there can be no extension of membership unless there is fundamental reform of the CAP, but that reform has not happened—indeed, it cannot happen—as hon. Members are well aware.

GM foods have been mentioned. We can do something about that problem. If, for example, children in my constituency grow two heads and we can conclusively prove that GM foods are to blame, we can impose certain restrictions on them for three months subject to the approval of the European Commission. However, the basic freedom that we had has gone.

I could go on for a long time because there are 17 other matters that I could mention, but my basic point is that the treaty of Nice is very significant. Like all the previous treaties, it represents a massive surrender of power. It means that 90 per cent. of the decisions in the European Union will be taken by majority vote. If we are worried about immigration controls and asylum seekers, we must consider what will happen when the restrictions are removed and eastern Europe is included in the European Union.

It may be that all that is for the benefit of mankind, but the people should be told about the treaty. Every time there is a treaty, we are told not to worry because it is not as bad as the last one, and represents a step forward. We must remember that when we hand over the people's power and things go wrong, the people get nasty. They are not worried now because, by and large, they do not have a clue what is in the treaty. When they ask about it they are told not to worry, and only a few people will tell them that it is bad. When democracy goes wrong and people feel that they have been betrayed and sold out, everyone will have a nasty time.

That is why it is right to let the people decide. At least then, if it goes wrong, we can say, "You voted for it." Of course, we might have to say, "You didn't bother to vote for it—only 50 per cent. of you bothered to vote." However, we should at least give them the chance to vote. We must remember that the power is not ours; it belongs to the people, and we are meant to be managing it. If we hand over that power without giving them the chance to decide, we are not only cheating but undermining the whole principle of democracy.

That is why I hope that hon. Members will vote tonight for a referendum. I presume that not many of them will, but if we do not, we will be making a terrible mistake. I say again in all sincerity that I know that Labour Members who vote for a referendum will be doing something unpopular that will get them into trouble, but they will be doing the right thing. True democrats will some day cheer them and say that they were right.

Ms Meg Munn (Sheffield, Heeley): I shall be brief, as other hon. Members want to speak.

As the Committee knows, I am a new Member. I received a telephone call yesterday to ask whether I would write a short article for *The House magazine* about my first impressions. I have many first impressions, but those that are relevant to the debate concern scrutiny. In various debates over the past 10 days, we have heard much about the importance of Members of Parliament scrutinising legislation and holding the Government to account. I take the matter seriously, and I believe that the people of Sheffield, Heeley elected me to do that job.

However, with regard to some of the new clauses before us, I find it difficult to take seriously the contention that the Opposition are interested in scrutiny and in holding the Government to account. New clause 37 has the names of six hon. Members against it. New clause 12 has the names of four hon. Members against it. I cannot count 10 Members of the official Opposition in the Chamber.

I also find it difficult to take seriously the calls for a referendum. As has been said, the Conservatives do not have a history of holding referendums on such matters. Why now? We have heard various explanations. We have heard that it is time for the people to have their say, that we should respect the views of the British people, that remorseless political integration is under way and that powers should be returned to Parliament. Opposition Members seem to be saying that they do not want to be in the European Union. If that is what they believe, they should say so. In their current search for a leader,

[Ms Meg Munn]

that will cause them some difficulties. People should be honest about what they want and clear about what they are saying.

My constituents receive objective 1 funding, and I do not share the fears of the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). We are not proud to live in an area that is among the poorest in Europe. We are extremely concerned about that. I hope that objective 1 money will do what it is intended to do—help to lift the people of my constituency and the surrounding area out of that situation, so that when the money comes to an end, as it is programmed to do, we will not feel the loss.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To resolve the question, why does not the hon. Lady ask the Minister, an able, conscientious and talented person with lots of officials to back him up, a simple question: what happens to Britain's share of objective 2 and objective 1 in the event of Europe expanding to include eastern Europe? There are three possibilities: the money will be cut, it will be increased or it will stay the same. Why not ask the Minister and see what he says?

Ms Munn: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will have heard those comments and that there is no need for me to waste time repeating them. If he wishes to deal with the hon. Gentleman's point in his winding-up speech, I am sure that he will do so. As I was saying, I hope that my constituents will not need such assistance in several years' time.

9.15 pm

Why do the Opposition propose a referendum on the Nice treaty when they are so reluctant to support a referendum on the euro? That reluctance has been made very clear. Some hon. Members suggested that the general election constituted a referendum on keeping the pound. If that is the case, the decision has been taken and the matter is over, although I am sure that that is not exactly what the people believe.

I believe that the treaty will make significant improvements and help enlargement. Constituents of mine who raised the issue during the general election campaign were supportive of enlargement and wanted us to move ahead, but many people do not understand the detail of the treaty. That is for us to talk about and explain, but I support the Government's position, which is that a referendum is unnecessary on this matter.

Dr. Ladyman: Very little time remains, so I shall keep my remarks brief and hope that hon. Members will forgive me if my contribution does not include some of the usual pleasantries. Three very thoughtful speeches were made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and my hon. Friends the Members for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) and for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), and I hope to deal at least in part with some of the issues that they raised.

Whenever we enter into a treaty, the minimum consequence is that we reduce our national room to manoeuvre, but sometimes we go further and limit our sovereignty. Whether we share or pool it, it will be limited in some way. However, we do not automatically have a referendum whenever that happens because we have a parliamentary system of democracy and take such decisions here in this place. We are the ultimate deciders of such matters. If we get those decisions wrong, we expect to answer for them in an election.

There is a precedent for holding referendums on issues of national importance when certain criteria are met. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington said, we have no written constitution, which means that we have no rule book and can only try to judge the nature of that precedent. In my view, for a referendum on a treaty to be appropriate, that treaty should involve a quantum leap in our constitutional position, cross party lines to the extent that we cannot resolve the matter clearly in a general election, and involve a complicated issue that is difficult to deal with and will become submerged in a general election campaign.

If those are the tests of whether a referendum is necessary, the treaty of Nice does not fulfil them. It does not constitute a quantum leap in our constitutional position. As the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) said, matters of tax and defence are still to be decided by unanimity. The treaty does not deal with what would usually be called significant losses of sovereignty.

Although attitudes to the treaty cross party lines, certain parties offered clear choices in the general election. One party proposed a referendum on the treaty, but it was rejected. Another argued that we should leave the Union altogether, but it, too, was rejected. Thus the criterion that I described in relation to party lines has not been met.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South added another set of criteria. He said that a referendum should be held on a measure that is unamendable and irreversible, but I respectfully suggest to him that he did not make such a case in respect of the treaty of Nice. He also argued that the treaty of Nice would have consequences which were sufficiently significant to justify holding a referendum on it. Of course it has consequences, but they are reversible and amendable. We could renegotiate them at the next intergovernmental conference. My hon. Friend did not make a clear case for the consequences being irreversible.

If consequences are the deciding factor in whether to hold a referendum, we must bear it in mind that all our actions have consequences. My constituents often ask me whether I would vote to reintroduce the death penalty. I tell them that if they want someone to do that, they must elect a different person. In the past two elections, they have chosen not to do that. Yet opinion polls tell me that my constituents would like the death penalty to be reintroduced. If they want that, they can vote for someone else, because I shall not support its reintroduction. My decision has consequences, but we do not hold a referendum on the subject; the decision is left to me.

I agree that the Nice treaty has consequences. I believe that they are beneficial; some of my hon. Friends would argue that they are detrimental. However, that is an argument not for a referendum but for voting for or against the treaty in Parliament.

Mr. Frank Field: Does my hon. Friend accept that, in 1975, on the only occasion when we held a referendum, none of his criteria were fulfilled? We held it so that a divisive issue could be settled in the country.

Dr. Ladyman: I agree that that was a factor in deciding to hold a referendum, but I disagree that my criteria were not fulfilled.

Consequences are an insufficient reason for a referendum. If we hold referendums simply because decisions are difficult, we undermine parliamentary democracy. It is strange that Conservative Members, who usually lecture us about the importance of Parliament and the need to ensure that it is supreme again, argue for putting aside our supremacy because they do not like a decision and want a referendum on it.

Peter Hain: It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friends the Members for South Thanet (Dr. Ladyman), for Sheffield, Heeley (Ms Munn), for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson), for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), and my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). I am sorry that my hon. Friends the Members for Caerphilly (Mr. David) and for Preston (Mr. Hendrick) were unable to get in, not least because of the long speech of the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash). However, I shall not make much of that.

The debate was of high quality and some fundamental issues were raised. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead made some important points. One was answered by my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet when he talked about surrendering sovereignty. Membership of the European Union does not mean surrendering sovereignty, which we have kept. We have retained the veto where it matters: for example, over taxation, social security and defence.

As my hon. Friend said, we are considering pooling sovereignty. How else can we combat the drugs menace, human trafficking and the environmental catastrophe that faces the world, especially Europe? How else can we tackle the problems of globalisation, and negotiate with the World Trade Organisation and other bodies, unless we do that from a common position of strength?

We pool our sovereignty, or surrender it, through membership of the United Nations Security Council. We thus give up our ability to do as we like about foreign policy. We pool our sovereignty through our membership of NATO. We thus give up our right to do as we like to defend our country. However, we gain in strength and influence by pooling sovereignty.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead said that he believed that enlargement could proceed without the Nice treaty. I suppose that that is theoretically possible. [HON. MEMBERS: " Ah!"] Wait for it! We have had this argument before. It would be theoretically possible if all 12 states had exhaustive individual accession treaties, but frankly, that is not feasible. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will accept that it is not a serious proposition to construct a new Europe on that basis.

One of the most powerful points that my right hon. Friend made was about the gap between the leaders and the led in Europe, although I am not sure that a referendum is the logical solution. This is a serious problem. The hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) was kind enough to address it, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South. I made a speech on the subject yesterday, which is available on the Foreign Office website—www.fco.gov.uk—in its full glory, as opposed to the summary that appeared in *The Independent*.

A serious problem faces the European Union in terms of the language that is used—the Eurospeak and Eurobabble—and the sense of an elite body talking to itself, meeting behind security cordons and barriers, having been ferried there by limousines. This is a serious issue that we need to address, and Britain is determined to ensure that it is addressed. However, we will not address it by holding a referendum.

If we are seeking to bring the leaders and the led closer together in the European Union, we should do it by constructing a different approach to communications, to policy and to the institutional relationship between the leadership of Europe and its citizens. Similarly, we would not deal with the low electoral turnout in Britain, which is an increasing problem, by holding a referendum on it, because that would not be a sensible way to proceed.

Angus Robertson: The Minister talks about the gap between the leaders and the led. Everyone recognises that a lot of valuable work goes on in the European Parliament. One issue that I have not heard mentioned is the knock-on effect of the reduction in the number of MEPs for the United Kingdom. I asked the Library today whether the Government had at any time clarified what number of MEPs will represent Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, post ratification. There has been no such clarification from the Government. I know that that is a matter of great concern for Northern Irish colleagues, as well as those in Scotland and Wales. Will the Minister clarify how many MEPs Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will have after the ratification of the Nice treaty?

Peter Hain: That matter has still to be addressed. I am being absolutely frank with the hon. Gentleman when I tell him that the reduction from, I think, 87 to 72 MEPs is a long way into the future. We cannot have enlargement on a sensible basis without addressing that matter. I see that the hon. Gentleman is nodding in agreement.

There is a further serious problem that cannot be solved by a referendum. In the Irish referendum, the slogan seemed to be, "If you don't know, vote no." Account needs to be taken of that. The gap between the institutions of Europe and the people of Europe is an issue that must be confronted and resolved.

The argument by the Conservative party that the Nice treaty is so important, and makes so many changes of constitutional significance, that we must hold a referendum on it before we ratify it, seems absolutely wrong. In the majority of member states, the traditional constitutional process for ratifying EU treaties is by parliamentary procedure, just as it is in Britain, just as it was for our own accession treaty when we joined, just as it was for the Amsterdam treaty, and, significantly, just as it was for the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty. Both those measures introduced far more fundamental changes than Nice does, and both were negotiated by the Conservative party, which saw no need to trouble the people with a referendum on either.

It is worth taking a look at some of the constitutional issues in the Maastricht treaty, which the Conservatives agreed. Maastricht established the European Union; it established citizenship of the Union; and it set up the pillar structure, with common foreign and security policy and justice and home affairs joining the European Community. It extended qualified majority voting to

[Peter Hain]

30 substantial new articles. The iron lady might not have been for turning, but today's Conservative party appears to be spinning like a top.

9.30 pm

What was the Conservative party's argument for the sudden change of heart? The right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude) told John Humphrys that it had not held a referendum on Maastricht because

"at that time there was not the custom of holding referendums."

That is not a serious argument and I am surprised that he even tried it with John Humphrys. The right hon. Gentleman has also complained that the Government held referendums on all manner of what he implied were trivial issues, such as Scottish and Welsh devolution and the system of government for London. That is the attitude that won the Conservative party precisely no seats in Wales or Scotland in 1997 and caused it to fare little better a few weeks ago.

Those were very important constitutional issues. So too is whether we join the euro, but on that—arguably the defining issue of our generation—the Conservatives would also deny the people the chance to voice their opinion, although they would have a referendum on apparently vital issues in the treaty of Nice, such as whether to extend QMV for the pension arrangements of the registrar of the Court of First Instance, encouraging the EU's institutions to reply to letters from members of the public in a reasonable time frame, and changing the name of the *Official Journal* of the EC to the *Official Journal* of the EU, which of course would do nothing more than reflect reality.

The Conservatives have put themselves in an incredible position—opposition for opposition's sake. They oppose a referendum on an important constitutional issue such as the euro, but want to break with established constitutional procedure and hold one on the treaty. However, the hon. Member for West Suffolk has made his case just in time and I congratulate him on that. What has the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), the front-runner in the Conservative leadership election, to say about a referendum on the Nice treaty? He is opposed to one, saying:

"Our official policy at the general election was that the Conservatives favoured enlarging the union but opposed the treaty of Nice which paves the way for enlargement . . . We opposed the extension of qualified majority voting to any new subject, however trivial . . . These policies are difficult to reconcile with Britain's continued membership of the EU . . . When I am leader, these will not be the official policies of the party."

The old agenda, which will disappear in a few weeks, has been put from the Opposition Front Bench tonight.

Notwithstanding the thoughtful comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South and my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, who made serious points that need to be taken on board, we must keep our eye on the ball. The Nice treaty is about a huge prize—reuniting Europe and healing the divisions of the second world war and the cold war. It must be endorsed as speedily as possible and ratified, as we intend to do through Parliament, to achieve European unity and to bring prosperity, stability, peace and security to all the other nations that want to join us in the EU.

Those countries are desperate to join, as I discovered when I spoke recently to the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, Jan Kavan, with whom I worked in the 1970s and 1980s in the anti-apartheid movement here in Britain. He wants to join the EU and we should not stand in his way—nor in that of our many other friends, such as Cyprus, Malta and Poland. I urge the Committee to reject the new clause, endorse the proposition put by the Government and ensure that the treaty of Nice is ratified.

Mr. Spring: From the time when the Minister was active in the Young Liberals in his youth, he will remember a song called "Let The Sun Shine In". That is exactly what we have attempted with the murky areas of the Nice treaty. This is complicated legislation and the Government have covered themselves in confusion. As we have heard consistently, they did not think out the implications of what they signed up to, and that has been transparently obvious during three days of Committee debate.

The Minister talked about Eurobabble, and for all his honeyed words, Eurobabble is what we have heard from him. There is a terrible danger that the elites of the European Union will acquire an echo of Marie Antoinette. The truth of the matter is that if we go on disconnecting the people of Europe from the institutions of the European Union, it will not survive and prosper.

This is an opportunity to re-engage the people of Britain with the process in the European Union by offering them a referendum. I am extremely disappointed that the Minister has not given even one constructive reason why there should not be a referendum. I have listened carefully to his hon. Friends, and agree substantially with what they have said.

We want to breathe the fresh air of democracy into this process. Unhesitatingly, we will press the new clause to a vote.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 129, Noes 377.

Division No. 34] **[9.36 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bacon, Richard
Barker, Greg
Baron, John
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bercow, John
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Brady, Graham
Brazier, Julian
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cameron, David
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Collins, Tim
Cran, James
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Duncan, Alan
Duncan, Peter
Evans, Nigel
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flight, Howard
Flook, Adrian
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
Garnier, Edward
Gibb, Nick
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Hammond, Philip
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver

Hendry, Charles
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Horam, John
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson, Boris *(Henley)*
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Liddell–Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
McDonnell, John
McIntosh, Miss Anne
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Moss, Malcolm
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Norman, Archie
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Prisk, Mark
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, Laurence *(Tewk'b'ry)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ruffley, David
Sayeed, Jonathan
Selous, Andrew
Shephard, Rt Hon Mrs Gillian
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Alan *(Nottingham S)*
Simpson, Keith *(Mid–Norfolk)*
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Syms, Robert
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Walter, Robert
Waterson, Nigel
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Rt Hon Miss Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Gray and
Mr. John Randall.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Allan, Richard
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Rt Hon Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atherton, Ms Candy
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, John
Baird, Vera
Baker, Norman
Barnes, Harry
Barrett, John
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Begg, Miss Anne
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Hilary
Bennett, Andrew
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Borrow, David
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brake, Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brooke, Annette
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryant, Chris
Burgon, Colin
Burnham, Andy
Burstow, Paul
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Cable, Dr Vincent
Cabom, Rt Hon Richard
Cairns, David
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Caplin, Ivor
Carmichael, Alistair
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chaytor, David
Chidgey, David
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Coleman, Iain
Colman, Tony
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Corston, Jean
Cotter, Brian
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis–Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Donohoe, Brian H
Doughty, Sue
Dowd, Jim
Drown, Ms Julia
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Annabelle
Farrelly, Paul
Fisher, Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Foulkes, George
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Andrew *(St Ives)*
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Gidley, Sandra
Gilroy, Linda
Godsiff, Roger
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grogan, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hancock, Mike
Hanson, David
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Healey, John
Heath, David
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Hesford, Stephen
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Holmes, Paul
Hope, Phil
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Joyce, Eric
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Keetch, Paul
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
Killoyle, Peter
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lamb, Norman
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laws, David
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne

McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWalter, Tony
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall-Andrews, Robert
Martlew, Eric
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Morgan, Julie
Morley, Elliot
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Öpik, Lembit
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Sir Raymond
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Price, Adam
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Pugh, Dr John
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Reid, Rt Hon Dr John *(Hamilton N)*
Rendel, David
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Ross, Ernie
Roy, Frank
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Salter, Martin
Sanders, Adrian
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Jonathan
Sheridan, Jim
Shipley, Ms Debra
Short, Rt Hon Clare
Simon, Siôn
Singh, Marsha
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Stunell, Andrew
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Thurso, John
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
Weir, Michael
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Willis, Phil
Wills, Michael
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wray, James
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek
Younger-Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Noes:
Dan Norris and
Mr. John Heppell.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 38

EFFECTS OF NICE TREATY

'Within three months of the ratification by Her Majesty's Government of the Treaty of Nice amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, the Government shall lay before both Houses of Parliament a White Paper on the economic, political and constitutional developments arising therefrom.'.—*[Mr. Cash.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Cash: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

We have been through something of a marathon and we are now coming towards the end of our consideration of the new clauses. We have an opportunity to look at the implications of what we have been discussing over the past few days. My clause would provide an opportunity for the people of this country to be properly informed about what will be achieved after ratification of the Nice treaty. It states that within three months of the treaty's ratification

"the Government shall lay before both Houses of Parliament a White Paper on the economic, political and constitutional developments arising therefrom."

Tomorrow, or shortly afterwards, the European Commission will produce a White Paper based on a report made to it. It will be a White Paper from Europe. I can give a sample of it. It says that the EU is a "laboratory of world governance". We have been witnessing a continual process towards an undemocratic and unaccountable Europe within a legal framework. The Division has denied us a referendum, just as we have been denied a referendum on the treaty of European Union itself. In my opinion, it is time that we had one.

Over the past year and a half, I have challenged the Prime Minister three times on the Floor of the House to give us a White Paper on the European issue—the constitutional, political and economic implications of what we have been deliberating on over the past few days, or indeed the past few years. Three times the Prime Minister has denied the people of this country the information that would enable them to make a judgment about what is going on. Why? The truth is that the Prime Minister dare not tell the British people what is happening. He knows perfectly well that if he were to provide a White Paper, he would have to spell out all the political and economic implications for the House and for the daily lives of the people of this country.

It is a denial of the information that is due to the British people. Churchill said that one should tell the truth to the British people because they are a robust people, and "if you do not tell them the truth, woe betide you on the morrow". That is what is going on here. That is why we have seen riots in Gothenburg and elsewhere. It is why

there was a rejection of the Nice treaty in the Irish referendum and why the referendum in Denmark turned down the proposals for the euro. People are fed up with being governed by an elite. They are not being given the information that they require. My new clause would enable the British people to have proper information about what is being done to them.

It is a matter of fundamental democracy and, after the Division tonight, the Government will stand accused of not being prepared to provide the people with a White Paper.

Mr. Spring: I want to make it plain that we fully support the notion of a White Paper as contained in the new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Mr. Cash). It would mean that we could take a long, hard and proper look at what Nice was all about and the implications that flow from it. I remind hon. Members that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs concluded:

"The Treaty of Nice has proved to be much more substantial than the United Kingdom Government and others initially envisaged."

We know from the Select Committee proceedings how the Government went disorganised and unstructured into the Nice treaty negotiations, and how they came out of them after signing up to the treaty without fully understanding its implications and what it is all about. In those circumstances, a White Paper would be the right way of taking a proper and considered view of what was agreed to at Nice. I am happy to support my hon. Friend's proposal.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: In the course of the Committee's consideration of the Bill many comments have been made about the need for clarity and transparency and the need to reconnect the people of the United Kingdom with the European Union. I think that a White Paper of the type that the new clause seeks to persuade the Government to provide would be a very important step in achieving those objectives. For those reasons, but not necessarily for those that have been advanced so far in the debate, I believe that this is a new clause worthy of support.

Peter Hain: Conservative Members have lost the argument in this debate and now they come waving a bit of white paper. It is not necessary to have a White Paper.

A White Paper on the effect of the Nice treaty, "Reform for Enlargement", was published in February 2000 and clearly set out the Government's position on the 2000 intergovernmental conference. Parliament is now debating the implications of Nice, and we shall continue to keep Parliament informed of developments in the European Union as they occur. We have laid before Parliament, and published yesterday, our six-monthly report on developments in the European Union. Additionally, Parliament will have ample opportunity to debate and contribute to the future of Europe in the lead-up to the next intergovernmental conference, in 2004. I look forward to the erudite contributions that the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) will make to those debates.

We believe that the treaty of Nice is a good outcome for Britain and will deliver a stronger Britain in a wider Europe. We have opened the door to enlargement, the fantastic prize of reunifying Europe. We have won more relative voting power for Britain. Conservative Members said that we could not achieve that, but we did. We have also won a more efficient Commission. We have secured more qualified majority voting when that is in Britain's interests, and we have preserved our veto by saying that we needed to do so. We have achieved a more effective system of justice in the European Union that will help to cut delays. We have also secured a more flexible European Union while safeguarding the interests of all member states.

We shall continue to engage at every opportunity in a discussion on all aspects of the Nice treaty as it evolves with Parliament and with the House of Commons—on the Floor of the House, in Committee, and in the Scrutiny Committee. I therefore do not think that a White Paper is necessary, and I do not think that the Opposition are serious about pressing the new clause to a Division.

Conservative Members have had their last fling today. When they return from the summer recess, they will have a new leader. The right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) has made it clear that he supports the Nice treaty. How will the hon. Members for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) and for Stone and all the other Conservative Members who have attacked the Nice treaty be voting on Third Reading in October?

Mr. Bercow: Against.

Peter Hain: There we have it. A rebellion is already being planned, three or four months before Third Reading, by some Conservative Back Benchers. They will be voting against Third Reading and defying their new leader, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe. What a pathetic rabble they are.

As Labour Members, we are lifting our heads above that dreadful spectacle and saying that the real issues are about the unity of Europe, a more efficient Europe, a more prosperous Europe, a Europe that drives forward towards full employment, social justice and the protection of people's job security and rights, and a Europe that fights poverty and combats the environmental threat that is the scourge of our times.

We commend the Bill and reject new clause 38.

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN, *pursuant to Orders [4 and 11 July], put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The Committee divided: Ayes 181, Noes 334.

Division No. 35] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(E Surrey)*
Allan, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Bacon, Richard
Baker, Norman
Barker, Greg
Baron, John
Barrett, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bellingham, Henry
Bercow, John
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Botiomley, Peter *(Worthing W)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Brady, Graham
Brake, Tom
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Annette
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Malcolm
Burnside, David
Burstow, Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cable, Dr Vincent
Cameron, David
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Carmichael, Alistair
Cash, William

Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chidgey, David
Chope, Christopher
Clappison, James
Collins, Tim
Cotter, Brian
Cran, James
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Doughty, Sue
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Peter
Evans, Nigel
Ewing, Annabelle
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flight, Howard
Flook, Adrian
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
Garnier, Edward
George, Andrew *(St Ives)*
Gibb, Nick
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Gray, James
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Gummer, Rt Hon John
Hammond, Philip
Hancock, Mike
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver
Heath, David
Hendry, Charles
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Holmes, Paul
Horam, John
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson, Boris *(Henley)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keetch, Paul
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamb, Norman
Laws, David
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Liddell–Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
McIntosh, Miss Anne
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Norman, Archie
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Öpik, Lembit
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Price, Adam
Prisk, Mark
Pugh, Dr John
Randall, John
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, Laurence *(Tewk'b'ry)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Salmond, Alex
Sanders, Adrian
Sayeed, Jonathan
Selous, Andrew
Shephard, Rt Hon Mrs Gillian
Simmonds, Mark
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stunell, Andrew
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Syms, Robert
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Thurso, John
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Trend, Michael
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyler, Paul
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Walter, Robert
Watkinson, Angela
Weir, Michael
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Rt Hon Miss Ann
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Willis, Phil
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Wishart, Pete
Young, Rt Hon Sir George
Younger–Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Atkinson and Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Rt Hon Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atherton, Ms Candy
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, John
Bailey, Adrian
Baird, Vera
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Begg, Miss Anne
Benn, Hilary
Bennett, Andrew
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Borrow, David
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bryant, Chris
Burgon, Colin
Burnham, Andy
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Cabom, Rt Hon Richard
Cairns, David
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Caplin, Ivor
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chaytor, David
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Ann
Coleman, Iain
Colman, Tony
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis–Thomas, Mrs Claire
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Drown, Ms Julia
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Foulkes, George
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Gilroy, Linda
Godsiff, Roger
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grogan, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hanson, David
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Healey, John
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Hesford, Stephen
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hope, Phil
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric

Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Jonnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Joyce, Eric
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWalter, Tony
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall-Andrews, Robert
Martlew, Eric
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Morgan, Julie
Morley, Elliot
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Sir Raymond
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Reid, Rt Hon Dr John *(Hamilton N)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Roy, Frank
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salter, Martin
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Jonathan
Sheridan, Jim
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Singh, Marsha
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Wills, Michael
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Wood, Mike
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wray, James
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Heppell and Dan Norris.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill reported, without amendment.

To be read the Third time tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [28 June],

That Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 26th October, 2nd, 23rd and 30th November 2001, 11th, 18th and 25th January, 15th March, 12th and 19th April, 10th May, 21st June and 19th July 2002.—*[Jim Fitzpatrick.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

PETITION

Asylum Seekers (Everton)

10.16 pm

Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside): I present this petition on behalf of 378 Christians in Anglican and Catholic churches in the north Liverpool deanery who wish to register their concern about poor conditions and the atmosphere of fear and oppression in two tower blocks in Everton, Liverpool—Landmark and Inn on the Park—in which asylum seekers are housed.

The petition states:

"The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons acknowledges the issues faced by the asylum seekers in Everton; that the House urge the Secretary of State for the Home Department to take all measures which lie within his power to improve the safety, peace of mind, and living conditions of these residents; and that the House give its full support to all such measures.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

British Bases (Kenya)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

10.17 pm

Mr. Martin Caton (Gower): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the issue of civilian casualties at British military training areas in Kenya. I am particularly pleased to be able to do so before the summer recess, as this is an important matter and one about which I know there is growing public concern throughout the country.

In introducing this debate, I cannot help but cast my mind back three years to the last Parliament when we passed the Landmines Act 1998, and I can still remember the enormous pride that I felt as a new Back Bencher at the fact that our Government were demonstrating clear moral leadership in the world and making an eloquent statement about the value that they put on human life and well-being not just in our own country but throughout the world.

I know that during our debates on that Bill, I was not alone among Members of Parliament on both sides of the House in having in mind the heart-rending pictures that we had, seen in our newspapers and on our television screens as the campaign for that legislation developed, of young children killed and terribly maimed by anti-personnel mines . All too often, because terrible and sad conflicts have taken place on the African continent in recent years, those pictures were of African children—the innocent victims of current and historic wars in their home countries.

It was those pictures that came back to me just over a fortnight ago when I listened to a "You and Yours" radio programme about people in Kenya—mostly children—being killed, disabled and injured by unexploded munitions on military training grounds used by the British Army in the central part of that country.

The Observer of the same weekend carried a full-page article by Kamal Ahmed headed "Britain's secret killing fields", which provided its own specific and terrible images both visual and verbal that told the story of individual and family tragedies that resulted from, in most cases, children and young people happening on artillery shells or other ordnance which had failed to explode when initially fired and which had never been collected or cleared.

Since then, I have done some research and read a lot more personal case studies from people who live in the regions in which the two military training areas on which I wish to focus are set. I found the stories extremely moving, very distressing and quite shaming. I want to put some cases on the record this evening because it is important to keep the real human consequences of our actions—or inaction—at the centre of the debate. That can be lost sometimes if we deal only in statistics, history and geography.

First, to set the scene, I need to explain that the areas that I am talking about in Kenya are Archer's Post, near the Shaba game reserve, predominantly the tribal lands of the Samburu, and Dol Dol, close to the town of Nanyuki, mostly Masai lands in the shadow of Mount Kenya. Both areas have been used by the British Army, but not exclusively, for more than 50 years. I cannot prove that the examples that I shall cite involve the victims of British ordnance, but I will try to show that there is every likelihood that they do. There is every reason to believe that innocent civilians have been killed or crippled by British munitions and that that has happened ever since our Army started to use Kenyan training areas more than 20 years before independence was achieved in 1967.

I have read of specific cases dating back to 1979—for example, that of Lemura Kapisi Ole Kipese, who one afternoon in August that year was grazing his father's livestock when he saw an oval object with a spring attached to the end. When he tried to pick it up, the spring snapped and it dropped to the ground. The next thing he knew, he was in hospital in excruciating pain. He is still disabled. He says, "Since the poisonous bits of the explosive lodged in the lower parts of my body, my left leg had to be amputated. Besides, I lost the use of both arms, which were left paralysed."

In the same year, Swaili Mpopwoki was even unluckier. An object that she picked up and then threw down blew her to smithereens. Her brother described the consequences, "Shrapnel lodged in her breast while pieces of metal hit her face making her blind and badly disfigured. She eventually died of her wounds."

Moving forward 20 years, things do not seem to have changed very much. In September 1999, Peter Mwangi, a 14-year-old, took home what he thought was a metal stone. He hit it with a hammer, but it would not break, so he threw it into a fire and it exploded. He and three siblings were almost killed and one of them lost a leg. A nurse at Wamba hospital—the local hospital that deals with casualties from Archer's Post—described the condition of Mowli Lmolian Lekorian, when he was brought in, saying, "He was very badly injured. The scull was almost out; the leg, the abdomen and the eyes also." I shall not go on, but I could; there are many individual and family stories such as those. On average six children a year are killed or maimed by unexploded ordnance—unexploded, that is, until the children find it.

So who is responsible? Perhaps the first question is whose bombs and shells are doing the damage. The Kenyan, and once or twice, the American, armies have trained in those areas, but all the available evidence suggests that the British Army has been by far the most significant user of those training areas. The United Kingdom sends 3,000 to 3,500 soldiers to Kenya in any one year. Their use of artillery and mortars is now confined predominantly to the flatter areas of the Archer's Post range. That part of the country is home to the Samburu tribe, who are pasturalists—nomadic people moving to wherever there is good grazing. I am informed that around 20,000 of them live in the Archer's Post range area for part of the year.

Local people are sure that Dol Dol used to be exploited for similar heavy artillery manoeuvres in support of infantry training until some years ago, although the Ministry of Defence has informed me that it has no record of that taking place. It is agreed that the area has been restricted to the use of lighter weaponry in recent times. However, there is some evidence of relatively new white phosphorous bomb rounds being found on the range. In any case, other unexploded ordnance—perhaps from years ago—remains at Dol Dol, which is in the Masai tribal lands. The Masai are again, of course, a nomadic pasturalist people, and thousands of them live in the area.

Incidents that cause the sort of injuries that I have described mostly involve children herding the family animals. They come across the bombs and pick them up. A significant proportion of the ordnance is still dangerous and, for the unlucky ones, the bombs blow up, killing, maiming and burning them. In one incident, a child was evaporated because the explosion was so intense. We know that since 1940 at least 55 people have been killed and 101 injured in the Archer's Post and Dol Dol areas. The actual figures are estimated to be two or three times higher because many of the victims and their families are too scared of the Government to raise the issue.

We know that the British Army was in charge of the Archer's Post range until independence, by which time there had already been many deaths and injuries, and unexploded ordnance was left uncleared. Since 1991, the Kenyan army, lacking resources, has not had the capacity to use the range to any significant extent, so for 30 of the last 57 years, almost all the bombs and shells fired have been British. Evidence suggests that even in the 1970s and 1980s, the British used far more ammunition than did the Kenyans. Throughout the entire period, injuries and deaths among local people have continued.

Apart from the proportion of range times and the overall quantities of ammunition used by our Army, there is another reason to believe that our ordnance is responsible for a high percentage of the injuries. I refer to the way in which we use the ranges, particularly Archer's Post, compared with the methods used by the Kenyan army. There is a big difference. The British Army trains its soldiers in combat conditions that are as realistic as possible, so our artillery and mortars are aimed just ahead of where the soldiers are training. That means that the munitions land, and mostly explode, in the flatter areas of the range where, if they do not blow up, they are more likely to be found by the children of the nomadic tribes. When it could afford to test its artillery, the Kenyan army fired into the hills, where there have been no reports of accidents to date.

A preliminary report by David Taylor, a leading expert on unexploded ordnance, was commissioned by solicitors representing the victims and their families. It highlighted the fact that the Ministry of Defence accepts that, owing to those differing modes of operation, it left more bombs on site in low-lying areas than the Kenyan army is likely to have done. Taylor states that some and possibly all of the unexploded ordnance encountered is of British origin and would have been used by the British Army in live firing exercises. The implication is that British munitions were responsible for a significant proportion, and possibly all, of the deaths and injuries caused by unexploded ordnance in the Archer's Post and Dol Dol areas.

That leads us to the next question. Is the British Army doing everything that it can to prevent children from being blown to bits when they follow their parents' cattle or simply play in those areas? Are they kept out of the area during training and afterwards, when clearance is under way? Are the unexploded shells and bombs properly cleared after the training sessions?

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Aldershot): As the hon. Gentleman probably knows, I was a member of the armed forces parliamentary scheme, as was the former Member for Mid-Dorset and North Poole, Christopher Fraser. A couple of years ago, we went to Mpala farm, which is part of the territory to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, to undertake live firing exercises. Our impression was that the British Army was very careful to ensure that nobody strayed to the range. Indeed, because of the noise, it would have been difficult not to realise that the firing was taking place. The British Army takes its responsibilities seriously, and the military training that it undertakes is not only vital to Britain but a great asset to the Kenyan Government.

Mr. Caton: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says. I think that the Kenyan Government welcome the activity. However, there is a lot of evidence that the Masai and other nomadic tribespeople do not view the use of the training areas as entirely beneficial.

There is evidence of people being able to get on to the ranges even when live firing is taking place, although that is not the substance of my speech. The solicitor representing the tribal people who are likely to take action against the British Government managed to get into one of the training areas when live firing was taking place, so I do not think that we should be complacent.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will forgive me if I paraphrase the Ministry of Defence position, according to written answers that I have received to parliamentary questions and information that I have read elsewhere. I am sure that he will correct me if I have misunderstood the Ministry's line, but I understand it to be saying that the clearance of munitions in training areas is the responsibility of the host nation, so it is up to the Kenyan Government to make the ranges safe for their tribespeople. The Ministry admits that it has become aware of civilian casualties recently. The date quoted is 1999, and frankly I find that incredible. I shall return to that point in a moment.

The Army says that since it found out what has been happening, it has been helping to spread information and assisting with the clear-up operation. In a written reply to me, my right hon. Friend the Minister referred to the large concrete signs outside live firing areas, with words of warning in English and Samburu. However, that does not take account of the fact that a majority of even the adult tribespeople, let alone the children, cannot read. Referring to Archer's Post, he informed me that

"the nomadic tribespeople have been grazing their animals in the area for a considerable number of years and are aware that some of the area is a . . . live firing military range as it has been for many years.

That begs the biggest question. If that is the case, why are people being blown up? In any case, that statement does not seem to lie comfortably with the other point that my right hon. Friend drew to my attention—that

"range wardens employed throughout the year by the British Army instruct the local population about the dangers posed during live firing and from touching unexploded ordnance."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 2001; Vol. 372, c. 3W.]

If that is necessary, it is clearly accepted that not all the tribespeople are already aware of the danger. Sadly, it appears from reports in the Kenyan media that most tribespeople are equally unaware of the work of those rangers. There is also evidence that people can and do get into the training areas where live ammunition is being fired.

[Mr. Caton]

It is true that the British Army started to carry out an annual clean-up operation last year. It is named Operation Pineapple. To date, 380 bombs have been collected, but my right hon. Friend informed me that only 64 sq km of the 1,500 sq km of the range have been cleared.

Ross Cranston (Dudley, North): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and congratulate him on raising an important subject. Does he agree that the House needs reassurance about what the British Army is doing in terms of clear-up? Whatever happened in the past, if our right hon. Friend can set out in detail what the British Army is doing now, we would be much reassured.

Mr. Caton: My hon. and learned Friend is right. That is the core issue, although there are related issues that I shall briefly address.

Our Army paid local people to help with the clear-up. About 60 people were employed at £2 a day each. The operation took 25 days, providing a sum total of £3,000 to the local economy. One cannot help asking whether that is the price that we are paying for six local children killed or maimed a year.

I return to the British Army claim that it was not aware of the problem of civilian casualties until 1999. That does not hold water. We have been in the area for more than 50 years. Until 1964 we were in sole charge of the range. Deaths and injuries were occurring then, too. British Army officers have given evidence at inquests into the deaths of locals killed by unexploded ordnance over many years. The deaths and injuries have continued at a fairly steady rate over those years. There are reports of British Army personnel taking injured children to hospital in 1986 and after. It stretches credulity too far to claim that our Army was entirely ignorant of those deaths and injuries until 1999.

What actually happened, I believe, is that by 1999 media interest was focusing on British activity in that part of Kenya and local representatives were investigating the possibility of legal action against the UK Government. That was the real impetus for the response that we have seen in the past couple of years. That legal action looks set to go ahead within weeks and there seems to be a very strong case indeed.

Tonight, I am not speaking about legalities or about whether the law is enough of an ass to decide that a poor country such as Kenya must pick up the tab in the end, even though the injuries were caused by British munitions and the United Kingdom is a rich country, far better able, in every sense, to deal with the problem. I am not trying to preview the proceedings that may take place in the British courts on the issue this year. However, if we examine international laws and conventions, I cannot help wondering whether our activity in the Archer's Post and Dol Dol areas complies with article 28 of the UN draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, which states:

"Military operations shall not take place in the lands and territories of indigenous peoples unless otherwise freely agreed upon by the people concerned. Hazardous material shall not be stored or disposed of on the land of indigenous peoples. Governments shall take measures to assist indigenous peoples whose health has been affected by such material."

Both the Masai and the Samburu are classified as minority groups in a state set-up—a classification that is recognised in various international human rights instruments. These people have certainly not freely agreed to the use of their tribal territories for the military operations. Apart from the mutilation of their children, they blame the military activity in their areas for considerable environmental damage that undermines their traditional grazing patterns.

I recognise that this is ultimately an issue for the Kenyan Government, but I do not believe that we can wash our hands of all responsibility if we know or believe that our Army is involved in activity that could be undermining the basic human rights of these indigenous peoples. I do not know whether that is, or will be, a matter for law, but that is not the main point that I have been trying to make. I have tried to concentrate on our moral responsibility.

I want my Government to be talking the language that they were talking back in 1998 when we were discussing the land mines question. I want us to value the lives of these Kenyan children as we value the lives of the children who live near Salisbury plain or any other British range. As we know that we have it in our power to repay our debt to the victims, their families and communities and to prevent these terrible incidents from happening again, surely we have a duty to act.

10.36 pm

The Minister of State for Defence (Mr. Adam Ingram): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Caton) for securing a debate on this important subject. I also thank him for the series of written questions that he has tabled, which I have answered in full.

While we should recognise the emotive and sensitive nature of the issue, it is equally important for us to set it in a factual context. This debate allows me to place on record an explanation of how the British Army conducts its training in Kenya, to demonstrate that we are taking all reasonable measures to ensure that that training is conducted as safely as possible and to dispel any enduring misunderstandings. I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dudley, North (Ross Cranston) for pointing out that that is an important part of the debate.

My Department has received notification that a number of Kenyans will be making claims for compensation as a result of injuries allegedly suffered as a consequence of the use of training areas in Kenya by the British Army. Clearly, any accident caused by unexploded ordnance is a matter for great regret, and I do not want to minimise that fact in any way. However, no one should claim a monopoly on understanding the suffering of the victims or their families.

My Department will deal with any claims in accordance with its usual procedures, and pay compensation if its legal liability is proven. In the circumstances, my hon. Friend will understand that it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the particulars of the claims at this stage.

I hope that my hon. Friend shares my view that our armed forces need to be able to operate safely and effectively anywhere in the world, and that in order to achieve that, they need to train in the widest variety of environments and climates. The British Army has used training areas in Kenya for many years. The facilities

provided to us by the Kenyans provide it with excellent opportunities to conduct training in a variety of arduous conditions, including arid and jungle environments. The hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Howarth) alluded to his short experience of visiting a training area, and I am grateful to him for his contribution.

Some 3,000 British troops train in Kenya each year. The number of troops exercising at any one time tends to vary between 100 and 750. They are supported by the British Army training liaison staff Kenya, who comprise 10 permanent staff, 27 temporary duty staff and 144 full-time locally employed staff. In addition, we also employ more than 100 part-time locally engaged staff on an as-required basis.

I am grateful to the Kenyan Government for providing us with these vital training opportunities. If we cannot train in those conditions, we cannot operate in them. Many of the regiments that have run our short-term training teams in Sierra Leone previously trained in Kenya. Indeed, the 1st Battalion, the Light Infantry, which was in Sierra Leone until recently, was in Kenya earlier this year. All those regiments were able to perform their demanding and crucial tasks and make a significant contribution to peace in Sierra Leone, thanks to the experiences that they gained by exercising in places such as Kenya.

We use nine separate training areas in Kenya, and they offer a variety of environments and conditions. Two—Archer's Post and Dol Dol—are managed by the Kenyan Department of Defence; Kathendini is managed by the Kenyan wildlife service, and the remaining six are on privately owned land, under arrangements with the individual landowners. The activities that we undertake differ from area to area. For example, at Solio and Lewa Downs, we primarily carry out acclimatisation training. Dol Dol is used for company and platoon-level dry training. Archer's Post is used for collective battalion-level training, which involves some live firing. Each six-week detachment to Kenya will train in several areas before coming together for two weeks of collective training at Archer's Post. In general, we do not use each area for more than five or six weeks each calendar year.

In addition to the three battle group exercises, which are known as Grand Prix and take place every year between October and April, several smaller exercises at troop, company or squadron level also occur. They include engineering troop and squadron exercises, a medical squadron exercise and an explosive ordnance disposal squadron exercise. Each takes place annually. In addition to providing us with excellent training opportunities, the engineering and medical exercises give direct support to the Kenyan community through local construction projects and the provision, through links with a non-governmental organisation, of primary health care to the local community.

Before I talk about the clearance exercises, I shall explain that in Kenya, the British Army trains using live ammunition at Archer's Post and on some privately owned land, with the agreement of the landowners. That training is conducted in accordance with both British Army and local regulations. On the other hand, we use Dol Dol as a dry range, and do not conduct live firing there. The only ammunition we use there, and at other dry training areas, is blank rounds and thunderflash noise simulators.

Let me explain the measures that we have put in place to ensure that the British Army's use of training areas in Kenya is as safe as possible. Safety is paramount in all aspects of British Army training, including the use of live ammunition. Strict regulations, applicable both in the UK and overseas, govern the issue, carriage, firing and clearance of live ammunition. We aim to declare, record and, when possible, destroy unexploded ordnance as soon as possible after it has been fired. That is the case wherever we train—and it is achieved by the troops who exercise with live ammunition, who sweep the area visually before departing from a training area.

Depending on the terrain of the training area, there is, of course, always the possibility that a small percentage of unexploded munitions may not be located immediately. I hope that my hon. Friend will be interested to note that it is normal practice for the host nation to be responsible for the clearance of military training areas, and that the practice is followed in Kenya for the facilities managed by the Kenyan Department of Defence.

That does not apply to privately owned land, and for many years the British Army has cleared any unexploded ordnance from such land in Kenya, as required by our arrangements with local landowners. That takes place during Exercise Pineapple, to which my hon. Friend referred. It occurs annually at the end of the exercise season in Kenya.

In May 2000, the 30-man team conducting the clearance work on private land mounted a small clearance operation at Archer's Post to support the Kenyan Department of Defence. As a result of that initial work, we have increased our support to the Kenyans, and in May this year some 100 Royal Engineers specialists participated in a similar exercise. As my hon. Friend said, a total of 64 sq km of the most heavily used parts of the area were cleared. Some 271 items of live ammunition were destroyed and therefore made safe. A list of those items will be examined by ammunition experts to establish the provenance of munitions. Given that several armies train in Kenya, that may take time.

I must also add that it is unlikely that we will establish with any certainty who fired all the munitions, given that some of the ammunition was old and without markings. That differs from my hon. Friend's argument, and I hope that he notes the position.

Clearly, we also have an interest in ensuring that the conduct of military training in Kenya is carried out in as safe a manner as possible. To achieve this, we work alongside the Kenyans, who retain overall responsibility for range safety. Specifically, we continue to provide infrastructure support and range wardens, and to educate the local population about range safety. I would like to take this opportunity to explain a little more about that aspect of the work.

Our staff in Kenya liaise closely with the Kenyan Department of Defence, the district administration and local leaders to ensure that local communities know where and when we train. We take every possible precaution to minimise danger to the Kenyan people. We conduct helicopter sweeps of the danger areas before commencing training, to check that the areas are clear of people and livestock. After training, the troops mount visual searches of the impact areas to ensure that, as far as possible, any unexploded ordnance is disposed of or clearly marked.

[Mr. Adam Ingram]

We have also built and equipped a range control building at Archer's Post that is manned whenever we use the training area. We liaise with other users of the range to ensure that all troops using the area use the same safety procedures. We employ and train Kenyan range wardens, whose job it is to control access to the training area when firing is in progress. The wardens also travel between the communities near Archer's Post and the indigenous population that roams in the area, to educate local people about the dangers posed by entering the training area during live firing, and by touching unexploded ordnance. We also deploy British personnel, and we fly danger flags at Archer's Post when we are training.

I had wanted to make some further points, but my hon. Friend took slightly longer than I had anticipated because of the interventions. I have tried to set out the range of activities in which we are involved in connection with the use of the ranges, and to explain why they are important in terms of training our own forces. That has also been recognised by others when our forces are deployed in humanitarian and peaceful initiatives. I have also tried to explain the safety measures that have been put in place.

I hope that I have reassured my hon. Friend of the genuine, sincere and determined way in which we are tackling this issue. We benefit from the use of these ranges from a training perspective, and the Kenyans benefit in many other ways. I have tried to respond to the debate in a structured and informative way. However, if my hon. Friend feels that he needs more information, I suggest that he writes to me during the recess, and I shall do my best to help him.

Mr. Howarth: Is it not the case that the British troops have every interest in ensuring that the ordnance is cleared? If it is not cleared, it poses a real danger to our troops.

Mr. Ingram: Absolutely. Ours is not the only Army that uses that particular range, and as my hon. Friend said, the Kenyans have a responsibility as well.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at thirteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

Deferred Divisions

SECTION 5 OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (AMENDMENT) ACT 1993

That this House takes note with approval of the Government's assessment as set out in the Financial Statement and Budget Report 2001–02, and the Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report 2001–02 for the purposes of section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993.

The House divided: Ayes 318, Noes 179.

Division No. 30]

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atherton, Ms Candy
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, John
Bailey, Adrian
Baird, Vera
Banks, Tony
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Begg, Miss Anne
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew
Betts, Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Blunkett, Rt Hon David
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Borrow, David
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brown, Rt Hon Nicholas *(Newcastle E & Wallsend)*
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Colin
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Cairns, David
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Caplin, Ivor
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chaytor, David
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Coleman, Iain
Colman, Tony
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis-Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Drown, Ms Julia
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Follett, Barbara
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Goggins, Paul
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hamilton, Fabian *(Leeds NE)*
Hanson, David
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*

Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Heppell, John
Hesford, Stephen
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Johnson, Miss Melanie *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Kelly, Ruth
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonnell, John
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Milburn, Rt Hon Alan
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Morgan, Julie
Morris, Rt Hon Estelle
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norris, Dan
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Ken
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Reid, Rt Hon Dr John *(Hamilton N)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Cov'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Roy, Frank
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salter, Martin
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Jonathan
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Simpson, Alan *(Nottingham S)*
Singh, Marsha
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Wills, Michael
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(E Surrey)*
Allan, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bacon, Richard
Baker, Norman
Baron, John
Barrett, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bercow, John
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Worthing W)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Brady, Graham
Brake, Tom
Brooke, Annette
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burns, Simon
Burnside, David
Burstow, Paul
Burt, Alistair
Cable, Dr Vincent
Cameron, David
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Carmichael, Alistair
Cash, William
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chidgey, David
Chope, Christopher
Clappison, James
Collins, Tim
Conway, Derek
Cotter, Brian
Cran, James
Curry, Rt Hon David
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Donaldson, Jeffrey M
Doughty, Sue
Duncan, Alan
Duncan, Peter
Evans, Nigel
Ewing, Annabelle
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flook, Adrian
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
George, Andrew *(St Ives)*
Gibb, Nick
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Gummer, Rt Hon John
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hancock, Mike
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harvey, Nick
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver
Heath, David
Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Hendry, Charles
Hermon, Lady
Hoban, Mark
Holmes, Paul
Horam, John
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson, Boris *(Henley)*
Keetch, Paul
Kennedy, Rt Hon Charles *(Ross Skye & Inverness W)*
Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(E Yorkshire)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamb, Norman
Lansley, Andrew
Laws, David

Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maples, John
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Moore, Michael
Moss, Malcolm
Norman, Archie
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Öpik, Lembit
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prisk, Mark
Randall, John
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, Laurence *(Tewk'b'ry)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Salmond, Alex
Sanders, Adrian
Sayeed, Jonathan
Selous, Andrew
Shepherd, Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Keith *(Mid–Norfolk)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stunell, Andrew
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Thurso, John
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, Rt Hon David
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walter, Robert
Waterson, Nigel
Watkinson, Angela
Webb, Steve
Weir, Michael
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Rt Hon Miss Ann
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Wishart, Pete
Young, Rt Hon Sir George
Younger–Ross, Richard

Question accordingly agreed to.

SOCIAL SECURITY

That the draft Social Security (Literacy Etc. Skills Training Pilot) Regulations 2001, which were laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 324, Noes 178.

Division No. 31]

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atherton, Ms Candy
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, John
Bailey, Adrian
Baird, Vera
Banks, Tony
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Begg, Miss Anne
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew
Betts, Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Blunkett, Rt Hon David
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Borrow, David
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brown, Rt Hon Nicholas *(Newcastle E & Wallsend)*
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Colin
Burnside, David
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Cairns, David
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Caplin, Ivor
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chaytor, David
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Coleman, Iain
Colman, Tony
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Crausby, David
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cryer, John *(Hornchurch)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis–Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Donaldson, Jeffrey M
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Drown, Ms Julia
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Follett, Barbara
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Goggins, Paul
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hamilton, Fabian *(Leeds NE)*
Hanson, David
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Heppell, John
Hermon, Lady
Hesford, Stephen
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Johnson, Miss Melanie *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Kelly, Ruth
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Lewis, Terry *(Worsley)*
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonnell, John
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne

McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Milburn, Rt Hon Alan
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Morgan, Julie
Morris, Rt Hon Estelle
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norris, Dan
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Ken
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Reid, Rt Hon Dr John *(Hamilton N)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Cov'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Roy, Frank
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salter, Martin
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Jonathan
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Simpson, Alan *(Nottingham S)*
Singh, Marsha
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Trimble, Rt Hon David
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Wills, Michael
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(E Surrey)*
Allan, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bacon, Richard
Baker, Norman
Baron, John
Barrett, John
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bercow, John
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Worthing W)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Brady, Graham
Brake, Tom
Brooke, Annette
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burns, Simon
Burstow, Paul
Burt, Alistair
Cable, Dr Vincent
Cameron, David
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Carmichael, Alistair
Cash, William
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chidgey, David
Chope, Christopher
Clappison, James
Collins, Tim
Conway, Derek
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Cotter, Brian
Cran, James
Curry, Rt Hon David
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Doughty, Sue
Duncan, Alan
Duncan, Peter
Evans, Nigel
Ewing, Annabelle
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flook, Adrian
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
George, Andrew *(St Ives)*
Gibb, Nick
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Gummer, Rt Hon John
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hancock, Mike
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harvey, Nick
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver
Heath, David
Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Hendry, Charles
Hoban, Mark
Holmes, Paul
Horam, John
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson, Boris *(Henley)*
Keetch, Paul
Kennedy, Rt Hon Charles *(Ross Skye & Inverness W)*
Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(E Yorkshire)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamb, Norman
Lansley, Andrew
Laws, David
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
McIntosh, Miss Anne
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maples, John
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Moore, Michael
Moss, Malcolm
Norman, Archie
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Öpik, Lembit
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Price, Adam
Prisk, Mark
Randall, John
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, Laurence *(Tewk'b'ry)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Salmond, Alex
Sanders, Adrian
Sayeed, Jonathan
Selous, Andrew
Shepherd, Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Keith *(Mid-Norfolk)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stunell, Andrew
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Thurso, John
Tonge, Dr Jenny

Tredinnick, David
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walter, Robert
Waterson, Nigel
Watkinson, Angela
Webb, Steve
Weir, Michael
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Rt Hon Miss Ann
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*
Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Wishart, Pete
Young, Rt Hon Sir George
Younger-Ross, Richard

Question accordingly agreed to.

House of Commons

Thursday 19 July 2001

The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TREASURY

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked—

Climate Change Levy

1. **Mr. David Amess** (Southend, West): What recent representations he has received on the climate change levy. [3320]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Paul Boateng): The Government received many representations over the two years of development of the climate change levy, and many of the ideas that businesses suggested are reflected in its final design.

Mr. Amess: I wholeheartedly congratulate the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his splendid news, although he has some way to go before he catches up with my wife and me.

How does the Financial Secretary intend to deal with the European Commission's ruling that dual fuel exemptions in the climate change levy constitute state aid, and the doubts that it has cast on the exemptions compatibility with environmental aid guidelines?

Mr. Boateng: Robustly. We are negotiating with the Commission, and the industry is involved in those negotiations, which are going well. We have a strong case, and we believe that our representations will be successful.

Mr. Tony Colman (Putney): Has my right hon. Friend held any discussions on the climate change levy with United States Senator James Jefford, who is the new chairman of the Senate Environment Committee? He wants the United States Government to re-engage with the Kyoto protocol negotiations. He is interested in the success of the implementation of the climate change levy by US businesses in the United Kingdom in improving energy use, increasing investment and reducing costs. Does my right hon. Friend agree with Senator Jefford that, although emissions trading may be a long-term answer, we need a regulatory regime, such as the climate change levy, and to work with business to deal with greenhouse gases in the short and medium term?

Mr. Boateng: I have had no discussions with the Senator, although I would like to. There is good news from the United States, where there is strong and growing support for Kyoto. There is every sign that President Bush understands the importance of the issue, although we have some disagreements about his approach to the Kyoto targets.

In introducing a package of measures on the climate change levy, we make the point that it is part of the answer, but that trading emissions also has a role to play. Our approach is balanced and retains a competitive edge for our industry while bearing down on carbon emissions.

Mr. Howard Flight (Arundel and South Downs): I congratulate the Chancellor on his good news. Should his lot be the same as mine, with four children to bring up, it will have a profound impact on his tax thinking in future.

Hon. Members know that there will be a windfall VAT gain of at least £30 million from the VAT levied on the total amount of energy bills, including the misguided climate change levy element. Will the Financial Secretary confirm that the windfill will not be recycled to business through the cut to employers national insurance?

Mr. Boateng: Windfall. The hon. Gentleman knows that Customs and Excise is considering the points that he made. When it has reached a decision on the advice it will tender to Ministers, I shall write to him about it. He makes an important point, but I stress that the climate change levy improves the competitiveness of industry because we have introduced a generous system of rebates and we are also providing support through national insurance employers contributions. That is good news, which is widely welcomed by industry, if not by Conservative Members.

International Development

2. **Kali Mountford** (Colne Valley): If he will make a statement on progress in recent G7 and G8 meetings on international development issues. [3321]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gordon Brown): At our meeting on 7 July, G7 Finance Ministers approved proposals which will be published tomorrow. They advance our commitment not only to debt relief but to halving global poverty by 2015.

A new global health fund to finance commodities and treatments has $1 billion, with the United Kingdom pledging $200 million to a successful fund. By the end of the Genoa summit, we expect the figure to be £1.5 billion.

Britain has also proposed a research and development tax credit for pharmaceutical company research into diseases such as TB, malaria and AIDS to end the position whereby 10 per cent. of research currently goes on diseases that affect 90 per cent. of the people. We expect pharmaceutical companies to develop clear, comprehensive, global, two-tier pricing, and give the global health fund and other legitimate purchasers deep discounts on the full range of drugs, treatments and vaccines for HIV-AIDS, malaria, TB and other killer diseases.

Kali Mountford: The House is aware of my right hon. Friend's long-standing commitment to reducing child poverty both in the United Kingdom and world wide. I am sure that we are all very happy to hear of his new

personal interest in the well-being of all children, and I am sure that everyone extends congratulations to him and his wife on their happy announcement.

Will he take the opportunity of the Genoa summit to build on the progress that has already been made in tackling child poverty? Does he also accept that, in addition to debt reduction, we really have to do more for children born with HIV-AIDS and for those who have very little access to education and a decent future? Will he take this opportunity to prepare for the United Nations September summit, a special session on children, and press our partners in the G7/G8 to prepare for it so that we can all do much more and increase our commitment to reducing child poverty?

Mr. Brown: I thank my hon. Friend and other hon. Members for their congratulations. I am pleased that, this morning at least, I am not answering questions on the children's tax credit or baby bonds; otherwise, I might have to declare an interest.

The message that must be sent out this weekend and running up to the 15 September children's conference, involving the United Nations and other agencies, is that we can tackle those huge problems only by global economic and social co-operation. Each year, 6 million people die unnecessarily from avoidable diseases—2 million from TB, 1 million from malaria, 3 million from HIV-AIDS—although it is possible to tackle those very major problems by using available pharmaceutical research and encouraging more research.

We intend not simply to push forward the global health fund, but, in 2002, to work with Canada, the G7 president, to make the education of children in the Commonwealth and elsewhere a central issue and to ensure that more resources, particularly to stop the charging for education, are made available. I also believe that we can make progress on reaching our other 2015 target, which is that every child has primary education in every country of the world.

Matthew Taylor (Truro and St. Austell): I congratulate the Chancellor on his news of the past few days; perhaps it will mean a speedy policy on the baby bond.

I commiserate with the shadow Chancellor on his bad news during the past few days. Conservative Members showed a remarkable lack of courage in not adopting a social liberal agenda, for which at least Liberal Democrat Members will be arguing.

Will the Chancellor take the opportunity of President Bush's visit to the United Kingdom today to ensure that although Bush may be moving away on Kyoto and on helping developing countries with alternative energy development, he will at least not renege on the commitment made by the previous President on international debt relief? Will the Chancellor, on his own account, also examine the tax relief that this country gives on bribes paid by British companies to foreign countries in the developing world? Will he bring that relief to an end?

Mr. Brown: We continue to push forward the agenda on debt relief and 23 countries are now receiving that. I believe that there is a common purpose among all the G7 countries, including those that were initially doubtful about the debt relief programme, to move the programme forward.

The global health fund will stand at $1 billion as we go into the Genoa summit. My own view is that it could increase to $1.5 billion. Although that money has been got together in only a few months, it must be the case that we should do more, particularly with countries outside the G7, so that we can have a wider and bigger fund with which to purchase commodities, help with the provision of treatments and make a difference in the attitude that will be taken by the pharmaceutical companies.

On the other questions of globalisation—

Matthew Taylor: Bribery.

Mr. Brown: As the hon. Gentleman knows, when we entered government we inherited a provision whereby tax relief was provided for bribes paid by British firms to gain contracts. We are tackling that and it will be removed. Equally, the codes of conduct that we are proposing within the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are designed to ensure that countries cannot expect to enjoy all the resources that come from participating in the global economy if they remain immune to action against corruption.

Therefore, in addition to the paper that we are producing this weekend, "Debt Relief and Beyond", I expect that progress will be made on all those fronts. However, a more important message has to go out from Genoa: only by co-operation among the nations of the world can we make the progress for social justice that is necessary.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is my right hon. Friend aware that during the recent election campaign some of the biggest cheers that we received when we travelled around many constituencies were for third world debt relief? Long may the policy continue of helping those starving kids and relieving AIDS in South Africa. Is that not in sharp distinction to one of those Tory grandees, a putative new leader of the Tory party, selling fags and spreading cancer around the third world?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend rightly points to the need to devote resources to tackling the problems of AIDS, TB and malaria, and that is exactly what we plan to do. We are introducing legislation on advertising of cigarettes and so on. On the question of third world debt, as I said, 23 countries are now receiving debt relief through an initiative that was benefiting only one country when we came to power. Many more countries could benefit from debt relief. However, seven of them are currently engaged in civil wars or conflict, mostly in Africa. What we want out of Genoa is another initiative that will help post-conflict countries, so that as soon as they are out of conflict and restructuring their economies we can make available the debt relief that they should have.

Mr. Michael Portillo (Kensington and Chelsea): I add my congratulations to the Chancellor and his wife Sarah. I must say that this news has brought great pleasure to me and also, I believe, to Lord Tebbit.

Will the Chancellor ensure that the resources that he has committed to relieving world poverty are used to the best effect? It seems to me that charities have the lowest running costs and that, typically, they work with the grain of local communities in poorer countries producing projects that local people support. In that context, is the Chancellor happy that only about one tenth of what the Government commit actually goes through charities? The Secretary of State for International Development has rightly imposed some conditions on the money that is going through the United Nations global health fund. Can the Chancellor say whether any of the other organisations through which we are putting money raise the same issues—that we want to bureaucracy to be cut and money to be delivered more effectively to poor people?

Mr. Brown: On behalf of all right hon. and hon. Members, I thank the shadow Chancellor for his contributions to the debates of this House over the past year as shadow Chancellor, but also over many years when he spoke from the Front Bench for the Conservative party, and for the contribution that he has made from the Front Bench to national life. While he knows better than anyone else in the House, I suspect, the vicissitudes of political life, all hon. Members have been struck by the dignified manner in which he accepted the events of this week and we all wish him well in whatever he seeks to do in the years ahead. During the past year he has made many controversial speeches as shadow Chancellor—almost none of them on economic policy.

I am grateful that he has concentrated on the issue of third world international development recently. I understand exactly what he is saying about ensuring that the money that is provided in international development aid and through other sources goes straight to the cause for which it is intended. He may note that the new fund dealing with vaccines, the GAVI fund, which is financed partly publicly and partly privately, has a very small administration and is getting the vaccines to the countries that need them. Modelled on that, the new global health fund that we are setting up this weekend will provide both vaccines and treatment, not just for HIV-AIDS but for TB and malaria. I hope that there will be an all-party consensus that we have to do more to tackle the problems of global ill-health and illiteracy.

I believe that it is possible that the United Kingdom can continue what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development, to her credit, has done and maintain Britain's lead in persuading other countries that they should contribute to the global health fund and set their sights on meeting the 2015 targets. I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention, particularly on this issue.

Mr. Portillo: I am grateful to the Chancellor for his personal remarks, as well as for that answer. Does he agree that, over many decades, one of the problems with international poverty relief has been that so much money from the international community has found its way into the sticky hands of dictators and some of their megalomaniac projects? Should not that money get through to building schools and hospitals, which are what people need? Does he share my shock at the fact that, over the past 30 years, people in Africa have been getting poorer, in contrast with the progress made in the rest of the world? Does he accept that there is a vicious circle of ignorance, poverty and disease? Will he use the opportunity of the Genoa summit to show the international community that, if we are to succeed in tackling poverty, education and health will be critical to people in developing countries?

Mr. Brown: I agree that we must do far more to root out corruption and to ensure that the money provided in international relief goes to the causes for which it is intended. To put the positive side, however, in contrast to the negative, when debt relief is provided, for example, to Uganda, it is on condition that the money goes into education and health. Uganda is now able to reduce its pupil-teacher ratio from 100:1 to 50:1, which is a considerable advance, and every primary school child will benefit from education in a classroom with a roof over their head.

Equally, in other countries, debt relief is now being provided only on condition that there is reform and that the money goes to health and education. The latest figures show that 40 per cent. is going to education and 25 per cent. to health. Considerable advances are being made. In Uganda, Malawi and other countries we have insisted that the additional money that we have provided for education is used to ensure that there is no charging. The fact that there are no charges for education has meant that the number of people enjoying primary schooling in Uganda and Malawi has gone up by 3 million. It is possible, by applying conditions to debt relief, to ensure that reforms are made.

I hope that the shadow Chancellor will continue to take an interest in these matters from the Back Benches. We all understood the difficulties that the Conservative party had in choosing between its three candidates. I suppose that he can say that he appealed to all thinking Conservatives, but there were just not enough of them.

Mr. Portillo: The Chancellor and I are slightly out of sync today, as I am now coming to the nice bit. I congratulate him on building on the work that was begun by John Major as Prime Minister. I hope that he will continue that work on behalf of all the parties in the House. We all recognise that Britain, as a relatively prosperous country, has special responsibilities to the world, and indeed a special privilege, because it is in a position to provide effective help. Even if it were merely a matter of national self-interest, which it is not, we should strive to reduce the poverty and eliminate the corruption that together are the causes of conflict, of untold misery and of the huge flows of refugees that we all then have to deal with.

There may be some Conservatives who say that charity begins at home, but even if that is so, it certainly should not end there. I congratulate the Chancellor on his work in this field, because I know that being able to do some good is the highest privilege that attaches to holding office, and if we are not here to do good, what, after all, is politics about?

Mr. Brown: The shadow Chancellor will be able to speak on these issues in the House over the next few years.

The pressure for action on debt and on illiteracy and ill-health has come not only from Members of Parliament—I acknowledge the work that hon. Members

of all parties have done—but from the general public. We all know that our churches, community groups and non-governmental organisations have been a powerful and constructive voice in pushing not only for debt relief but for action on the 2015 targets.

We have a unique situation in which the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations have agreed that it is their purpose to meet the targets of a two-thirds cut in infant mortality, the halving of poverty and having every child in primary education by 2015. This is a major statement of purpose by the world community, and I hope that we can continue to work with the churches and community organisations to make a reality of these bold, challenging, yet utterly necessary targets.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Coatbridge and Chryston): Was my right hon. Friend able to break away from his welcome celebrations last night to see John Pilger's programme on Carlton television on the subject of globalisation? Whatever our views on Mr. Pilger's individual style, does my right hon. Friend accept that the programme produced compelling evidence that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation have not yet moved towards the transparency and accountability that we all want? Given my right hon. Friend's authority because of his achievements on debt, will he continue to push forward with the Government's demand for reforms in those areas?

Mr. Brown: If I say that I saw Mr. Pilger's programme, my right hon. Friend may think that I was not celebrating last night. However, I did see the end of it and I disagreed with much of what I saw. The argument that the institutions that were set up in 1945 to maximise prosperity—of all people, not just some—are somehow the cause of our problems is completely wrong.

The World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations and the various institutions such as Unicef associated with the UN should be supported in what they do. In some cases, they need additional resources and, in many cases, they need to modernise, but by working through those institutions we can maximise prosperity and extend it into the poorest countries, in co-operation with their Governments.

We must not lose sight of the bold idea from 1945 that it is only through international co-operation that we can solve many of the problems of poverty in the world. I disagree with Mr. Pilger's main thesis that the institutions are somehow responsible for the problem. The challenge in the years ahead is to modernise and strengthen the institutions so that we can tackle ill-health, illiteracy and poverty.

Business Tax Burden

3. **Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East): If he will make a statement on the tax burden on businesses. [3323]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Andrew Smith): Information on receipts from different taxes and changes are included in the relevant issues of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Dr. Lewis: I thank the Chief Secretary for that singularly uninformative reply. Does he accept that the Confederation of British Industry has estimated that the tax burden on business has increased by £5 billion a year, and could that be the explanation for the fact that Britain has slipped in the ranking of most competitive countries in the World Economic Forum's league from fourth to ninth position?

Mr. Smith: The truth is that the Government have cut taxes on business, including a cut of 3 percentage points in the large and small companies rate of corporation tax and the introduction of the 10p starting rate, which—as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has said—will be expanded in the Budget next year to give more help to small businesses. The result is that corporation tax as a share of the gross domestic product has fallen under this Government from the 3.6 per cent. we inherited to 3.4 per cent. last year.

As for the CBI, Digby Jones, its director general, said in response to my right hon. Friend's enterprise statement on 18 June:

> "We are really encouraged by the commitment to make Capital Gains Tax more favourable to enterprise than in the United States. Together with the commitment to improve tax treatment for share options, this is a clear indication the Government understands the importance of business competitiveness in the global marketplace."

David Taylor (North-West Leicestershire): While I accept my right hon. Friend's point about the level of corporate taxes, does he accept that small and medium enterprises face a serious problem in relation to the level of business rates? I received today a letter from a small firm in my constituency that has moved to new premises and provided 150 new jobs. Its space requirements have not quite doubled but its rate bill has quintupled. Can my right hon. Friend work with other Ministers to examine the effect of that tax, which is long overdue for reform?

Mr. Smith: I shall of course examine carefully the points that my hon. Friend makes. There is always more we can do for small firms and we are looking at what that might be, but we have cut their average corporate tax bill by nearly a quarter. We have raised the threshold for mandatory audit, we have introduced the Small Business Service and we are simplifying the VAT regime. We also allow businesses to calculate their tax liability on the same basis that they need to provide figures for their company reports. As a consequence, there are now 170,000 more small businesses than when the Government came into office. We shall look at what we can do to give them more help, but the progress that has been made already should be recognised.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am sure that the Chief Secretary will appreciate my total commitment over many years to manufacturing industry, but I want to bring to his attention the plight of a textile company in the north-west. It is involved in a very competitive sector of manufacturing, and has spent more than £1 million on reducing the emissions into the environment that result from its manufacturing processes. Under the climate change levy, the firm will have to pay £85,000 a year. Does not the right hon. Gentleman believe that that is extremely unfair? Before he tells me about rebates, I must add that, unfortunately, the company is not eligible for a

rebate. It will therefore have to accept an additional tax burden of £85,000 a year. How would he explain that to the company?

Mr. Smith: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's commitment over many years to manufacturing industry, and the consistency and passion with which he has spoken on the subject under successive Administrations. The answer to his question regarding the firm in the north-west that he described is that we can build success for the future only through investment, by developing skills and by creating a generally low-tax environment for business that recognises the tough global competitive circumstances faced by such firms. No Government can guarantee the success of individual firms or sectors; we can only do our level best to create the best conditions for them to succeed against tough global competition. Opposition Members accept the Kyoto targets, but it is no good them willing the ends with regard to climate change if they are not prepared to grasp the means.

Debt Relief

4. **Mr. Michael Connarty** (Falkirk, East): What steps he is taking on debt relief in developing countries. [3324]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gordon Brown): Since Chad was accepted as the 23rd country on 22 May, 23 countries have now entered the debt reduction process, with debt cancellation now totalling $53 billion. Four more countries are expected to achieve debt cancellation in the next few months. Seven countries are prevented from doing so by internal conflicts.

Mr. Connarty: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. May I add my personal congratulations to the others that my right hon. Friend has received from his Scottish friends, and from Sarah's personal friends in Scotland?

Does my right hon. Friend think that what he has achieved in debt cancellation is undermined by the fact that many countries are burdened with commercial debts, rather than debts to Governments, with the result that a level playing field does not exist? Is any effort being made to try to stop the repatriation of so much money to commercial companies in the advanced part of the world? That would create a more level playing field in commercial terms for the countries that we, through the Government, are trying to help, and thus make it easier for them to escape indebtedness and poverty.

Mr. Brown: I thank my hon. Friend, and I acknowledge the work done in his area and throughout Britain by the churches and the non-governmental organisations to raise the issue of debt relief. There is an arrangement in the Paris Club for dealing with commercial debt, but most debt owed in Africa is owed to official sources. That is why our decision—which has been followed by most other major countries—to give 100 per cent. debt relief to those countries moving through the debt reduction process is of particular benefit to Africa.

Many of the countries involved wish to be able to borrow money in the future to pay for the infrastructure projects and the work in health and education that they want to undertake. They must be in a position to be able to do so. We do not want to put them in a position that means that they can never borrow again.

I share my hon. Friend's worries about the speed of the process, and the Government are to put forward new proposals at Genoa. We cannot deal only with the conflict countries; we must ensure that the debt relief being given at the moment is sustainable. That means that we have to look at the particular position of a few more countries. A number of countries are not applying for debt relief. Most of those that do apply will get it either this year or next, subject to the civil wars in those countries coming to an end.

Dr. Jenny Tonge (Richmond Park): I hate to dispel the warm glow in which I am sure the Chancellor is basking this morning, but does he agree that the debate about debt relief has clouded the point that if this country carries on increasing its aid budget in the way that it does at the moment, it will take 50 years to reach the United Nations recommended target of 0.7 per cent? What is he going to do about that, as it is so much more important?

Mr. Brown: First, the percentage is increasing and has increased over the last few years. It is rising to 0.31 per cent. and will then rise to 0.33 per cent and we will look at the matter again in the spending round. In our manifesto, we committed ourselves to substantial increases in international development aid, and we will look at that matter in the spending round decisions next year. I do not accept what the hon. Lady says. We are increasing the amount of aid, both in real terms—by about 50 per cent. over the last few years—and in terms of the percentage of national income.

There are many more things that have to be done. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development has not only set up a Department that leads the world, but one that has led the way in untying aid, which I hope that the hon. Lady agrees is important. My right hon. Friend has also called for an end to export credits involving arms and other unproductive expenditure being financed by the Exchequers of Britain and other countries. Equally, she led the way last week in the removal of subsidies for small arms. On all the issues, she and the Government are trying to lead the way.

On the 2015 targets—which I hope that the hon. Lady will also address when she looks at the issues—the global health fund and the initiatives next year on education are our means of moving matters forward so that we can meet those targets. We are increasing resources for overseas aid, and we are doing so sustainably. It is unfortunate that the Liberal Democrats all the time make new spending promises that they know perfectly well they cannot afford.

Mr. Andy Reed (Loughborough): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on his personal commitment to the work that has been done over the last few years, but does he accept that, unfortunately, some of the devil is in the detail? Has he seen the report from Jubilee Plus this week, which shows that, under the heavily indebted poor countries initiative, it is possible that some of the countries may not reach their growth targets, which would cause particular problems for those that try to exit the HIPC initiative over the next few years? Will he use his influence on the G7 and G8 to ensure that the details of the HIPC initiative deliver the poverty reduction that all of us in this House want?

Mr. Brown: I thank my hon. Friend for taking a long-term interest in the issues and the all-party work that has been done. There are six countries—Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda and Tanzania—in respect of which we are now working with the World Bank and the IMF because of the central issue of the sustainability of debt relief. HIPC must offer a sustainable exit from debt, and we will ensure that that takes place. That is why we are prepared to look at all means of doing that, and we will work with the international institutions to secure it.

I do not think that the reports published this week should get away from the central argument. It is only if we co-operate with other countries and work to strengthen the international institutions that we will make progress on the issue. The idea of some—that we could make any difference by abandoning the international institutions and retreating into isolationism or protectionism—is absolutely wrong. I believe that reform of international institutions is the agenda on which all those who believe in social justice should focus their attention.

R and D Tax Credit

5. **Dr. Vincent Cable** (Twickenham): What consultations he has had with business representatives on the proposed research and development tax credit. [3326]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gordon Brown): In 2001, we introduced tax credits for small firms' research and development. Consultation has now closed on extending a new tax credit to larger companies and we will make our views known in the pre-Budget report. Today we are also publishing a further consultation paper on the wider reform of corporation tax, including measures for intellectual property tax relief and capital gains relief for the sale of subsidiaries. The consultation period with corporations will last until the pre-Budget report.

Dr. Cable: Is the Chancellor aware of the strength of feeling among companies at the cutting edge of British technology that the Government's proposals as they stand—to give tax credits to new and incremental research and development—have two profound difficulties? The first is that they introduce a great deal of additional complexity into an already complex system. The second is that they introduce major distortions into business decisions by rewarding one type of research and development with tax credits and other forms not at all. Will the Chancellor say that he is still open to representations on reforming the proposals along those lines?

Mr. Brown: We are still open to representations. We have put forward a number of proposals to business so that we can increase the share of research and development undertaken in Britain. In Japan and America, it averages about 3 per cent. of national income. In Britain, it is about 1.8 per cent. We have to do more. The research and development tax credit for small firms costs us £150 million a year, but that system allows small firms to finance their research, even before they make profits. We are consulting companies about whether we should proceed with a similar system or with what we may call a relief for additional research. The hon. Gentleman should point out to the House that the proposal that he favours would cost several hundreds of millions of pounds more than the other proposal mooted in the document. In the Liberal Democrat manifesto, we counted 43 spending commitments that were not financed and that commitment was not in the manifesto, which brings it to 44. Somehow and sometime the Liberals will have to face up to the fact that they cannot keep promising money when they do not have it.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is crucial to assist with research and development to secure jobs in industry in towns such as Burnley if we are to tackle the sorts of problem that we faced in that town earlier this month?

Mr. Brown: I agree with my hon. Friend that manufacturing industry and the renewal of industry in areas such as his are crucial and part of the Government's policy. We have not only cut corporation tax and small business corporation tax—to 10p for smaller firms with profits up to £50,000—but introduced the research and development tax credit and made permanent capital allowances for manufacturing industry for small and medium-sized businesses. He will be interested to know that in the next few months, following our permission from the European Commission, we will be setting up regional venture capital funds from which businesses developing in the regions, including the north-west, can draw. That measure is in addition to the work that has to be done—I had a conversation with him yesterday about these matters—to improve the new deal and the facilities that it offers to people who are unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed, in some of our poorest communities. We are determined that in this Parliament we will take the additional action that is necessary so that no young person and no long-term unemployed person will go without the offer of a job.

Pensioner Taxation

6. **Mrs. Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham): If he will make a statement on the taxation of pensioners. [3327]

The Paymaster General (Dawn Primarolo): As a result of our policies on tax, seven out of 10 pensioners pay either no tax or pay at the 10p rate. Our personal tax and benefit changes mean that pensioner households will be £600 a year better off on average compared with 1997.

Mrs. Gillan: The hon. Lady's reply will be cold comfort for pensioners, as it does not reflect the reality. Will she admit that, under the Labour regime, pensioners have had more and more of their income taken in taxes? Will she also confirm that by 2003 more than half our pensioners will be subject to means-tested benefits for the minimum income guarantee and the pensioner credit? Is that Labour's way to ensure that pensioners, in the words of the Labour manifesto,

"have much to give to society"—

principally, it seems, through increased taxes?

Dawn Primarolo: I am glad that the hon. Lady is now concerned about pensioner poverty, bearing in mind the Conservative Government's record in office. The tax reforms and the introduction of the 10p rate, as well as the introduction of and rise in the winter fuel allowance

and the introduction of the minimum income guarantee, which puts in place a minimum income for the poorest pensioners, are assisting the Government to ensure that the resources that we have go to those in greatest need—the very poorest pensioners. I am sure that if she looks in detail at the proposals for the pensioner tax credit, she will agree that rewarding those pensioners who have saved through the credit is another way to tackle that poverty.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I thank the Government on behalf of the poorer pensioners in my constituency for taking their incomes up from £67 for single pensioners to £92. Does my hon. Friend agree that the scandal has been that those on small occupational pensions have been paying too much tax, and that the new pensioner credit is not coming in soon enough to help such individuals? What plans do the Government have to conduct an information campaign so that those hard-working individuals can receive their just reward and the tax rebate that they deserve?

Dawn Primarolo: As my hon. Friend knows, the minimum income guarantee will be raised again next year, guaranteeing an income to those poorest pensioners. He is right that we need extensive publicity to ensure that those pensioners who will be entitled to the pensioner tax credit can receive it. The Government continue to review their tax policy on those few pensioners who pay tax so that, where possible, they can be removed from the tax system and any rebates to which they are entitled can be paid as quickly and easily as possible.

Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): The biggest concern of any pensioner is the stability of their pension provider. Does the Minister recognise the concern and trauma of millions of Equitable Life policy holders and the failure of the regulatory authorities to protect their interests? In December 1998, the Treasury encouraged the Equitable to continue with its flawed strategy. Today, the Chancellor of the Exchequer declines to accept responsibility for that disastrous advice. This month, we discover that the Financial Services Authority did not even know that the Equitable was reviewing its financial position. Is it not time that the regulator started regulating and the Chancellor recognised that the buck stops with him?

Dawn Primarolo: It would be ridiculous on such an important issue for me to stand at the Dispatch Box and give answers that were not based on information and fact. As the hon. Gentleman knows full well, the FSA is preparing a report on the events leading up to the closure of Equitable Life to new business. When we see the report and have the facts before us will be the time to have the discussion.

Pension Funds

7. **Mr. Eric Illsley** (Barnsley, Central): What proposals he has to relax the Inland Revenue rules regarding the amounts of money which individuals can withdraw annually from pension funds. [3328]

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Ruth Kelly): The Government seek to help people to provide for their financial security and comfort in old age. Pensions should provide a secure income throughout retirement, guarding against the risk of savings running out. The Government keep the rules under review and remain open to suggestions of workable and affordable alternative methods for delivering a secure income in retirement.

Mr. Illsley: I welcome my hon. Friend's commitment that pension funds should be able to provide an income throughout retirement, but is she aware that, due to the lack of availability of gilts in this country, the fall in the value of some pension funds and the interaction of the Inland Revenue rules, the income for some pensioners who run their pensions in that way is falling year on year? Will she consider the impact of the Inland Revenue rules, which I understand were examined as recently as 1999, to see whether any adjustment can be made to prevent that fall in income?

Ruth Kelly: I presume that my hon. Friend refers to the current state of play on annuities. Annuities are specifically designed to fund a guaranteed income stream in retirement. Certain proposals have been made for their reform. The problem is that the proposals that we have received so far have severe drawbacks. They do nothing to help pensioners who have very small savings, and it is not clear that they would not be costly. However, I remain open to suggestions about how the regime could be reformed. If any hon. Members know of any proposals that are workable and affordable, of course I will listen to what they have to say.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): The hon. Lady will know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) has tabled a Bill on this matter. Second Reading is not until January, so I hope that the six months available can be used constructively to look again at the proposals of Dr. Oonagh McDonald on the draw-down of annuity by the age of 75. Many constituents of hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that that rule needs to be changed and is leading to gross injustice.

Ruth Kelly: I certainly understand the concerns that the hon. Gentleman has raised although I repeat that, at the moment, annuities are the only way of providing a secure income flow in retirement. Of course, we have to consider other proposals, and in the next six months, I hope that people will make serious proposals for reform. The hon. Gentleman proposed that we consider Dr. McDonald's suggestions, which are interesting but have cost implications. If annuities and savings funds became more flexible, it is of course possible that people would start to use them not only as savings vehicles for their future pension but also as inheritance vehicles. There is that risk, in which case the cost implications could be severe. However, as I said, I am interested in hearing sensible, efficient and workable proposals. If I can be shown that they are not costly, of course the Treasury will take them extremely seriously.

Barnett Formula

8. **Joyce Quin** (Gateshead, East and Washington, West): What plans he has to review the Barnett formula. [3329]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Andrew Smith): As my right hon. Friend knows, the Government's spending plans have been set down and agreed for the years until 2003-04, including spending allocations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Those allocations are governed by the statements of funding policy incorporating the Barnett formula, and that remains the Government's policy.

Joyce Quin: Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that, despite the welcome increases in public spending in the regions, the Barnett formula continues to be the focus of public concern and public attention, especially in the north-east of England? Indeed, the issue was raised several times during the general election campaign. Given the Government's commitment, which I very much hope that they will honour, to hold referendums on regional government in England, does he agree that we should grasp the opportunity to devise a long-term formula, more closely related to needs, which would benefit the whole of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Smith: My right hon. Friend refers to remarks made during the general election campaign and she will be aware of what the Prime Minister said. I have nothing to add to his words. However, for those who have concerns about the Barnett formula, I point out, first, that it is not the formula that is responsible for the inequalities in funding about which people are worried. Those are historic matters which, of course, the Barnett formula addresses. It is a convergence formula—something on which we receive representations from other parts of the United Kingdom.

Secondly and importantly, I am glad that my right hon. Friend welcomes the substantial increases in public expenditure and the benefits that they bring to the north-east and other regions. Money from, for example, the new deal, the working families tax credit and the child tax credit, the extra help for pensioners and the employment credit that will operate from 2003 give extra resources precisely to those areas that need them most, including of course the north-east.

Mr. Simon Thomas (Ceredigion): I welcome the new honesty from the Minister about the fact that the Barnett squeeze does exist in Wales and Scotland. What is the real justification for the formula, other than as a bad habit or for the avoidance of blood on the carpet? Does he realise that Wales, Sheffield, Cornwall and Liverpool will lose out in additionality from European funding until we get a better and more equitable funding regime in these islands? Is it not time to replace the Barnett formula with a new relationship between the nations and regions of these islands? Is he not enamoured of a needs-based formula for Wales and fiscal autonomy for Scotland?

Mr. Smith: I thought that the nationalists did not want a formula at all, but to be wholly responsible for raising and spending their own money. We have shown sensitivity to the particular needs of regions and countries. The hon. Gentleman refers to structural funding: in the case of Wales, we specifically made additional provision in recognition of the objective 1 funding. He should be thanking us for that, not complaining about it.

Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside): What mechanism does my right hon. Friend have for relating public spending to public needs in the English regions? Will he consider spending billions of pounds of public funds through the science research councils, especially in relation to the regional implications and the development of the knowledge economy, particularly in the north-west?

Mr. Smith: I was fortunate enough to launch our knowledge economy White Paper in the north-west, and I know how much of a contribution the investment in science is making there, building up clusters and building on the traditional strengths of industry in the region. There is innovation and new investment in pharmaceuticals and other sectors in which the north-west has a relative competitive advantage. We will build on that in the interests of my hon. Friend's constituents. Long-term unemployment in the region has dropped very sharply, thanks to the Government's initiatives. She asked what mechanisms we have for relating public expenditure to need; I think that the new deal is the best example.

Climate Change Levy

9. **Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York): If he will make a statement on the estimated revenue to the Treasury of the climate change levy from *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* agricultural firms. [3330]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Paul Boateng): The climate change levy will raise an estimated £1 billion in its first year, all of which will be recycled back to business through cuts in national insurance contributions and support for energy efficiency.

Although the levy is broadly revenue-neutral, it is not possible to say at this stage what the effects on any specific sector or industry will be. That will depend on several factors, including the future energy consumption of firms in the sector and employment levels in those firms, the number of energy-intensive firms in the sector that are eligible to receive a discount on the main rates of the levy by signing up to an energy efficiency agreement, and what use firms in that sector make of electricity generated from levy-exempt new renewable sources of energy and combined heat and power.

Miss McIntosh: I thank the Minister for that reply. Does he accept that the Government are discriminating between sites that are covered by integrated pollution prevention and control and those that are not? Does he accept that businesses are now the principal tax collectors in this country? What would he say to Chennell and Armstrong, a firm in my constituency, which will pay out £3,562 more in tax but receive a reduction in national insurance contributions of only £78?

Mr. Boateng: No. This is the Government who cut corporation tax and capital gains tax, and introduced generous capital allowances as part of the climate change levy. The hon. Lady should welcome all that, not criticise it.

Mr. Colin Challen (Morley and Rothwell): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best leader for the Conservative party would be Dr. Faustus, who believed that a short-term gain pays off with a long-term pain? What is the cost to the country of not leading in the development of new technology to combat climate change? What is the cost to the country of businesses suffering the effects of flooding and other consequences of extremely severe weather? All those costs are mounting, and if we do not deal with them, we will have a long-term pain.

Mr. Boateng: Given the record of Conservative Members, I do not think that Dr. Faustus would have got through the first round. *[Interruption.]* They don't like it up 'em. The whole House recognises that combating climate change and reaching the Kyoto targets are desirable objectives. This is a business-friendly tax, and one that the whole House welcomes, or ought to welcome, as it should welcome the good news that we are due to reach those targets, with 5 million tonnes of carbon saved by 2010.

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): Will the Minister look carefully at the impact of the tax in those areas that have been particularly affected by foot and mouth disease? Does he accept that in many of those parts of the country, any extra burden is crippling?

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Gentleman makes a very important point. We are concerned to make sure that in rural areas, particularly those affected by foot and mouth, Customs and Excise takes a sympathetic attitude to the problems experienced by farmers. We have not only made sure that energy-intensive parts of agriculture have access to the 80 per cent. reduction, but established a Customs and Excise national advice centre, which has a specific remit to give advice and help on claiming discounts, on collection arrangements, on other technical issues relating to relief and, importantly, on arrangements for deferring payment of VAT, where that will help.

Business of the House

12.30 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton): Will the Leader of the House please give us the business for the week after the recess?

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): The business for the first week after the recess will be:

MONDAY 15 OCTOBER—Second Reading of the Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill.

TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the European Communities (Finance) Bill.

Motion to approve the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 2001.

WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER—Third Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. John Bercow (Buckingham): Ghastly!

Mr. Cook: I knew that I would have the hon. Gentleman's support for that.

THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER—Opposition Day (2nd Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject or subjects to be announced.

FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER—Debate on drugs strategy on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

The provisional business for the following week will include:

MONDAY 22 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the Homelessness Bill.

Mrs. Browning: I thank the Leader of the House for that information. Before we discuss the business for the week following the recess, may I say that today should have been renamed "Gardeners' Question Time" because there are no fewer than 67 Government-planted questions on the Order Paper, no doubt in the hope that the answers would not be noticed by hon. Members who are tidying their desks and waiting to depart for the recess?

While I am on the subject of unfinished business and what hon. Members might notice in the next 24 hours, will the Leader of the House confirm that before the House rises tomorrow, the Government will have placed in the Vote Office the promised new ministerial code of conduct designed to prevent a repetition of the controversies that surrounded the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) and the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz)? As we understand it, it is to be accompanied by an inaugural code of conduct to govern Ministers' special advisers and spin doctors to stop the bullying of civil servants. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will reassure me that that document will be made available and not just slipped on to the shelves once the House has risen.

I also wonder whether the Leader of the House will arrange for the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions to come to the House in the week after the recess. The Prime Minister appointed Mr. Kiley during the election when there was no opportunity for us to discuss his decision. Yesterday, the Secretary of State sacked Mr. Kiley by press release. Again, the House has had no opportunity to become acquainted with the background and the reasoning behind that.

Perhaps the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions will deal with another matter when he comes to the House, which my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) raised with the Prime Minister yesterday. My hon. Friend expressed concern that the GNER east coast main line contract might be a short-term contract. In reply, the Prime Minister said:

"Some franchises may be short, while others may be longer. That is sensible, because it gives us the flexibility that we require. As for GNER and the east coast main line, that decision will be taken shortly."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 2001; Vol. 372, c. 286.]

So shortly was the decision taken that, no sooner had the right hon. Gentleman uttered those words than the Secretary of State announced—again, by press release—that the contract had been renewed for only two years.

Despite what the Prime Minister said yesterday, it is obvious that the Government have torn up their rail policy and delivered a slap in the face for the Strategic Rail Authority. Given that there are so many pressing issues for which the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions has responsibility, he should come to the House not just to make a statement, but for a whole afternoon.

Mr. Cook: First, on my hon. Friends' skills in gardening, I am repeatedly pressed in business questions to provide assurances that statements will be made while the House is sitting, not after it has risen. It is to my hon. Friends' credit that they have worked hard to ensure that their questions are answered while we are sitting.

On the ministerial code and special advisers, I am advised that the answer is yes; it will be published and be available to the House before we rise, and I shall seek to ensure that that takes place.

Mr. Kiley was appointed in the spring on the basis that he agreed that he would carry out discussions with the bidders on the public-private partnership plan and that he would try to seek agreement. That was the basis of his appointment, but three weeks ago, he said that he could not carry it out and could not deliver what he had agreed to deliver—an agreement with the contractors. It is well known that, this week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions received an approach from the former chairman of London Transport and a majority of the board, saying that they thought it impossible to work with Mr. Kiley. In those circumstances, my right hon. Friend had the choice of sacking the majority of the board or sacking Mr. Kiley, and I would not like to think what the House would have done if he had sacked the majority of the board.

On GNER, it is the case that because of the very substantial infrastructure works required following the Hatfield incident, it is not presently possible to agree with the bidders a long-term franchise of 20 years. That is still the aspiration of the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, but in the meantime, to provide continuity, he has extended the present franchise by two years to 2005, but I stress that the agreement to extend it is not simply a matter of the time in that agreement; there is also provision to upgrade the London-Leeds service, so that people can travel every

30 minutes, and for early placement of orders for a new fleet of inter-city trains and early investment in station improvements. All of those will be real gains for passengers and are a welcome result of the announcement that my right hon. Friend made the other day.

Finally, the hon. Lady will have noticed that the last Bill that I mentioned in the business statement was the Homelessness Bill, to which we shall return on the Monday of the second week after our return. She will also recall that I gave an undertaking to the House that we would not programme that Bill, to find out whether we could make progress by agreement. I am pleased to say that proceedings on the Homelessness Bill have been completed in Committee in advance of the date agreed. I welcome that, and provided that we continue to get that co-operation, we will be able, on a case-by-case basis, to consider whether programming motions are required.

Harry Cohen (Leyton and Wanstead): When we return after the recess, can we have an early debate about the London underground because one of Mr. Bob Kiley's persistent criticisms has been that the Government's PPP scheme obfuscates management? I should like to know what the role of London Transport is. Is it just a dog that barks to the Government's tune? What is its future? The infrastructure companies are very secretive. Transport for London, under Mr. Bob Kiley, will eventually control the underground, but only partially. The Government have a primary responsibility for the whole system, but are keeping it at arm's length. So can we have a debate to sort out who does manage the London underground?

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend cannot have it both ways; he cannot insist that we listen to the voice of London Underground and then complain when we listen to the majority of the London Underground board, who clearly told the Secretary of State that they could not continue to work with Mr. Kiley and did not think he could find a way forward. The answer to my hon. Friend's question is clear: at the end of the public-private partnership, London Underground and London Transport will manage the service; they will determine the service; and they will be responsible for safety.

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): That is waffle.

Mr. Cook: No, I am not waffling at all. The reality is that there will be a public service, publicly run by London Underground.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): In the light of this week's events, does the Leader of the House accept that Select Committees are only one way in which the House exerts its authority over the Executive and holds them to account, and undertakes proper scrutiny on behalf of the public? Does he accept that the Home Secretary's announcement of the crime figures today to the media and not directly to the House is not acceptable, as it does not give us an opportunity to question him on what is clearly a deplorable situation, especially in relation to violent crime and the clear-up rate? Does he also accept that for Members to be given a spinny document by the new Home Secretary entitled "Time to Deliver" today is totally inappropriate? With street crime as bad as it is, it should surely be "Time to Stand and Deliver".

Does the Leader of the House accept that there really should not be 50 different mini-statements by way of written answer on the last day before the summer recess?

The Leader of the House will be aware that the House has on the whole been able to maintain an all-party approach to events in Northern Ireland. Does he accept that the situation is very fragile at the moment and that peace in Northern Ireland is extremely delicately balanced? Will he give an assurance that, if the House is faced with a major change in the situation in Northern Ireland, it will be recalled?

Mr. Cook: I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's comments on the publication of crime statistics. Annual crime figures have repeatedly been produced in public when they are ready and are available for debate by the public as well as by Parliament. They have not been released in a statement to the House. As Leader of the House, I do not think that it would be possible to manage business if we had to have a statement for every annual publication of statistics.

On the substantive issue, let us not lose sight of the fact that the figures show that overall crime is down by 2.5 per cent., burglary is down by 8 per cent and vehicle crime is down by 7 per cent. It is true, as the hon. Gentleman says, that violent crime is up. It is up by 3 per cent., which is a lot less than the trend over previous years. Although any increase is too much, the trend is down. I hope that our efforts to reduce violent crime will achieve a decline, as there is in other crimes at the present time.

Obviously, if there is a serious situation in Northern Ireland, the recall of Parliament is an option for the Government, and Members can call for it. However, it would be a very unusual Leader of the House who gave a guarantee that the House would be recalled before it even adjourned.

Mr. Tony McWalter (Hemel Hempstead): Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is rather disappointing to see on today's Order Paper that the Science and Technology Committee is not to be constituted prior to the summer recess, especially given the Government's commitment to a knowledge-based economy, in which matters to do with science, engineering and technology should feature prominently? Is it his view that that Committee is not as important as others—or can he give some other reason?

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend will be aware that we have set up every other departmental Select Committee and, indeed, pretty well every other Select Committee of the House. Seventeen of them met yesterday. The sole reason why we have not been able to set up the Science and Technology Committee is that we do not have a satisfactory number of nominations to it. That matter is beyond the powers of the Leader of the House.

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): Why on earth have we not had a statement from the Prime Minister about Northern Ireland? Does it not seem odd, even to the Leader of the House, that there were protracted crisis talks last week but the House of Commons has not been informed of where we are, where we are going, what is going on, who said what and what the Government expect to happen? How can we possibly contemplate a summer

[Mr. Eric Forth]

recess when we have all been left in complete ignorance of what is going on and what the future holds? Please will the Leader of the House get the Prime Minister here tomorrow for an emergency statement?

Mr. Cook: Since the Prime Minister is due to attend the G8 summit tomorrow, I should have thought that most Members, if not the right hon. Gentleman, would attach greater importance to the agenda of reducing world poverty, launching a trade round—

Mr. Forth: No.

Mr. Cook: The right hon. Gentleman speaks for himself and says that he does not attach importance to poverty reduction, the world trade round or tackling the AIDS epidemic in Africa, with which my right hon. Friend will be dealing on Friday—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is no point in the right hon. Gentleman asking the Leader of the House a question and then shouting him down. What is the point of that?

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker.

The right hon. Gentleman perfectly illustrated why a statement on Northern Ireland at the present time might not help. He demanded to know who said what to whom. I cannot imagine a statement detailing that as anything other than disastrous in the context of talks that are continuing and will continue during the recess.

Mr. Tom Harris (Glasgow, Cathcart): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the increasing number of personal injuries resulting from the use of air rifles and air pistols? Is he aware that such attacks can often result not only in blindness and partial blindness but in permanent brain damage? Will he give Members an early opportunity to debate measures to regulate, if not prohibit, the use of those weapons?

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend has raised a serious issue and I fully understand his concern, which he has expressed to me privately as well as publicly. I can assure him that there will be many opportunities after we return from the recess to debate crime and criminal justice. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be able to make his comment in that context.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): In March, the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food told us that foot and mouth was under control. Yesterday, there were 10 confirmed cases. Will the Leader of the House review the information and advice given to farmers by the current Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and her Department about what they have to do in the course of this outbreak? Public footpaths are open, some through farmyards, yet farmers are told in a pamphlet and video issued by the Department to wash their wellies and change their overalls between every task. Public footpaths through farmers' own farmyards are open, yet if their children visit neighbouring farms, they are told to change their clothes. What is the point of giving that kind of information and still saying that public footpaths have to be open?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the statement made yesterday about footpaths provides that some of the counties most affected, such as Cumbria and Devon, can retain blanket bans. In other counties where blanket bans have been removed, it remains open to local authorities to close individual footpaths; indeed, they would be expected to close footpaths within 3 km of any affected farm. It is important that farmers and others involved in the livestock industry observe every possible biosecurity measure because they handle animals and are therefore at greater risk than people walking across the land.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 23, which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Savidge)?

[*That this House expresses concern at President Bush's intention to move beyond the constraints of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in developing missile defence; and endorses the unanimous conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, which recommended that the Government voice the grave doubts about NMD in the UK, questioned whether US plans to deploy NMD represent an appropriate response to the proliferation problems faced by the international community and recommended that the Government encourage the USA to explore all ways of reducing the threat it perceives.*]

To date, 264 Members of Parliament have expressed deep concern about the United States proposals to tear up the anti-ballistic missile treaty and deploy the national missile defence system. Given that the Prime Minister is today meeting President Bush and that the matter will no doubt be discussed, does he have any intention of coming to the House and making a statement about our position before we go into recess?

Mr. Cook: I have no doubt whatever that that matter will be on the agenda when the Prime Minister meets President Bush and that they will be asked about it when they conclude their discussions. The American Administration are not proposing, as my hon. Friend put it, to tear up the anti-ballistic missile treaty. What they are doing, and what we have encouraged them to do, is have a dialogue with Russia to see if they can find an alternative strategic framework. We should encourage the United States and Russia to reach that agreement; I would not rule out the possibility that it can be reached.

Mr. Andrew Turner (Isle of Wight): Could the Leader of the House invite the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to come to the House and explain why there is such discrimination against small livestock farmers? When they are taking small loads of animals to slaughter they have to have them inspected twice by vets, whereas large farmers can take their animals straight to slaughter and are subject to only one inspection.

Mr. Cook: I shall certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the hon. Gentleman's

observation about the differential impact on smaller farmers. I can well understand the familiar problem that smaller enterprises perhaps find it more difficult to meet the burdensome requirements which are very important at this time of biosecurity measures.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister shares the concern that has been expressed in the House about the stubborn tail-end of the disease and the failure to achieve the point, which we all want to get to, of total eradication. He has invited my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to look at what further measures we might take to speed up the eradication of the disease.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 149, which was tabled my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings)?

[*That this House recognises that the 50 per cent. clawback by the Government of any surplus of the Mineworkers' Pension and Superannuation Scheme is grossly unfair; and invites the Government and the trustees of the Pension and Superannuation Scheme to enter into negotiations and agree upon a more just appointment of the surplus and so enhance the pensions of thousands of retired mineworkers and widows.*]

The early-day motion draws the attention of the House to the fact that the Treasury still receives half of all the surpluses from the mineworkers' pension scheme and the staff superannuation scheme. My right hon. Friend may well be aware that the combined value of those two schemes is about £25 billion. The average pension paid to a member of the mineworkers' pension scheme is about £36, and 28,000 beneficiaries to the scheme receive about £10. Will my right hon. Friend therefore urge the Treasury team to meet the administrators of the scheme as soon as possible to review the 50 per cent. take with a view to devising a procedure that will make more money available to those beneficiaries at the bottom of the pile?

Mr. Cook: I fully understand my hon. Friend's anxiety and I know that there are hardship cases such as those that he mentioned. The original bargain between the Treasury and the miners' pension scheme was that the Treasury would guarantee that pension payments would increase in line with inflation even if there was a deficit in the scheme. As my hon. Friend knows, there is currently a healthy surplus in the scheme, which means a substantial accrual rate to the fund year on year.

The other side of the bargain is that, in return for the guarantee in case of a deficit, the Treasury has the right to take up to 50 per cent. of any annual increase in the surplus. However, I full understand my hon. Friend's point. He knows that the trustees are currently reviewing the scheme. The Government are awaiting the outcome, which we are willing to discuss with trustees when we receive the review.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The Leader of the House knows that the Prime Minister is expected to complete a set of proposals with the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic next week. The House will be in recess, and the right hon. Gentleman may be aware of the rumour that the information will be provided only to selected individuals. Will he ensure that it is published so that all hon. Members can see the proposals as soon as they are completed?

Mr. Cook: I am confident that, in the event of the completion of talks with all parties—I hope that they will be successful—the outcome will be made publicly available. Even if we were minded otherwise, any agreement between all parties would become public knowledge quickly and loudly.

However, I cannot give a commitment that my right hon. Friend will disclose the outcome of talks with any one party, whether the Prime Minister of Ireland or one of the Northern Irish parties. Any such outcome is sensitive to trying to achieve an overall agreement. We all support that.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the Leader of the House make time when we return for a debate on the role of Select Committees? They are Committees of the House and their chairmanship is a matter for hon. Members. It is wrong for Government Whips to insist on a named individual being Chairmen. They may make suggestions but the chairmanship should be up to Select Committee members.

Mr. Cook: We have not been short of opportunities to debate Select Committees this week. Indeed, we have another debate on them today. However, the Modernisation Committee—

Mr. Forth: Oh, no!

Mr. Cook: I stress to the right hon. Gentleman that there is no point in the House asking for proposals and then objecting to the Committee that is plainly the logical body to introduce them.—[HON. MEMBERS: "He wants more."] I am not sure that the right hon. Gentleman wants more Select Committees. However, if he wants Select Committees whose members are chosen transparently and independently, he should welcome the fact that that is the first priority for the Modernisation Committee. I hope that we can present a report shortly after the recess.

Mr. Owen Paterson (North Shropshire): Yesterday, the Prime Minister hid behind the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and stated that rural people had not demanded a full public inquiry. Does the Leader of the House understand that so many sectors of the rural economy have been devastated by foot and mouth that the countryside will accept nothing less than a full, public inquiry under the independent, impartial chairmanship of a judge?

Mr. Cook: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not hide behind the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons—[HON. MEMBERS: "He did."] No, he did not. He accurately reflected its statement, in which it made it plain that it favoured an inquiry that resembled the one that followed the last outbreak of foot and mouth, rather than the protracted public inquiry into BSE.

It is worth while reflecting on the reasons for the royal college's view. It wants any lessons to be learned and any conclusions to be drawn as expeditiously as possible through a proper, full inquiry. As the House knows,

[Mr. Cook]

a public inquiry takes years. It is a matter of judgment whether we want to wait for years before learning the urgent lessons of the recent outbreak.

David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to his comments of a few moments ago, could my right hon. Friend give an indication of when it is likely that the Modernisation Committee will present proposals on changes in decisions on Select Committees membership? It would be useful to have a debate on that subject later this year. Is he aware that many of us are encouraged by the fact that the Government seem to have learned the lessons from Monday—unlike the last Tory Government, who never learned the lessons from 1992 when they prevented the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) from being reappointed to the Health Committee?

Mr. Cook: I congratulate my hon. Friend on having made the second mention of the Modernisation Committee, thereby obliging the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) to leave the Chamber.

On the question of a timetable, I think that the best I can do for my hon. Friend is to give an assurance that we will bring one forward as quickly as possible. How quickly that is depends of course on how quickly we can establish agreement within the Committee. However, we have agreed to meet in September to consider the matter. If we make good progress at that meeting in September, I would hope that we can bring forward a report early in our proceedings after the recess.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Sleaford and North Hykeham): May I reinforce the request by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) for a statement or a debate on the east coast main line? Does the right hon. Gentleman understand the dismay at the decision not to grant a long-term franchise? Does he realise that a two-year extension is bound to put back the date when we will see continuing investment of a substantial type, and that only the grant of a long-term franchise will really provide the basis for continuing large investment in an overcrowded line?

Mr. Cook: There is nothing between the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the Government on whether there should be a long-term franchise; we would prefer a long-term franchise. The reality is that so much infrastructure work is required post-Hatfield that it was not practical to reach an agreement with bidders on the basis of the current state of the infrastructure and the work that is required to it. That is the reason, and the only reason, for the two-year delay.

GNER is of course one of the operating companies. It is itself, therefore, very much responsible for the rolling stock, but not for the track. A two-year period should not of itself inhibit investment in rolling stock, as any successful bidder thereafter will be obliged to take over that rolling stock.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Did my right hon. Friend hear the exchanges in Treasury questions on the Barnett formula? If he did, he would be aware that there are calls from both sides of the House for the system of funding the regions and nations of the United Kingdom to be renewed and reviewed. May we have a debate on the matter immediately after the recess, so that the House can help the Government to take the matter forward and we can introduce a system that is based on real need and fairness?

Mr. Cook: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for his offer of help in taking the matter forward. However, he will be aware that the Government have repeatedly said that we have no plans to review the Barnett formula.

Mr. David Heath (Somerton and Frome): Will there be an opportunity for the House to discuss—it would be particularly appropriate now as President Bush is in the country—the situation of my constituent Mr. Steve Morgan of Frome, an experienced journalist who accompanied the Greenpeace demonstration against the star wars test and is now facing charges in Los Angeles, subject to a minimum five-year prison sentence for photographing a peaceful demonstration? Will there be an opportunity for the Foreign Secretary to say what consular support is being given to Mr. Morgan and what representations have been made at the highest level for his immediate release?

Mr. Cook: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that his constituent is getting full consular support. We have been in contact with him and the other UK nationals involved since the day of their arrest. We have also been in contact with their lawyer. We will continue to do all we can to provide consular support to him. I know from my previous work at the Foreign Office that it would be counter-productive for us to intervene politically in what is a judicial matter, but all possible consular support will be given.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Government's plans to part-privatise air traffic control are rapidly falling apart? It looks as though the income generated from the sale will not even cover the inherited debt of the National Air Traffic Services. Can we have a ministerial statement in our first week back giving us a progress report and looking at the options on how we can dig ourselves out of this fiasco?

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend will be aware that there is a delay in the bid coming from the consortium. We understand that the delay reflects some financial issues which plainly have to be resolved to the satisfaction of the bidder. However, we expect the bid to proceed and the process to continue. I am sure that it is a matter on which right hon. and hon. Members will wish to table questions when we return.

Pete Wishart (North Tayside): Regardless of what the Leader of the House said earlier, we had an admission from the Treasury this morning that the Barnett formula is indeed a convergence formula. The Government have admitted to the existence of the Barnett squeeze. Will the Leader of the House respond to that announcement by ensuring that there is an early debate on the subject so that we can examine this admission and the effect that the Barnett squeeze will have on Scottish public services.

Mr. Cook: The Barnett formula reflects population changes. There is no way in which the Treasury or anyone

else can protect any area from a change in the population base on which the Barnett formula is calculated. I am wearily resigned to the fact that this is an issue that we will hear much about when we return and I have not the slightest doubt that it will be repeatedly ventilated in the Chamber by people on both sides of the argument.

Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 72 on women in Parliament?

[*That this House believes that a democratically elected Parliament should seek to reflect the make-up of its population; notes that while women make up 51 per cent. of the UK population, only 18 per cent. of elected honourable Members are women; considers such an imbalance to be unacceptable in the 21st century; welcomes the Government's promise in the Queen's Speech to draft legislation to enable political parties to take positive action in the selection of women as parliamentary candidates; and urges the Leader of the House to bring forward the legislation as soon as possible to ensure the selection of many more women candidates for the next general election.*]

In two weeks it has attracted the signatures of more than 100 Members representing five different political parties. Will my right hon. Friend join me in deploring the fact that only 18 per cent. of elected Members are women and can he tell us when he might find an opportunity to introduce legislation that would enable political parties to make some attempt to tackle that democratic deficit?

Mr. Cook: I fully share my hon. Friend's concern at the relatively small number of women in Parliament and the fact that it has declined rather than increased at the last election. I would like us to take measures that would give a better prospect of the increase in women in Parliament and make sure that this democratic Chamber fully represents all of Britain. In respect of the legislation to which my hon. Friend refers, I cannot introduce legislation that does not exist. I will look sympathetically at timetabling a Bill if one can be introduced soon after the recess, but at the present time we await confirmation that such a Bill is ready.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Christchurch): When can we have a debate about the Government's home energy efficiency scheme which has failed so miserably and has caused pensioners in my constituency to wait more than a year to get replacement boilers? Will the Leader of the House ensure that the questions that I tabled and that have received holding answers are answered extensively before the end of the week? Written questions are one of the means by which we can hold the Government to account to some extent. Can the right hon. Gentleman ensure that when the House returns all Departments are strongly advised to reply to them within a reasonable time scale? At the moment the standard of Departments is deteriorating badly.

Mr. Cook: I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall look into his question about responses to written questions. I very much hope that all Departments will seek to clear all written questions before the House concludes its work for the summer. That would be a normal standard to expect. The home energy efficiency scheme is a matter for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and I shall convey what the hon. Gentleman has said to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I would stress, however, that the United Kingdom has done well in making sure that energy efficiency is applied across our economy, and to our homes and transport. That is why we are well ahead of the Kyoto targets and are one of the leading nations in the world in making reductions in greenhouse gases.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I note that the first debate after the recess will be on the Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill. There is a lot of disorder and dismay in my constituency about the ownership of Carlisle United, which is owned by Michael Knighton, of whom hon. Members may have heard. Three weeks away from the beginning of the season, we do not have 11 full-time footballers, we do not have a manager and we do not have any money. The Football League and the Football Association know about the problems that Carlisle United is facing and are refusing to intervene. My only concern is that when we come back in October Carlisle United will no longer exist. However, I should like to be able to move an amendment to the Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Cook: I am humbled to say that I am unable to promise either a ministerial statement or Government legislation to save Carlisle United. My hon. Friend makes his case forcefully, and I am sure that he has ventilated an issue of deep concern to his constituents and his local press. I am very pleased that he will have an excellent platform on which to repeat his concerns when we resume, on the first day back.

Mr. John Bercow (Buckingham): I hope that the Leader of the House will bear up stoically and with fortitude under the burden of being deprived of our convivial company over the next three months.

Can we please have an urgent statement in Government time on the extraordinary decision of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to transport large quantities of ash hundreds of miles from Newcastle to the Shanks and McEwan landfill site at Calvert in my constituency? Ought not the Secretary of State to tell us why it was sensible to transport that ash hundreds of miles from an infected area to an area thus far, thankfully, uninfected with foot and mouth? Would it not be useful for her to tell me how it was proper and courteous of the Department to inform me of the involvement of my constituency in this worrying matter only on the day on which the first transportation took place?

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow) for his concern about my being able to stand tall and survive the absence of his company and that of other hon. Members. Let me say to the hon. Gentleman—no, on this last occasion, I shall call him my hon. Friend—that in Italy I shall say daily to my wife, "I wonder what the hon. Member for Buckingham is getting up to in my absence."

I will draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and press her on the importance of providing prior notice to Members of Parliament.

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Many of us are heavily dependent on mobile phones for communicating with our friends, our offices and our constituents, particularly over the summer holidays, so can we have an early debate on the inadequacy of the service provided by mobile phone companies in large areas of Britain where it is impossible to receive a signal? Vodafone has spent millions of pounds on buying a German company and provided £800 million of share options to its chief executive yet has written to me to say that it cannot afford to spend money on increasing its coverage in parts of Wales.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend speaks for the whole House, in that we have all had the experience, somewhere in Britain—often in our constituencies—of being unable to get the connection that we need. I am sure that her point will have been suitably logged by those at Vodafone who monitor our proceedings, and I hope that she will be hearing from them shortly.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): The Leader of the House will be aware that by the time we return we will not have had a debate on defence procurement for almost a year. In view of the grave decisions taken recently by Her Majesty's Government, is not a debate long overdue on Bowman, on which we shall have an announcement today; on the cancellation of the future aircraft system for the Royal Air Force; on the possibility that the new aircraft carrier is to be put out to tender to foreign yards; and on the loss of 1,000 jobs on the Clyde following the type 45 order? Is it not high time that the Government faced up to their responsibilities and involved the House in those important matters?

Mr. Cook: In fairness to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, he made a well-attended statement on the type 45 destroyer on which he took many questions from both sides of the House, and he is about to make a statement on Bowman. That is two discussions in the House on defence procurement in two weeks. I do not think either that the House can be accused of failing in its job of scrutiny or that my right hon. Friend can be accused of failing in his job of informing and making announcements to the House.

Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): What is the expected time of arrival of the British Overseas Territories Bill from the House of Lords? It is a welcome measure, but it is drawn very narrowly in relation to the important issue of citizenship. I am somewhat disappointed that it does not also embrace the question of representation, a concept that was canvassed by Baroness Symons before the Foreign Affairs Committee. For example, it was mooted that overseas territories might have access to the House and be able to petition it at the Bar. Should not the Government reflect, before they are arraigned before a court, on the fact that the existing representation for the citizens of our overseas territories is deficient in relation to the European convention on human rights? This is ultimately their Parliament, and we will not have full adult franchise until the British subjects peppered around the globe have representation here.

Mr. Cook: I stress to my hon. Friend that the British Overseas Territories Bill fulfils an undertaking that we gave in the last Parliament to extend British citizenship to all those in the overseas territories who wish to take it and who fulfil the residency requirements. That was welcomed in the overseas territories, especially but not only in St. Helena, where people felt a sense of injustice that they had lost their rights to British citizenship. This is an important Bill which fulfils our part of a bargain that we made with the Governments of the overseas territories that they would in turn take tougher action to ensure that they had stringent financial measures in place that reflected the international agreements we had made in their name.

On the wider question, we should reflect carefully before taking the steps that my hon. Friend suggests. It is an important principle—and important politically—for the residents of the overseas territories that they are self-governing and only involved with the UK to the extent that we handle their external affairs, defence and international obligations. We must be careful not to take any steps to erode their rights of self-government, which might turn out to be unpopular in the overseas territories.

Mr. Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale, West): The Leader of the House will know that the Government have confirmed that they intend to close two transplant units in April 2002. The hospitals at Wythenshawe in Birmingham and in Sheffield have been left with an uncertain future for a year. It is a source of great disappointment to those hospitals and the many thousands of transplant patients who depend on them that we still have not had a clear statement from the Government on what their recommended decision will be. Can we have an urgent statement and, for the sake of those hospitals and the people they serve, learn the Government's intentions, so that proper preparations can be made in time before April next year?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman is right that the concentration of transplant facilities has been under review for some time, and I stress that it is in line with sound medical advice and practice to ensure that adequate specialisation is focused on one site and is not dissipated too widely. I am not aware of the Department of Health having reached a decision on the local consultations or whether it has received a view from the local health authorities, but I shall ensure that if any announcement is made during the recess the hon. Gentleman is informed, preferably in advance.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): Given the huge scale of the Government's achievements, can my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House explain why the Government have discontinued their annual report? Is there not a case for having a debate, perhaps when we return from the recess, about a possible role for the Office for National Statistics, which could publish a report independently of the Government that would look back to the manifesto commitments that were made?

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarkably loyal opening line. I have given several assurances that I shall write to fellow Ministers and I shall certainly write to the Whips to draw attention to my hon. Friend's opening sentence. Whatever we politicians might imagine, the outside world would regard it as strange if having had a general election only a few weeks ago we were suddenly to produce an annual report going back

well before the election. The people have had the opportunity to reach a verdict on our performance in the previous Parliament, and I am happy to say that the result was a resounding success for the Government.

Sir Robert Smith (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine): As the Leader of the House will know, my constituents will be concerned about the east coast main line, which does not, as is often thought, end at Edinburgh but carries on to Aberdeen. In his answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg), the right hon. Gentleman gave an assurance that the franchisee, GNER, would be able to purchase rolling stock despite the uncertainty. Does he recognise, however, that the type of rolling stock required may depend on the type of track improvements that are decided on? Given that uncertainty, will he ask the Secretary of State to see whether he has any powers under section 56 of the Railways Act 1993 to underwrite the purchase of that rolling stock, so as to remove the uncertainty and ensure that at least some of the improvements come to the line as soon as possible to benefit our constituents?

Mr. Cook: I am not sure that I would encourage the hon. Gentleman to hope for an underwriting of costs by the operating company, but he has highlighted a problem associated with giving a 20-year franchise at the present time. The actions of any operator, including GNER, depend on the state of the track, which is why a two-year extension has been granted.

I am well aware of the line to which the hon. Gentleman refers. It is one of the most attractive lines in the United Kingdom, and I hope that it will soon be among the best.

Paul Flynn (Newport, West): As a reforming and modernising Leader of the House, does not my right hon. Friend think that the debate on drugs to be held in October would be far more valuable if a motion were tabled on which the House could vote? The "World at One" radio programme has announced the result of its survey of opinion among hon. Members. It found that, of the hon. Members surveyed, four out of five want there to be a royal commission on drug use, because they think that the present drug laws perversely increase drug harm and are unenforceable.

Mr. Cook: I note what my hon. Friend says, although I would not wish to adopt the innovation of "World at One" surveys becoming the basis on which the House reaches a decision. At the present stage of the debate for which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has called, it is right that the House should have an open-ended debate in which hon. Members can express their opinions freely, without being polarised by a substantive motion and an amendment. That is appropriate for this stage of the debate, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will take part in the debate in October.

Dr. Julian Lewis (New Forest, East): May we have a statement from the Foreign Secretary on the Government's attitude to the atrocious behaviour of the Russian army in Chechnya? That army is not merely in combat with guerrillas, but is perpetrating gross human rights abuses against the civilian population. If we cannot have a statement, may we at least have an indication of whether the Prime Minister will take the opportunity, when he meets President Putin, to raise these terrible issues?

Mr. Cook: There have been exchanges in the House on this matter on many occasions in the two years since the invasion of Chechnya. There have also been many exchanges on the matter between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Foreign Office representatives and their opposite numbers in the Russian Government. I fully share the hon. Gentleman's concern about human rights abuses in Chechnya, and I have often impressed on the Russian Foreign Minister the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the public in the effort to isolate people from the guerrillas. We shall continue to urge that view on the Russian Government.

Mr. Bob Blizzard (Waveney): My right hon. Friend may remember that, in April, the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions announced that £5.5 million in assistance would be given to fishing communities, to be delivered through the regional development agencies. Will he confirm that the Department of Trade and Industry is now responsible for that initiative? Will he ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement on the methodology used to divide that sum between the regions containing fishing communities?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the apportionment should reflect the size of the fishing communities in each region? The bigger the fishing industry in an area, the more local economies have been dented, and the more assistance is needed. I have found no evidence of that thinking in the figures that I have seen regarding the apportionment of the money, so I should be grateful for any help that my right hon. Friend can give me.

Mr. Cook: I understand my hon. Friend to be correct in saying that the matter now comes within the scope of the Department of Trade and Industry. He makes an interesting point about the way in which the compensation scheme is distributed among communities that have been involved in fishing, and I shall be happy to draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Miss Anne McIntosh (Vale of York): Is the Leader of the House aware that yet another case of foot and mouth disease has been confirmed in Vale of York today? Will he take this opportunity to impress on the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that this is not the most appropriate time to revoke the blanket closure of footpaths in north Yorkshire? Will he also investigate the failure of that Department's officials to respect the biosecurity rules that the Department set out? The experience in Vale of York is that farmers have been ruthless in applying those rules, but that the Department's officials have been less so.

Mr. Cook: I am happy to confirm that, in making her announcement today, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State confirmed that she agreed with north Yorkshire's proposals temporarily to retain closures in parts of the county. Therefore, the immediate threat that the hon. Lady apprehends does not exist and north Yorkshire can continue with blanket closures for the time being. As I

[Mr. Cook]

said earlier, it is a source of disappointment to Members on both sides of the House that the tail of this outbreak is proving so stubborn and that it is taking so long to achieve our aim of complete eradication. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has asked us to examine what further steps can be taken to achieve the goal of no further outbreaks of the disease.

Mr. John Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 134?

[That this House congratulates Barry Town Football Club on their outstanding victory over FC Shamkir in the first leg of the Champions League; recognises the achievement of a two goal advantage for the second leg and only the second ever win in this competition for a League of Wales team; appreciates the contribution made by goalkeeper Tim Clarke in his debut match; and wishes the team all the best for the return match in Baku Azerbaijan, next week.]

It has been signed by Members on both sides of the House and me. Barry Town won the second leg of its champions league tie in Azerbaijan, against all the odds. It was a stunning victory. Although I appreciate that my right hon. Friend probably will not be able to find time for a full debate on this success, will he inform his right hon. Friends of this result, join me in congratulating these giant slayers and wish them all the best in the next round against Porto in Portugal?

Mr. Cook: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating his local team, and I assure him that I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to this signal success of British sporting endeavour abroad. I will have to make a particular point of attending the debate on the Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill when we return, which plainly will be very interesting.

Dr. Evan Harris (Oxford, West and Abingdon): The Leader of the House has mentioned the importance of fighting the worldwide epidemic of HIV. He will be aware of the growing problem in this country, where new HIV cases last year totalled nearly 3,500—the highest-ever incidence of new HIV infection. The picture is similar with gonorrhoea, syphilis and chlamydia among young people.

In spring 1998, the Government promised an HIV strategy for the autumn. In spring 1999, they promised a sexual health strategy for the year 2000. In spring 2000, they promised an integrated strategy for spring 2001, and a draft strategy for autumn 2000: nothing has appeared. Nearly six months ago, the Government said that a strategy would be published shortly, and people were expecting it to be published today. It has not been published.

The Leader of the House is a man of the world. Perhaps he can tell his more coy and bashful colleagues that they must stop behaving like giggling schoolboys and be prepared to tackle the sexual health problems affecting this country. The strategy must be published so that young people in this country can be protected from further infection.

Mr. Cook: Coy and bashful are not words that I would associate with any hon. Member of this House. I shall meet the Minister with responsibility for public health in an hour's time and I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to her attention. This is a serious issue and there is no doubt that countries that have run vigorous public campaigns of information and warning have coped best with the epidemic.

On the forthcoming G8 meeting and the action being taken in Africa, we hope to confirm in Genoa that $1 billion will be available to combat the spread of AIDS and other diseases, such as tuberculosis, in the poorer parts of the world. It is important for those countries that we take that step, but it is also important for us, because until we tackle the worldwide epidemic there can be no insularity for ourselves.

Mr. Stephen McCabe (Birmingham, Hall Green): After references to Barry Town and Carlisle United, I am tempted to make a special plea for Greenock Morton, but perhaps not now.

On a serious note, does my right hon. Friend welcome the announcement from the Japanese Environment Minister, Yoriko Kawaguchi, that her Government will sign the Kyoto agreement? Does that mean that the outstanding obstacle is now the attitude of the American Administration? May we have an early debate on this and the other aspects of the so-called special relationship that many of us fear are looking increasingly bad for our health?

Mr. Cook: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments on Morton. I should take this opportunity, perhaps in sheer self-defence, to congratulate Livingston football club on its promotion to the premier division—it is long overdue.

On Kyoto, my hon. Friend raises a serious issue that will be at the heart of the discussions between President Bush and the Prime Minister today. We have given a commitment that, with our European colleagues, we will try to ensure that the Kyoto protocol comes into existence. To achieve that, we need the support of other countries such as Japan, and we are working to get that support in Bonn at present. I hope that we will be successful when that conference reconvenes again in November in Marrakesh. On the wider question, I have never taken the view, either as Leader of the House or Foreign Secretary, that the House is short of opportunities to explore and discuss the special relationship.

Mr. Gwyn Prosser (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on channel tunnel safety? Is he aware of reports that the French authorities continue to arrest as many as 250 would-be illegal immigrants at Coquelles every night, that dozens are still getting through and that they often end up in my constituency? Those desperate people are resorting to desperate measures. There have been many serious injuries and, sadly, four fatalities. Will my right hon. Friend find time for us to debate such matters and to review channel tunnel security?

Mr. Cook: I am very much aware of the problem to which my hon. Friend rightly draws attention. It is, of course, of national and not only local concern, important though it is in his constituency. We have had dialogue with the French authorities on the problem, particularly at Calais. I am pleased to say that we are enjoying good

co-operation from the French police. Together, I hope that we will be able to secure our goal, which is to ensure that immigrants who come here illegally are halted as soon as possible at the far end of the tunnel.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff, West): Will my right hon. Friend make time for a debate on cremation charges for very young children? Is he aware of the case of my constituents, Rose and Philip Jones, whose stillborn baby Lisa was disposed of in an incinerator? In the 1980s, the parents had been promised a proper cremation. As a result of that and many other cases, cremation is available for miscarried babies. According to press reports, however, charges may be introduced—for the first time in many cases—for the cremation of very young children. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should have a debate on ensuring that parents are not punished at their time of greatest grief?

Mr. Cook: I understand entirely the enormous distress caused to a family when a child is lost through miscarriage, and I fully appreciate the great need for emotional sensitivity when handling such a case. My understanding is that in Wales, as elsewhere, the family have the option of having the hospital deal with the foetus or of arranging privately for a cremation. Cremation charges are a devolved matter for the Welsh Assembly, and I am sure that the Minister responsible there will have heard my hon. Friend's comments. I understand the need to approach the matter in a different and more tactful way than one would in other circumstances.

Bowman Contract

1.28 pm

Mr. Paul Keetch (Hereford)*(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the awarding of the Bowman contract.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Geoffrey Hoon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the Bowman communications programme.

This project will provide the armed forces with a modern, highly capable tactical combat radio communications system to replace Clansman. It will provide secure, reliable communications to our land forces and selected elements of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. In addition to voice communications, the system provides a tactical internet and automatic position location, navigation and reporting. Delivery will include more than 48,000 radios, 30,000 computers, conversion of more than 30,000 existing platforms and training for more than 100,000 members of the armed forces.

Until recently, the history of the Bowman project has been a saga of difficulties. The requirement for the system was originally endorsed as long ago as 1988, but the initial attempt at competition collapsed in 1996. The following year, in March 1997, it was decided to pursue a single source procurement with Archer Communications Systems Ltd.

Last summer, in the light of continuing major problems with the programme, the Government decided that the competition for the Bowman combat radio would have to be relaunched. That decision has now been vindicated. Over the past year, we have made impressive progress on the project. There has been a vigorous competition, with three strong bids submitted by Thales, TRW and CDC, a subsidiary of General Dynamics already operating in the United Kingdom. Following careful analysis of the bids, I am pleased to announce today that CDC has been selected as the Department's preferred supplier of the Bowman system.

We evaluated a wide range of issues. Given the project's chequered past and the continuing operational need, the priority has been to deliver a successful and low-risk solution that will fill this capability gap at the earliest possible opportunity: CDC offers just that. Its solution is the clear winner of the competition. It provides the best value-for-money solution, fully meeting our military requirements. I am confident that it will meet our demanding timetable for getting the system into service. It is based on experience of developing a proven system, and includes best-of-class radios and a very efficient approach to rolling out and supporting the equipment.

The Ministry of Defence and CDC will now work together on the programme to bring Bowman into service. We aim to be in a position to let a contract in late summer this year, to achieve an in-service date of early 2004. The contract is valued at about £1.8 billion. It will cover the supply of the Bowman system and the first five years of support up to the year 2009. It will use the ITT VHF radio sub-system and the Cogent cryptographic system.

CDC's solution provides employment opportunities in the UK in a broad range of system areas, including design, development, manufacture and project management.

[Mr. Geoffrey Hoon]

Ninety per cent. of the work content of the CDC bid will be based in the UK—the highest proportion of any of the three bids. About 1,600 jobs will be secured across the UK, including 400 new high-technology and support posts at the company's headquarters, which CDC plans to establish in south Wales.

The company has also earmarked south Wales for a new Army communications technology research and development centre, to be staffed by about 65 leading scientists. Other regions will benefit as well. We expect subcontract work to secure more than 100 jobs in Scotland, more than 300 jobs in south-west England and about 75 jobs in the south-east, centred on Hastings. Major United Kingdom subcontractors include Alvis and Westland.

This is excellent news for British industry, and not just in terms of job opportunities. The high-quality jobs that it brings will allow for the continuation of this country's defence communications capability. In particular, there will be significant technology transfer to the UK. The Ministry of Defence will hold appropriate intellectual property rights, available for use by other companies working on linked projects. Industry has committed itself to maintain a development and production facility as a UK concern. All this will mean that we will maintain a strong UK strategic capability.

This month will also see the first deliveries, ahead of schedule, of the personal role radios. This is a new capability, separated from the main Bowman requirement in 1999 to ensure early delivery to the front line. The radios will provide short-range communications for dismounted infantry, and will transform the way in which they are able to operate.

The progress that we have made, and this announcement today, draw a clear line under the problems of the past. They confirm that the Bowman programme is on track for success and show that our commitment to smart acquisition—to best practice—is delivering tangible results for the armed forces. Selection of the preferred supplier, just one year after we re-opened the competition, underlines our determination to deliver this battle-winning capability to our service men and women. Our armed forces can now look forward to receiving the most modern and integrated secure communications system available anywhere in the world.

I recognise that today's announcement will be a disappointment to the other two bidders. Thales and TRW have invested considerable time and effort in their respective solutions. Both submitted proposals that were substantially better than the one that we rejected last year. Their involvement has ensured a hard-fought and successful competition. As a result, their reputations as credible prime contractors will have been enhanced. I want to stress how much we have valued the significant Thales presence in the UK defence sector.

For this project, however, CDC offers the best solution to meet our military requirements to the right time scale. As I have outlined, it does so with an excellent package of work in the UK. I am confident that we have made the right decision both for the armed forces and for UK industry. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Keetch: The Liberal Democrats welcome the procurement of Bowman for the armed forces, coming as it does after nine years. I thank the Secretary of the State for coming to the House. Although he said that he wanted to do so, it is a matter of fact that he wanted to make his answer in response to a written question and not as a statement.

Is it true that a hastily convened press conference at the Ministry of Defence this morning had to be abandoned, and that press releases had to be taken back after news of your decision, Mr. Speaker, to grant my private notice question?

Will the Secretary of State tell the House why CDC clearly knew well in advance that it had won this contract? When I checked the company's website at 10 o'clock this morning, it was advertising jobs in Calgary, in Canada, to manage the prime contractor job—the posting had been placed on the website on 12 July. Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that such a complex project can be managed from Calgary?

Has CDC guaranteed that the Bowman contract will be delivered on time and to specification? What is the Government's assessment of job losses and job gains, not in Canada but in the United Kingdom? We certainly welcome the job gains, for example at Westland in Yeovil, but we want to know more about the quality of the jobs that will be created.

Is it true that there was an intervention by Lord Levene, who offered a factory in south Wales to employ former steel workers? Are those jobs being created at the expense of other high-quality jobs that will be lost throughout the United Kingdom? Are the rumours true that some kind of deal is being offered on the carrier projects as a sop to Thales?

Finally, if this means the end of secure military communications capability for the United Kingdom, what export orders can CDC of Canada look forward to as a result of today's announcement by the British Government?

Mr. Hoon: As usual, it is difficult to tell whether the Liberal Democrats are for or against any proposal. They have taken the full opportunity to criticise our proposals without indicating whether they are genuinely concerned about the quality and the quantity of the jobs that will be created.

I have dealt with all the hon. Gentleman's points about the quality and the quantity of jobs. In my statement, I pointed out that, of the three companies that made excellent offers to the Ministry of Defence, CDC proposed the largest proportion of jobs in the UK. I emphasise that the overriding need was to provide both value for money and the most secure system available in the right time scale for our armed forces. More than anything, that was why we chose the CDC offer, which built on the company's experience of supplying similar equipment that could be developed to the Canadian armed forces.

I can certainly assure the hon. Gentleman that CDC was not informed on 12 July, and that the matter has been pursued with all the appropriate means at our disposal so as to ensure full consultation.

Ms Claire Ward (Watford): Of course we welcome the decision for our own defence forces, but may I express disappointment on behalf of those of my constituents who are employed by Thales and will inevitably be concerned

about the future of their jobs? Such concerns for constituents are shared by other Members. What feedback will the unsuccessful bidders be given to ensure that they are able to look to the future for more British contracts?

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Obviously, there are losers when such important contracts are awarded. I made clear in my statement the importance that we attach to the contribution that Thales has made in the UK since its foundation. The company already has defence work worth about £2.7 billion. That is not to say that it is not eminently capable of winning far more work in future. The company is excellent and we very much value its presence in the UK—a point that I shall make directly to the company.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Grantham and Stamford): It is all too characteristic of the Government that they make a statement after the news has been all over the press: in the *Financial Times* this morning, on the "Today" programme and, as the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Keetch) pointed out, on the internet. Once again, Parliament has been treated—on the last day before the recess—with characteristic levity by the Government.

It is also characteristic, and typical of new Labour spin, that the Secretary of State should set out the positive job news without mentioning the negative job news. Is it not a fact that Thales will have to lay off several hundred people in its former Racal subsidiary?

The Conservative party unreservedly welcomes the fact that a decision has now been taken on this important matter. Never again must the British Army go into battle, as it did in Kosovo, with such an unreliable communications system: soldiers were forced to use their personal mobile telephones, which were insecure. That was utterly disgraceful. There is no doubt that the Government have a mixed record on this matter, having spent three years being taken for a terrible ride by the Archer consortium. If they thought that they could do better than us, and our record on this matter is far from exemplary, they might have done so without waiting three years.

One or two things were clearly missing from the statement. I did not hear any mention of an in-service date. Will the Secretary of State tell the House, precisely and unambiguously, the in-service date for the system? In what respects have the specifications, which CDC will be working to, been altered from those to which the Archer consortium was asked to work? In other words, to what extent have the specifications been set back in the past year?

How much public money will the Government have to write off because of the Archer fiasco? *[Interruption.]* Yes, it was a fiasco, and it was entirely a fiasco of this Government. Labour Members are misinformed: the Archer fiasco lasted from 1997 to 2000. The National Audit Office says that between £35 million and £102 million of public money will have to be written off. Will the Secretary of State tell us the correct figure?

Will the Secretary of State give us an unambiguous assurance that the full source codes will be made available to this country, and that in future we will have total control of this important software?

Mr. Hoon: I have heard some astonishing performances by the hon. Gentleman recently, but today he probably wants to outdo himself before he goes off for a well-earned rest for the summer.

On the responsibility of the previous Government, I can only remind the hon. Gentleman of the dates that I set out to the House. The requirement for the system was originally endorsed as long ago as 1988, and the House does not need reminding which Government were in power at that time. It also does not need reminding about the collapse of the competition in 1996 and the decision in March 1997—we all know when the general election was held that year—to pursue a single source procurement with Archer Communications Systems Ltd. All those are matters of fact, and I find it astonishing that the hon. Gentleman should choose to comment on them when he lives in a very large greenhouse—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Mr. Davies) has asked several questions of the Minister, and he must allow him to reply.

Mr. Hoon: Perhaps I have dwelt on the hon. Gentleman's discomfort for long enough, save to say that this Government tried hard to make the single source procurement system work. I recognise that we failed to do so. That may have had something to do with the way in which the contract was originally placed, but I will pass over that. We took a difficult decision to abandon that programme, and we have now been rewarded by the fact that we have had a vigorous competition involving three very successful companies.

The in-service date should be early 2004. Specifications have been adjusted in certain areas, but not with any great significance. I will write to the hon. Gentleman with precise details if he requires them. There will be some write-off. The final figure has still to be determined, but we judge that the great majority of the write-off will benefit the existing procurement because the work that has been done will not be wasted. We will not waste significant sums as a result of abandoning the previous process. If the hon. Gentleman requires assistance with other matters, I will pass him the relevant information.

Mr. Robert Walter (North Dorset): The Secretary of State will be aware that the headquarters of the Signals and the Royal School of Signals are located at Blandford in my constituency. He mentioned the creation of 1,600 jobs. There has been considerable speculation in the Blandford area about the three bidders and how many jobs will be based there. Can the right hon. Gentleman give us an idea of the establishment which the winning contractor will locate at Blandford for implementation, training and support purposes?

Mr. Hoon: As I have already said, and as I must make clear, some 1,600 jobs will be secured. I mentioned the range of detailed technical equipment that will be required, from radios and computers to equipment that will be fitted inside helicopters. Although there are early indications across the country of the numbers of jobs that are likely to be created in each place where the subcontractors are currently located, it would not be sensible to give out precise details of the proposals because of the nature of the contract. It has only just been placed and still needs to be signed up to, which we hope

[Mr. Hoon]

will happen later this summer. It would not be right to create expectations unless we are absolutely confident about where the jobs will be located. However, I shall ensure that the details are sent to the hon. Gentleman as soon as I have them.

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough): The Secretary of State has placed on the record his appreciation of the significant contribution that Thales makes to the United Kingdom defence industry. Has the company told him about the impact that the decision will have on its 14,500 employees in the UK?

Mr. Hoon: I have had discussions with Thales about the contract's implications, and it is right that those remain confidential for the moment. It is obviously for the company to determine how it organises itself in light of the decision.

Each of the three companies would have established new facilities rather than continuing at existing facilities had they been successful, and the percentage of work in relation to each company's bid would have been roughly the same in the UK.

The developments in communications for the armed forces are important. In those circumstances, had the decision been in favour of Thales, I doubt whether the precise number of jobs created would have differed significantly. If there are job losses as a result of the decision, it will not be the direct consequence of Thales failing to win the contract; rather, it will be the result of its reorganisation of its business across the UK.

Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I want to congratulate those parts of the UK which have benefited from the contract, but the decision will be a major disappointment to my constituents who work for Thales in the Govan area at a company previously called Barr and Stroud, which was tremendously well known. However, when making such announcements, the Secretary of State should talk not just of job gain, but about the overall situation. Thales certainly thinks that 400 jobs will be going as a consequence of the decision. It is also worried that its ability to tender for very important contracts on aircraft carriers will be damaged by the award of this contract to CDC. Will he comment on that?

Mr. Hoon: As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart), it is for Thales to determine how best it organises its work force across the country in light of the decision. I well understand the disappointment to which my hon. Friend refers. Had the contract gone to Thales, it would have been able to create a significant number of new jobs across the UK, but the percentage would have been slightly less than the percentage work-share that CDC has proposed. That is not, however, the basis of the decision. There is absolutely no reason why Thales should not continue with the excellent programme on which it has been working for the design of future aircraft carriers. Indeed, as I said in my opening statement, we very much value Thales's presence in the United Kingdom. It is has a substantial amount of defence work already, and we look forward to its winning more defence work and creating still more jobs in the United Kingdom in future.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher and Walton): The key to the announcement is that, at last, our armed forces may get a secure communications system, and I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Mr. Davies) that that is absolutely crucial in battlefield conditions. Let us hope that the Secretary of State has chosen the right winner of the competition and that the contract succeeds this time. He will know from shadowing me when I was the Minister for Science and Technology that the technology is vital, and it is essential that it is kept within his power, as Secretary of State for Defence. Will he tell us a little more about his reference to intellectual property and about the research centre, because the United Kingdom will suffer if British industry is denied full access to the technological developments in the Bowman contract?

Mr. Hoon: The position on technology is as I set out, and it would not be appropriate for me to go into the detail of the technology that will be available to the Ministry of Defence, which can then be passed on to other companies. Clearly, whichever company had been successful, there would have had to be precisely the same kinds of intellectual property arrangements between the company involved and the MOD on behalf of the Government. We are entirely satisfied that the arrangements in the CDC bid will allow this country the opportunity to exploit and develop the work that we have required for Bowman, both overseas, where appropriate, and in further enhancing the system.

That is why we welcome the creation of a research centre, which is likely to be located in south Wales. It will allow us to do further work in training and development towards the full digitisation of the system in the future. That is an important development; it will further enhance the communications equipment available to our armed forces, and that is why we judge overall that CDC provides the appropriate value for money solution, as well as a platform that can be effectively developed in future. I anticipate that that will involve a wide range of suppliers of such equipment.

Mr. Wayne David (Caerphilly): I thank my right hon. Friend for today's enormously positive statement, which is good news for the United Kingdom and, of course, the armed forces. It is particularly good news for the Caerphilly county borough in south Wales—an area with objective 1 status because of its very low gross domestic product, which has suffered a large number of job losses in recent months. The 400 new jobs that will come to the borough will be high-quality and well paid—precisely the kind of jobs that we need. Can my right hon. Friend say how the contract might help the greater south Wales economy?

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his observations. Certainly, the announcement will be good news for south Wales. I have already mentioned CDC, which will develop a number of jobs in south Wales. Cogent Cryptographics at Newport will also be an important supplier of cryptographic equipment under the contract. Several other companies are likely to benefit—

this is only the first tier of the contract. We anticipate that there may be a further 300 jobs in second-tier contracts, which have yet to be identified. As I said, it is not entirely appropriate to give the precise details, but I can give my hon. Friend details relevant to his constituency, and I will do so for other hon. Members' constituencies.

Mr. David Laws (Yeovil): I greatly welcome today's announcement, which is not only long overdue, as the Secretary of State said, but will be extremely important in my constituency, not least at Westland Helicopters. Can the Secretary of State confirm that about 120 jobs at Westland will be secured over the next five years and that such work will provide the foundation for future orders? Will he make a commitment to continue to work alongside Westland to help to secure future orders, not just in the domestic market, but in the export markets?

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his observations. As I said in my statement, Westland will be an important subcontractor and its work on converting helicopters to incorporate the Bowman system will secure at least the number of jobs that he mentioned.

Jane Griffiths (Reading, East): Although it is obviously welcome that the contract has been awarded and that the future of armed forces communications looks in better shape, what can I say to my constituents who are employed by Thales, some of whom will lose their jobs immediately according to the company, which expects 400 jobs to go straight away, initially at Harrow and Bracknell—both places where my constituents are employed? It is clear that south Wales has greater need of new jobs than the Thames valley, but none the less my constituents are real people with real homes and real families. What can I say to them?

Mr. Hoon: I entirely understand the disappointment felt by those who work for Thales. I had the opportunity in recent weeks of visiting a Thales facility that provides some of the most advanced optical equipment available anywhere in the world for the United Kingdom. Thales is a very high-quality, successful company, employing highly skilled people. Although I cannot in any way substitute the decision that we have made—on the grounds of best value for money and the most effective in-service date for the armed forces—I understand the concerns that my hon. Friend has raised. All I can say to her—perhaps this message can be passed on to her constituents—is that a large number of jobs will be created across the country as contractors and subcontractors secure work under the overall Bowman programme. I anticipate that some of that work may well go to her part of the world.

Dr. Julian Lewis (New Forest, East): The hon. Members for Reading, East (Jane Griffiths) and for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart) have emphasised the fact that Thales already employs 14,500 people in many constituencies all over the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State understandably stresses the new jobs to be created, but what about those to be lost, such as at the former Racal factory, now Thales, in my constituency? How many people does CDC currently employ in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hoon: In a sense, I have dealt with that point. All three companies, had they been successful, would have been developing solutions that would have required an increase of up to 90 per cent. in the UK work force. I would not want the hon. Gentleman to leave the House with the impression that somehow the 14,500 people employed by Thales in the UK are all engaged in such communications work. That is far from the case. Indeed, Thales would have created a significant number of jobs had it been successful. As I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Jane Griffiths), Thales is a diverse company. It makes available a range of high technology in defence work to the UK and other countries. I see absolutely no reason why that successful high-technology work will not continue.

Mr. John Lyons (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Are the unsuccessful companies excluded from bidding for subcontract work under the Bowman programme?

Mr. Hoon: No. Indeed, I anticipate that, as the effect of the contract spreads across the country, there will be a great number of contracts and subcontracts for which Thales and other unsuccessful companies may bid successfully.

Mr. Mike Hancock (Portsmouth, South): I would be grateful if the Secretary of State informed the House whether there have been any job losses in the senior management of the MOD over the bungled and incompetent handling of the contract—or, as normal, have they been rewarded with promotions and decorations? Will he substantiate his response to the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Mr. Davies) that there would be only minor downgrading of the specification? In evidence to the Select Committee on Defence last year, those from his Department said that the original spec would be downgraded significantly to the one now on order. Could he also give a figure for the compensation that will have to be paid? He alluded earlier to the existing contractors involved in the contract. How much money has the Ministry spent to date on the project?

Mr. Hoon: Let me make it clear that, as I said when I talked about specification changes, there were adjustments. There are constant adjustments in the specification of complex pieces of equipment; I gave the House an idea of the nature of that equipment in my statement. Adjustments in a contract that takes this length of time are inevitable and are part of the process.

As for compensation, in a sense the hon. Gentleman is asking the same questions that were asked earlier. The amount that is likely to be written off has yet to be determined precisely, but I am confident that a great majority of the work done under the previous contract will be relevant to the work that has been awarded to CDC, so the money that has been spent will not be wasted.

Mr. Michael Jabez Foster (Hastings and Rye): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the wisdom of his decision, not least because it is a true British decision and a true British solution which employs the greatest number of British workers? In particular, it provides some 75 jobs in my constituency of Hastings and Rye. Following the rather sad news last week about the bypass, it is good news that jobs are to be created in an area where there is

[Mr. Michael Jabez Foster]

a weak economy. Is the announcement likely to result in export opportunities and therefore on-going jobs after the period of the contract has ended?

Mr. Hoon: My hon. Friend tempts me, but it is fair to say that none of the three bids were entirely British. It is in the nature of modern high technology for defence purposes that that is increasingly unlikely. Much as I would like to agree with my hon. Friend, it is important to tell the House that these are multinational bids by companies based in several different locations.

As for the potential for export, the prospects for the future are very good. Such equipment will put Britain's armed forces at the head of countries that invest in secure battlefield communications. I am confident that the research and development investment that is likely to be located in south Wales will mean that our lead can be extended. Clearly, that experience will mean that other countries will look to our expertise and the manufacturing capability established in the United Kingdom with a view to securing export orders. I am confident that the decision gives us an appropriate platform for export.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): In his letter to me dated 19 July 2001, Lord Bach, the Minister for Defence Procurement said:

"Thales Acoustics in Harrow remain a potential sub-contractor to CDC."

Is that a sop to my many constituents who work at Thales, or has CDC given positive indication to that effect to the Ministry? Why cannot the Minister give positive, clear news about the actual costs involved? He quoted a figure of £1.8 billion as the overall cost of acquisition, training and support. Could that not be broken down between the bid from Thales and CDC's winning bid? Is it not time for open government in defence procurement?

Mr. Hoon: Clearly there is some extremely sensitive commercial information, but none of the companies would welcome costs being published, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, as the result of such competition. That has never been the practice and I do not anticipate changing that today. As I told the House, this is a prime contract; it is an overall contract for securing a particular service to the armed forces. I indicated that the contract was for 48,000 radios, 30,000 computers, a conversion of some 30,000 platforms and, most importantly, training for more than 100,000 members of the armed forces. As a result of the placing of the prime contract, there will be a cascade of further contracts across the country and we are confident that those companies that did not successfully secure the winning order will nevertheless benefit from that cascade.

Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does my right hon. Friend recall that during the Bosnian conflict our systems were so insecure that using the Welsh language was the only method of ensuring that no one could interfere? Although today's news will be disappointing to those who teach Welsh in the Balkan states, it is welcome for my constituency. It means 80 new jobs at Cogent Cryptographics in Newport. It is a small consolation in view of the thousands of jobs that have been lost a few miles away from the plant, but it emphasises that Cogent provides a world-class service and that south Wales is a natural home for high tech. The plant is cheek by jowl with that temple of intellectual property in Britain, the Patent Office in my constituency.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's later comments. Initially, I wondered whether he was suggesting that the Ministry of Defence might save money by compulsory training in Welsh for the armed forces. I agree with his further comments because we are pleased with the work that is conducted in his constituency. It adds to the security of the system and I am delighted that the announcement means jobs for his constituency.

John Thurso (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross): The Secretary of State knows the significance of the AEA Technology Batteries factory in Thurso. It is well placed to provide the batteries through its links with ITT. Is nominating ITT as supplier good news for Thurso? He mentioned an estimated 100 jobs for Scotland. Do they include jobs in battery provision in Thurso?

Mr. Hoon: Earlier, I referred to a cascade of contracts. I understand that the company to which the hon. Gentleman refers is well placed to take advantage of the decision that we announced and that it has some exciting technology, which could make a significant contribution. However, the Government will not examine every contract that results from the main decision. I therefore cannot answer his question specifically, but I am confident that the factory is in a good position to take advantage of today's announcement.

Mr. Dai Havard (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I declare an interest because, as a trade union official, I have been involved in discussions with all three bidders about their future activities as corporate citizens. I welcome today's announcement.

I share Caerphilly borough council with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, and my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. David). We have been involved in discussions about not only manufacturing work but quality research and development. Perhaps my right hon. Friend can confirm that approximately £25 million could be invested in research and development projects in that area with the local universities. The area is in great need of such activity.

My right hon. Friend should take note that no nationalist Members have bothered to be present for today's announcement although Caerphilly council is a nationalist authority.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not for the Secretary of State to note such matters.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful that I do not have to comment on the absence of hon. Members. Nevertheless, I confirm that there will be substantial investment in south Wales. As I said in my opening statement, we attach great importance to providing training and research to take the equipment to a new level of digitisation and security.

Syd Rapson (Portsmouth, North): Is the equipment compatible with the equipment that we shall use

in Europe? We know that it is compatible with Canada and north America, but is it interoperable with that of European forces?

Mr. Hoon: Compatibility is a tricky word in this context. We do not want the equipment to be easily understandable because the purpose of secure equipment is to be secure. My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the need for interoperability, which may be a better word than compatibility.

Mr. David Drew (Stroud): I very much welcome the news today: anyone who has any connection with the armed forces will want to see the beginning of the end of this particular project. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a particular need in the United Kingdom to bolster the role of small subcontractors, and will he do everything that he can as part of the further negotiations that will undoubtedly ensue to ensure that small subcontractors have a fair wind and are not discriminated against?

Mr. Hoon: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend on the importance of seeing the end of this particular saga, and I do not think that the Government can claim that the overall process has been particularly successful. In those circumstances, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I also agree with him entirely that it is important that, as the contracts that will be placed following the decision develop, smaller subcontractors have that opportunity. We have estimated that at least another 300 new jobs could be created as a result of those second-tier contracts, which are likely to be with smaller companies, adding to the total that I have already indicated.

Speaker's Statement

2.11 pm

Mr. Speaker: Last, week, the hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Mr. Hawkins) raised with me the view which the Electoral Commission has taken on the parking passes that hon. Members have received from the British Airports Authority and the need to declare them as a donation made for political purposes.

I must inform the House that no question of a contempt has arisen. However, as I promised, I have looked into the matter, and I am pursuing it vigorously. I hope that matters will be satisfactorily resolved very soon.

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Act:

Appropriation (No. 2) Act 2001

BILL PRESENTED

FOOTBALL (DISORDER) (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Secretary Blunkett, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Prescott, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Straw and Mr. John Denham, presented a Bill to amend section 5 of the Football (Disorder) Act 2000; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. Explanatory notes to be printed. [Bill 26].

European Communities (Finance) Bill (Programme) (No. 2)

2.12 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Ruth Kelly): I beg to move,

That, in accordance with the resolution of the Programming Committee of 18th July and pursuant to the Programme Order of 3rd July 2001 (proceedings in Committee of the whole House, on consideration and on Third Reading of the European Communities (Finance) Bill)—

(1) proceedings in Committee of the whole House shall, so far as not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion at 8.30 p.m. on the first allotted day (or, if that day is a Thursday, 5.30 p.m.);

(2) any proceedings on consideration and proceedings on Third Reading shall be taken on the second allotted day and, so far as not previously concluded, shall be brought to a conclusion at 10.00 p.m. on the day (or, if that day is a Thursday 7.00 p.m.).

I am pleased to move this motion, which provides for the conclusion of consideration in Committee by 5.30 today, and a further full day for remaining stages. We had a lively and good-natured debated on Second Reading, and it is important that all the issues of concern to hon. Members be properly scrutinised now. The motion allows the House adequate time to discuss this very short but important Bill, and I commend it to the House.

2.13 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): The Economic Secretary to the Treasury did not take long to speak to the programme motion, but I have one or two points to make about it. I should also state at the outset that I am by no means an admirer of the new arrangements that have been made, under the guise of so-called modernisation, to timetable legislation. The more I see of the operation of those arrangements, the more unsatisfactory they seem to be.

The usual reason why the arrangements are unsatisfactory is that, as we all well know, they constrain the House in its consideration of legislation. Bills are now passed by the House when large parts of them have received inadequate consideration, or in some cases no consideration at all. The arrangements therefore fundamentally negate the purpose of the House. However, we will not necessarily encounter those problems when considering the European Communities (Finance) Bill. The problem with this programme motion is that, in addition to the problems that I have just mentioned, it does not allow sufficient flexibility in considering the Bill in Committee and on Third Reading.

This Bill is important in its own way, and hon. Members on both sides of the House may wish to debate the important issues that it raises. The Economic Secretary was right to say that the Bill raised issues for debate. She was also right to say that we had a good debate on Second Reading, when Opposition Members properly raised some important issues. If hon. Members on either side of the House wished to address those issues in detail, the arrangements that have been made would be all well and good.

As we know, however, thus far no amendments to the Bill have been tabled. Our debates on the Bill today may be simply on whether its clauses should stand part. Perhaps those debates will occupy all the time that the Economic Secretary has said is available, but we shall have to wait and see. Perhaps that will not be the case. Perhaps there would have been sufficient time today to consider the Bill even on Third Reading. We simply do not know what will happen in the time available today.

The Opposition do not know why the programme motion was drafted so as to exclude the possibility of considering the Bill on Third Reading today. The motion provides that, regardless of whether we use all the time allocated for consideration in Committee, Third Reading is bound to occupy a second allotted day, in the autumn when the House returns from the summer recess. Those arrangements do not seem to be the most flexible possible, or even necessarily to work in the interests of the House, either in considering the Bill or in best using valuable parliamentary time.

Interestingly, as originally drafted, the motion provided for consideration on Third Reading today, the first allotted day. Additionally, when the motion was originally drafted, it was not known whether amendments would be tabled for debate in Committee. Yesterday, however, after it had become apparent that no amendments had been tabled, the motion was changed to exclude the possibility of Third Reading today. That is a strange arrangement.

Undoubtedly issues will arise in our consideration of this short Bill today, and they will have to be addressed. I am all for detailed scrutiny, and my usual criticism of programme motions is that they prevent such scrutiny. However, I do not know why we should be governed by programme motions that are so inflexible that they exclude the possibility of a debate on Third Reading even if such a debate would allow the best use of parliamentary time. I do not think that anything is to be gained by being so inflexible.

I must therefore conclude that this programme motion has exposed yet another unsatisfactory feature of the timetabling arrangements that the Government have introduced for the consideration of Bills. So often those arrangements not only prevent us from considering Bills properly and in the depth we should like, but are so inflexible that they could result, as they may today, in parliamentary time not being used in the best possible manner. We have discovered one more unsatisfactory feature of the arrangements, on top of all the others. It just goes to show that the arrangements have not been well thought through, and work against proper parliamentary scrutiny and proper parliamentary democracy.

2.19 pm

Mr. Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton): I support the thrust of the argument of the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison). When the Programming Committee met yesterday, we had an interesting situation, because the representatives of both the main Opposition parties were arguing against the Government, saying that the Government were probably allowing too much time for debate. There may be one or two Back Benchers, such as the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth), who would object to such a statement—

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): Yes.

Mr. Davey: Indeed, given his seemingly very passionate speech on Second Reading, I should have thought that the right hon. Member for Wokingham

(Mr. Redwood) would object to it, too. However, having examined the Bill and listened to the debate on Second Reading, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Luff)—the Conservative Whip—and I felt that the time being allowed today was sufficient for proceedings both in Committee and on Third Reading.

The fact that there are no amendments would suggest that that interpretation was correct. So the important issue of parliamentary time being well used arises. In the Programming Committee, when we asked why so much time had been allowed to debate the Bill, we received no answer. We found it rather odd that the request from Opposition parties to reduce the time allocated to the Bill was not met with agreement. Given that the Minister has had more than 24 hours to muse on that, I hope that she will explain why it has been given so much time. Given the current problems in the Conservative party—

Mr. Forth: What problems?

Mr. Davey: The fact that its next leader might be a pro-European, although his Back Benchers are anti-European—

Mr. Forth: That is indeed a problem.

Mr. Davey: It is not often that the right hon. Gentleman and I are in agreement, but on this occasion it appears that we are.

Perhaps the Government want to start as they mean to continue if the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) becomes the leader of the Conservative party, and promote as many debates and votes as possible on European issues in order to give the splits in the Conservative party a public airing—but I may be ascribing too many machiavellian tendencies to the Government.

I do not want to insult the Minister or the Whip, but I believe that parliamentary time is precious. As we are given only three days in the parliamentary year to debate the estimates, and are told that we are not allowed to debate our country's expenditure at greater length, it is bizarre that we have been given an extra day to debate a relatively small sum of money, when the Opposition parties have requested that the debate be allocated less time.

I hope that the Minister will either give us a good reason why we should vote for the motion, or say that she is prepared to allow a Third Reading debate today.

2.22 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): All that raises the question of whether we need a programme motion in respect of this Bill at all, as it is becoming increasingly obvious that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench are in an indecent hurry to get the Bill through, and the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr. Davey) seems to think that the Government did not know what they were doing, which is quite an indictment, coming from a friend of the Government. The fact that yesterday in Committee the Minister was unable to give an answer was no surprise to me, and it should have been no surprise to the hon. Gentleman—but perhaps our patience will be rewarded now, and the Minister will grace us with an explanation beyond what she has said so far.

The truth is depressingly familiar. These programme motions are turning out to be an embarrassment and an affront to the House. In this case, in the very few words that the Minister was prepared to utter in some sort of defence of the motion, she said that in her view it would allow adequate time for debate. That exemplifies the attitude that is now being repeated over and over again in relation to programme motions: Ministers are to judge how much time should be available for the House to conduct its proceedings. It is now quite blatantly becoming a matter of routine. The Minister said, "I think that I know how much time will be required for the debate." In most cases we tend to argue that almost certainly the time will be inadequate, but on this occasion—perhaps we should note the day and the date—my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) and the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton seem to be saying that far too much time is being offered.

Mr. Clappison: The question that the Government need to address is: why should we exclude the possibility of a Third Reading today if consideration in Committee finishes unexpectedly early? Important issues that have to be discussed may occupy all the available time, and that would be well and good—but what is to be gained by excluding the possibility of a Third Reading debate today if consideration in Committee does not occupy all the allotted time?

Mr. Forth: As a pale and inadequate substitute for the Minister, let me try to answer my hon. Friend and offer a possible explanation. The Government presumably want us to get on to the Northern Ireland business, and then perhaps deal with further business. Had they taken the approach that my hon. Friend has helpfully and inventively suggested, it might have put at risk an adequate Third Reading debate—or, if the Government had not put an end to the whole proceedings, we might even, heaven forbid, have had to sit after 7 o'clock this evening. That is perhaps a clue to the Government's thinking. They are so afraid of keeping the House—and for "the House" I can probably substitute "the babes", as it is usually they who are behind these things—and asking the delicate flowers on the Labour Benches to stay after 7 o'clock on a Thursday, that the whole business has to be structured in order to avoid that horrendous prospect.

I suspect that the Government work back from the convenience of certain Members who do not want to tarry here too long, and then fit the business in accordingly. So this has nothing to do with the nature of the business, the extent of interest in the House or anything of that kind, but everything to do with fitting the business of the House in for the convenience of Members who obviously do not want to spend much time here. That is probably the explanation—but no doubt we will get a much fuller explanation from the Minister when she replies to the debate.

Yet again, Ministers have taken it upon themselves to make a judgment about how much time the House will require, and that is the end of the matter. The House then has to fit in with the Minister's judgment and the convenience of Ministers, regardless of how much we may want to say or how much scrutiny we may want to give a measure.

[Mr. Forth]

My next point is well illustrated by what has happened today. Even Ministers do not necessarily know what business may come up. Normally we would expect to get to the main business on a Thursday at roughly 1.15 pm. We have departmental questions from 11.30 to 12.30. We then have business questions, which Mr. Speaker, with his normal generosity and open-handedness, normally allows to run its natural distance, which is normally until about 1.15 pm. Today, however, we had a very important statement in which many hon. Members were rightly interested, so we did not get to this business until about 2.15.

In other words, there was an hour less than would normally be available. That is not in any way allowed for in the approach that the Government are now taking with this heavy-handed, automatic, rigid, inflexible programming that we are now required to have laid upon us, which takes no account of what may happen in the House in the way of statements, private notice questions or whatever. Today provided a good example of that. That is another argument against programming, and against the Government's approach.

There is also the rather odd phenomenon that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere touched on. The Government have stated their intention that, slightly unusually, the Third Reading of this measure will be detached by a period of about three months from the Committee stage. That would suggest that there can be no urgency or importance whatever about the Bill—personally, I welcome that—and that any number of events could intrude between now and then which could affect the attitude of the House to the Third Reading debate.

It is one thing if we can anticipate having a Third Reading debate fairly quickly after the Committee stage, but it is quite another if there is to be an intervening period of three months. Anything could happen—who knows? The United Kingdom could leave the European Union—although for some of us that is but a dream. Any number of things could happen between now and then that could have a material effect on the Bill. So the confidence of the Government in asking us today to approve a measure that will determine the length of the Third Reading debate three months hence is even more bizarre than would usually be the case. I could just about understand the Government arguing that if we were to have Third Reading next week, they could reasonably anticipate how much time we were likely to need, but this is entirely different.

The Minister has some explaining to do to persuade us that the motion is appropriate in the circumstances. Self-evidently, the Bill is not urgent and the time needed for the rest of our business today cannot be foreseen. I am delighted to see that the business motion, item 5 on the Order Paper, has the magic words "Until any hour" attached to it. That must mean that it is a matter of some importance that will require very lengthy consideration. We should be grovellingly grateful to the Government for their generosity in allowing such a debate.

What follows may be relevant to the approach that we may take to this motion and whether we feel it appropriate for our business to be truncated as the Government are suggesting.

This is an unusual programme motion. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere and the Liberals are taking the odd approach that they want to hurry on, take Third Reading and get the whole matter dispatched rather quickly. I, who favour a more leisurely approach, am positively stunned and delighted by the fact that we are to have a three-month period of reflection between Committee stage and Third Reading. However, the product of that protracted reflection might have some relevance to the amount of time that the motion should allow for Third Reading.

We are in unusual circumstances. I am sure that the Minister will feel an urge to explain at some length why she cannot rush the Bill through as fast as my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere seems to want, and why we are to be given this period of reflection.

Needless to say, I am unhappy with the motion. Unless the Minister gives an adequate explanation, I will certainly want to resist it, as we generally do, not routinely but taking each case on its merits. I know that she will do her best. I can see her straining at the leash, desperate to let us have it in great detail and at great length, but unless she comes up with a satisfactory explanation, I am afraid that we will have to oppose the motion.

2.32 pm

Ruth Kelly: We had a lively and good-natured debate on Second Reading, and I very much look forward to continuing in the same tone today. I believe that the time allocated will allow us ample opportunity to discuss these important issues.

The House overwhelmingly agreed to have programming motions and timetable motions for Bills such as this, so that we could have sensible and serious debate on all issues. It is extraordinary that Conservative Members should choose a European matter on which to say that they have been granted too much time for debate. As the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) suggested, we should probably note the day and the time. He said that he was stunned and delighted by the time available, and I am glad that he agrees that we have allowed sufficient time to address all the issues.

As for flexibility, we have until 5.30 pm at most for consideration in Committee, but if hon. Members feel that there has been sufficient debate, it is totally in order for proceedings to draw to a close before that time.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 286, Noes 108.

Division No. 36] **[2.34 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bennett, Andrew
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*	Benton, Joe
Allen, Graham	Berry, Roger
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary	Best, Harold
Atherton, Ms Candy	Betts, Clive
Atkins, Charlotte	Blizzard, Bob
Austin, John	Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Bailey, Adrian	Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Baird, Vera	Brennan, Kevin
Barnes, Harry	Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Barron, Kevin	Browne, Desmond
Battle, John	Bryant, Chris
Bayley, Hugh	Burgon, Colin
Beard, Nigel	Burnham, Andy
Begg, Miss Anne	Cabom, Rt Hon Richard

Cairns, David
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Iain
Colman, Tony
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Cooper, Yvette
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cranston, Ross
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis-Thomas, Mrs Claire
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Dawson, Hilton
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Doran, Frank
Drew, David
Drown, Ms Julia
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Farrelly, Paul
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Foulkes, George
Francis, Dr Hywel
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gilroy, Linda
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grogan, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike *(Weaver Vale)*
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hanson, David
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hepburn, Stephen
Heppell, John
Hesford, Stephen
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hodge, Margaret
Hood, Jimmy
Hope, Phil
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Beverley *(Stretford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Joyce, Eric
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Kelly, Ruth
Kemp, Fraser
Kennedy, Jane *(Wavertree)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDonald, Calum
McDonnell, John
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWalter, Tony
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Martlew, Eric
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Miliband, David
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Morgan, Julie
Morris, Rt Hon Estelle
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norris, Dan
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Roy, Frank
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Ryan, Joan
Salter, Martin
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Shaw, Jonathan
Sheridan, Jim
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stringer, Graham
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Paul
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, Ms Claire
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
White, Brian
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Wood, Mike
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony McNulty and
Mr. Nick Ainger.

NOES

Allan, Richard
Amess, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bacon, Richard
Baker, Norman
Baldry, Tony
Barrett, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Boswell, Tim
Brady, Graham
Brake, Tom
Brooke, Annette
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burstow, Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Calton, Patsy
Cameron, David
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Carmichael, Alistair
Cash, William
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Clappison, James
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Donaldson, Jeffrey M
Doughty, Sue
Duncan, Peter
Ewing, Annabelle
Fallon, Michael

Flight, Howard
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Francois, Mark
Gale, Roger
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Grieve, Dominic
Hancock, Mike
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Hayes, John
Heath, David
Hermon, Lady
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Holmes, Paul
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Keetch, Paul
Kennedy, Rt Hon Charles *(Ross Skye & Inverness W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamb, Norman
Laws, David
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Liddell–Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Loughton, Tim
McIntosh, Miss Anne
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
Mercer, Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Oaten, Mark
Öpik, Lembit
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Page, Richard
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Price, Adam
Pugh, Dr John
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Sanders, Adrian
Sayeed, Jonathan
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Keith *(Mid–Norfolk)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'dns)*
Stunell, Andrew
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Syms, Robert
Taylor, Ian *(Esher & Walton)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Thurso, John
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyler, Paul
Walter, Robert
Waterson, Nigel
Watkinson, Angela
Weir, Michael
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*
Wishart, Pete
Younger–Ross, Richard

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Randall and Mr. Peter Luff.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Finance) Bill

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

Considered in Committee, pursuant to Order [this day]

[SYLVIA HEAL *in the Chair.*]

Clause 1

EXTENDED MEANING OF "THE TREATIES" AND "THE COMMUNITY TREATIES"

2.51 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Ruth Kelly): I beg to move, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The purpose of the Bill is to enable the United Kingdom to give effect to the new own resources decision amending the arrangements for financing the Community budget agreed at the 1999 Berlin European Council.

Clause 1 provides for the new own resources decision agreed by the Council of Ministers on 29 September 2000 to be added to the list of Community treaties in section 1(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. This addition will allow payments made by the United Kingdom, pursuant to the decision, to be charged directly on the Consolidated Fund, under section 2(3) of the 1972 Act.

The new own resources decision that we are considering is little changed from the 1994 own resources decision, and any changes made to the decision are financially neutral for the United Kingdom. Our net contribution to the EU budget will not change as result of what we are considering today.

The changes were rather technical in nature. The main change arising from the decision is to allow for an increase in the amount that member states can retain against the cost of collecting the traditional own resources. That amount was increased from 10 per cent. to 25 per cent.

Secondly, the decision allows for a staged reduction in the maximum call-up rate of the VAT-based resource, from the current 1 per cent. to 0.5 per cent. in 2004. Thirdly, it maintains the ceiling for own resources at 1.27 per cent. of EU national income. It simplifies the calculation of the UK's abatement, removing unnecessary and redundant calculations. However, as the recitals to the own resources decision make clear,

"this simplification has no impact on the determination on the amount of the correction"—

the abatement—

"granted to the UK."

Finally, the decision adjusts other member states' shares of the financing of the UK's abatement, in order to meet concerns raised by Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden, with no effect on the UK.

In line with the precedent set in previous own resources decisions, the UK agreed to forgo windfall gains arising to the UK from the changes to the financing of the EU budget and from a change in the treatment of

pre-accession aid that will occur on enlargement. We achieved a position that was, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister described,

"not a euro more, not a euro less",

and ensured that amounts currently abated will remain abated under the new decision.

The own resources decision implements parts of the wider reforms agreed at the Berlin Council that are an important step forward for the EU and good for the UK. That Council secured declining expenditure in the 15 EU countries over the financial planning period. It stabilised expenditure as a proportion of gross national product, thereby paving the way for a successful enlargement. It achieved no increase in the own resources ceiling. It secured the UK abatement, fully intact, and took steps in the right direction on policy reform.

The Bill shows the huge benefits of Britain's constructive engagement with the EU. It shows that by taking a leading role in reform and working together with other member states, we can achieve outcomes that are good for the UK and good for the EU.

Mr. Howard Flight (Arundel and South Downs): Our usual complaint about financial legislation in recent years is that it has been too long, obscure, often wrong and with too much to amend. Our problem today is that the Bill is virtually impossible to amend. I had considered proposing a sunset clause to make the Bill conditional on adequate reform of the common agricultural policy in a given period of time, but I felt that that tactic would not work. However, I shall revert to the crucial question of CAP reform later.

Parliament can really only say yes or no to the Bill, because it is the Council decision of 29 September 2000, following Berlin, which, in essence, contains the detailed legislation. Before I focus on the CAP, the crucial issue that underlies clause 1, I want to speak about article 9 of the Council decision. We debated the matter at some length on Second Reading, as it enables the EU to propose the implementation of direct taxation.

The House will recall that when my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) and I objected to article 9 on Second Reading, we were advised by the Economic Secretary that there was nothing to worry about, as no such proposition would ever arise. I cannot resist pointing out that the words were scarcely out of her mouth when up popped Belgium—backed by Germany—proposing to replace EU revenues paid by national Governments with an EU-wide system of taxation. It is therefore wrong to say that such a concept is not on the agenda: it is on the agenda, and is contained in the EU decision that we are considering today.

I congratulate the Chancellor on his robust opposition to that concept, and on the effective lecture that he gave to the EU, in which he urged other nations to get on with supply-side reforms of capital and labour markets. Did that lecture enjoy the full support of the Prime Minister? I should like to know. It is well known, in euroland and the City of London, that the Chancellor is strongly opposed to euro membership—indeed, he is now referred to as the Eurosceptic Chancellor. But is the policy being followed on the euro the Prime Minister's or the Chancellor's?

On Second Reading, Opposition Members made the point that there is no free lunch, and we asked the Economic Secretary what would be the cost of forgoing our windfall on Euro enlargement. She replied that the cost would be of the order of 220 million euros, but in such language that it appeared that she was saying that it would be a one-off loss. However, I am pleased to state that, in subsequent correspondence, she has made it clear that the loss will be in every year that we give up as part of the deal.

The main impact of the Council decision is the shift from VAT-based contributions to GNP-based contributions. I asked the Economic Secretary whether the definition of GNP to be used would be the official figure, or whether it would include estimates of undisclosed economies. The Economic Secretary has advised me that the official figures would be used in that context.

Why was it deemed appropriate, when considering how the Maastricht targets could be met, to take GNP figures for the different EU states that included estimates for undisclosed economies, on the basis that some countries had much larger black economies than others? Why has it been decided now that it is not necessary to calculate fair contributions where the GNP element has gone up? I point to that inconsistency, and to the fact that in terms of Maastricht, the rules result in those with larger undisclosed GNPs contributing less than they should.

3 pm

I have raised the rather fundamental issue implicit in the Council agreement that 1.27 per cent. of GNP is a sufficient transfer payment to make a common currency work. In the United States, for example, transfer payments are of the order of 11 per cent. of GNP. I have received no answer to this question, which was important in terms of the Council decision and the economic prospects for the euro. The Government must focus on this matter.

I have noted that the Chancellor has added another item to his economic tests for the euro—that of success. Clearly, the euro must be a success before the right hon. Gentleman will even think about it. However, it is important to ask whether the transfer payment arrangements—which have been set in stone by the Council decision at 1.27 per cent.—are sufficient in terms of economic analysis for a common currency to work.

Mr. Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton): Has the hon. Gentleman read the European Commission's analysis that said that, within member states, there are fiscal transfers between different regions, such as in the UK between London and the south-east and Scotland? When one is analysing the importance of fiscal transfers as an adjustment mechanism to compensate for the fact that we are losing the currency as an adjustment mechanism, one must take into account the fiscal transfers within each existing member state because the differences between regions within each member state may be as big as those between member states.

Mr. Flight: I am aware of that study, which has some relevance in other parts of the world that share a currency. But one must look at the transfer payments of individual countries within the EU because this matter goes beyond Scotland versus the south-east and reaches the whole economy in terms of competitiveness and cost structure. Many costs are determined on national bases by trade union agreements and so forth. I am calling for a study of the territory, including transfers within individual

[Mr. Flight]

economies as well as among them. I am not aware of a convincing analysis to suggest that the level of transfer payments that the Council decision has set stands up. It may do, and I am not pre-judging the situation, but it is clear as a matter of theory and practice that the euro will not be a success unless that is the case.

The main underlying issue raised by the clause is enlargement and the CAP. The discussions in Berlin, and the Council decision emerging from them, were all about changes in the financing arrangements to enable enlargement and modest reforms to the CAP to be included. Is enlargement by 2004 for real, or are we living with another politically convenient deceit? The Opposition support enlargement because a larger and more diverse EU clearly holds out the prospect of the Union's remaining an association of nation states trading freely among themselves.

Enlargement will be impossible if the CAP is not reformed significantly. Despite the fact that there are plans for further reforms in the next two years, there is insufficient time to effect those by 2004 to allow enlargement to occur. Are we dealing with a conspiracy—deliberate or otherwise—to delay enlargement, or with extremely bad management?

I wish to refer to the history of those discussions at Berlin, which led to last year's Council decision. The European Council agreed that there would be a series of reforms under Agenda 2000 in the crucial policy areas of the CAP, the budget and regional policy to pave the way for enlargement. It was clear that the 1992 reforms of the CAP, while meeting the demands of GATT, would not be sufficient to prevent further pressures at subsequent trade negotiations.

The 1999 CAP reforms, in conjunction with the later Council order, were held at a time of crisis and preoccupation with Kosovo. As a result, they were substantially watered down and not properly pursued. If the agreement reached in Berlin was regarded here as a success, the world could be forgiven for wondering what a failure would look like. The most significant feature of the reform has been that the depth of the price cuts has been subsequently reduced.

The main impetus for reform was budgetary, and the level of the budget had been agreed before the reform negotiations on the CAP. The first reform would have exceeded the budget; the second appeared to meet it. At the time, the United Kingdom, along with Sweden, was leading calls for reform and suggested that even the original 2000 proposals did not go far enough. It is not clear how the Government can say today that all that emerged was satisfactory.

The UK was a member of what was known as the London Club or the Gang of Four, who wanted to see the quota system abolished and the milk market liberalised by 2006. However, the result was that these will be increased in 2005-06. In terms of the arable sector, the United Kingdom, along with Denmark and Sweden, wanted to end set-aside.

The irony is that, even by the admission of German Ministers, further reforms will be needed to comply with the demands of enlargement and the next world trade negotiating round. The 1990 reforms in no way met that either. The reality was that the millennium round collapsed before reaching agriculture and great pressure was removed as a result, for the time being. If enlargement goes ahead, all professional analysts have commented that extending the CAP in its present form will be unworkable. At one stage, Fischler had thought that there would be a solution, with price supports changing to income supports. Then, the new entrants would not need to cut prices and would not even have to be brought into the CAP. However, this suggestion was perverse; why should a farmer in East Anglia get subsidies while a farmer with a similar-sized farm in Poland does not?

I shall focus on the options because we rarely deal in this Chamber with the issues and how the CAP might be reformed. The first designated area of possible reform has the unpleasant euroland name, degressivity, which in simple English means the reduction of direct payments over time. It involves the replacement of price support with direct payments and then the reduction of the latter in time.

Allowing a fixed time span ensures that budget costs rise but then fall again and avoids the potential problems associated with extending CAP payments to member states, which the European Union could not afford to be given to farmers who had not experienced falling prices in the first place. Allegedly, that system would offer the best route to contain budget costs.

That approach was opposed by Germany and supported by France and the United Kingdom. France introduced it to counter the move towards co-financing, which Germany had proposed. Furthermore, France proposed the reduction of direct payments by between 1 per cent. and 3 per cent. each year, with exemptions for small farmers. The UK proposed 4 per cent. cuts across all direct payments. Estimates at the time showed that cuts of 3 per cent. a year for all payments would save about 4.5 billion euros over seven years. Cuts of 3 per cent. in arable payments and 1 per cent. in other sectors would save about 3 billion. In its most extreme form, the reduction could eliminate direct payments over a fixed time period. It would mean that, while the initial costs of enlargement would be high, in time they would be reduced.

The removal of the price supports would have had the beneficial consequence of solving the export subsidy problem. Not only do export subsidies cost the EU a substantial sum: they have caused the depression of world food prices, which has affected third-world economies particularly severely.

The second proposed approach to reform has been called co-financing or repatriation, which is sharing the CAP budget costs between EU and national budgets. That would involve removing part of the funding of agriculture from the EU budget and handing it to national Governments. It does not, therefore, necessarily reduce the overall cost and it could increase policing costs. Support for that approach went along the lines of net beneficiaries versus net contributors. Germany proposed it to try to reduce its contributions and the UK opposed it at the time because we felt that it would be likely to distort the single market.

Additionally, that approach is unpopular with farmers, who expect to get less as a result. It would solve the problem of what to do about enlargement, as it would be up to the countries concerned. Many of the central European countries do not want agricultural subsidies because they want to reduce their agricultural sectors.

Repatriation failed as an idea in 1999 and it looks as though it will fail again as the other reforms have failed sufficiently to reduce the level of prices, making the option extremely unattractive to beneficiaries such as France and Ireland.

The third approach, which again has a nasty Euro name—modulation—is about targeting support to smaller farms and limiting payments to particular farms. The concept is that total aid payable per farm could be capped or compensation above certain thresholds met at less than a full 100 per cent.

The UK opposed all forms of modulation essentially because of the size profile of our farms. Capping the amount that could go to any individual farm would hit the UK the most. That approach was first proposed in 1992 and again in the early stages of the 1999 reforms, but it was blocked on both occasions. To a lesser extent, under the rural development project, countries could divert a fraction of their receipts to other projects, such as agri-environmental projects and afforestation, but only a handful have taken up that option, including Britain, where it has accounted for only 2.5 per cent. of the money distributed through the CAP.

In essence, none of those proposals has got anywhere. I mentioned them to put them on the record because that is all that is on the record. It is all very well to talk of the need for CAP reform, but how is the policy to be reformed if the Council decision that we are asked to approve today is to work?

3.15 pm

The problem with the CAP is that no one knows any longer what it is for. It has outlived its original intent by many years. It was intended to increase productivity, and to ensure a fair wage for farmers and that the price of food was kept at a fair level. Now, it does almost the contrary on all three counts. Productivity has increased and there is no logic for the CAP's being converted into a social policy. Should intensive farming be encouraged? People tend to argue that, if farmers should receive special treatment, it is as custodians of the environment.

Fundamental thinking is urgently required on the matter and the UK should lead in that. If we do not undertake that, we are not serious about enlargement and the countries of eastern Europe will end up being badly let down. It is a mistake that repatriation failed as an idea in 1999 because other reforms had not reduced prices sufficiently to make it attractive enough. The present crisis in British farming, for example, needs immediate prescriptive attention, which we could provide much more effectively if we were managing our own agricultural policy rather than being forced into the inappropriate straitjacket of the CAP for British farming. By analogy, the only solution for Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the other potential member countries would be for them to manage their own agricultural support policies and to have the freedom to decide what to do, within some broadly agreed cost guidelines.

Today, we are faced with the choice of a yes or no on a fundamental clause of two or three lines that concerns an EU decision which is a good decision in terms of how funding has changed but which is inadequate to meet its overall objective, which is to permit enlargement. I repeat the crucial message that, unless we have a major reform of the CAP—potentially along the lines that I suggested—well before 2004, there will be no enlargement then.

Jim Sheridan (West Renfrewshire): I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Tommy Graham, who, as many hon. Members will remember, was a colourful character both inside and outside the Chamber.

On behalf of my constituents I welcome the financial reforms to which the Bill commits us. It paves the way for the progressive enlargement of the EU. In doing so, I firmly believe that opportunities for growth, development and prosperity for all my constituents will flow from those reforms. I say that with a note of caution, however, as those objectives will be achieved by the British electorate only if there is a level playing field for worker participation and fair competition for all our businesses.

West Renfrewshire is experiencing significant job losses in the electronics and defence industries. Established companies such as Compaq and Selectron are making people redundant as we speak. Perhaps that reflects the difficulty that that industry is going through, but that is not the case with ROF Bishopton, where BAE Systems proposes the closure of its ammunition-producing facility. That is not happening because the skilled work force are resistant to change or unproductive. Their only drawback in life is that they belong to a country and are employed by a company in which consultation about factory closures and redundancies is a sham. Such companies can move production to other member and non-member countries of the EU with total impunity, at times exploiting the financial benefits that are offered from Europe. That is unfair and unacceptable to the British electorate.

I do not wish to ponder on the negatives of belonging to the EU: benefits flow from it. Tangible evidence can be found in my constituency, where European funding has helped to rejuvenate areas such as Port Glasgow, which has a high level of deprivation. Its people have been ignored for too long. The rejuvenation has been achieved without the taxpayers having to pay increased taxes and without any increase in our overall contribution to the EU budget.

The Labour Government's financial prudence, at home or in Europe, means that many of my constituents enjoy a stable standard of living, with low mortgage rates and even lower levels of unemployment. If we were to accept the Luddite approach to Europe articulated by many in the official Opposition, it would be disastrous for our country, our electorate and, more important, our businesses. Their lack of progress in Europe is consistent with the performance of our countries' national football teams, and let us hope that that will also improve.

Most of my adult life has been spent in manufacturing industry, and I make no apology for that. I have witnessed at first hand the corrosive effect on communities of needless job losses. The hostility shown by the official Opposition to workers' rights was a significant factor in those job losses and a major reason why I entered the world of politics. It is an extremely frustrating and humbling experience to have to depend on our European colleagues in the trade union movement to argue our case in European works councils simply because our British workers cannot be represented there.

In conclusion, it would be remiss of me not to mention my party's constructive partnership not only with our European partners but with the Scottish Parliament—a partnership that, unfortunately, the Scottish National party wishes to destroy. It is unfortunate that a party that claims to want independence in Europe is not present to hear this important debate on European finance.

[Jim Sheridan]

Many people have asked me for my assessment of my early days in this House. What has struck me most is the generosity, courtesy and advice offered by my experienced colleagues on both sides of the House. I think that I reflect the views of many of the new Members when I say thank you.

Mr. Edward Davey: I start by paying tribute to the hon. Member for West Renfrewshire (Jim Sheridan) for his maiden speech. It is clear from his first outing in the House that he will be fighting fiercely on behalf of his constituents and their interests, especially on employment in his constituency. I share concerns about job losses in the electronics sector of our economy. The imbalance in the British economy is a problem. We have regional imbalances and an imbalance between the manufacturing and service sectors. I look forward to future contributions from the hon. Member on that subject. He will bring a great deal of expertise and knowledge to bear on our deliberations.

On Second Reading we had a long debate on many issues surrounding EU budgetary reform—the cap, the need for greater accountability and the underlying issues of how the budget could develop. Clause 1 applies specifically to the details of the own resources decision. There are three elements to that decision that deserve discussion, one of which I want to focus on. The first is the change in the weightings given to the different elements of own resources and the switch away from the VAT element to the GNP element. That has been welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee, so there is probably little more to say about it except that we hope that it will continue. It is good that it has been achieved.

The second element is the ceiling of 1.27 per cent., which was agreed. Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee have generally welcomed that, in the sense that we need to ensure that before the EU takes more of the British taxpayers' hard-earned money it reforms its budget and the way in which it spends it. Therefore, putting a medium-term cap on its size is a necessary discipline, which the Liberal Democrats welcome.

The third element is the triumph that the United Kingdom Government claim for retaining the United Kingdom abatement. It may be a good thing, but there is no information before the Committee to enable it to know whether it is a good thing in the longer term. That may sound like heresy. We all remember Mrs. Thatcher coming back from Fontainebleau having achieved the abatement and claiming that it was a major success for UK diplomacy. Successive Governments have defended the abatement. It may prove that they were right to do so, but I shall ask the Minister some questions to find out whether the abatement is such a success as we have been told.

In order to retain the UK abatement, we have had to give up windfall gains that we would otherwise have achieved from the switch from VAT to GNP and other detailed changes behind the own resources decision, so the question for the Committee and the Government is whether what we have had to give up is more than we have gained from keeping the abatement.

It is clear from the Berlin summit communiqué that the amount that we had to give up was relatively small—the estimate was 220 million euros—but that was not the first time that the UK abatement was retained at the expense of windfall gains. In 1988 the Conservative Government negotiated the retention of the United Kingdom abatement. In 1988 and in 1992, windfall gains that might have accrued to the United Kingdom were given up in order to retain the abatement. The Committee will quickly see what I am implying: if by fighting to retain the abatement in 1988, 1992 and 2000 we gave up cumulatively more in windfall gains than would otherwise have accrued to us, we are losing out. That may or may not be the case because I do not have the figures.

The Library could not find in the communiqués issued after the 1998 and 1992 Councils a figure that was given in the same way as in the communiqué after the 2000 Berlin summit—in other words, the 222 million euros. There was no figure on record of the windfall gains that the UK gave up by retaining the abatement.

My question is factual. The Minister may not be able to give me an answer today, although perhaps her officials can help her out. If she cannot give me the figures, perhaps it is a good thing that the Third Reading debate will not be held until 16 October so that we can obtain the figures before we give the Bill its Third Reading. I doubt that there can be precise figures that would enable us to make judgments on the benefit of retaining the UK abatement and the successive amounts that we have forgone because we did not gain from those windfalls.

3.30 pm

That equation is necessarily difficult, as is shown by the fact that the benefit from the UK abatement changes every year. In 1991, the abatement was worth £2,497 million at cash prices—£2.5 billion. In 1995, it was worth £1.2 billion, and in 2002 it was worth £2 billion. Its value changes every year because it contains so many variables. No doubt the calculation of what the UK would have retained, if it had kept all those cumulative windfall gains, depends on many other variables such as the base of consumer expenditure underlying the VAT element of the own resources decision or the different rates of duty and levy collected in each country. Those variable factors would be part of the calculation.

One would not expect the Minister to give precise figures in order for us to make a decision, but one could expect ranges of figures—an indication of the size we are talking about. For example, is the UK rebate worth between £1 billion and £2 billion each year—depending on those factors—and is the amount that we would have gained from the windfalls between £500 million and £1 billion? Such a range of figures would be useful. The Committee could then come to a final decision about whether successive Governments were wise to fight so hard for the UK rebate, not only at Berlin but before that in 1988 and 1992.

The Minister raises her eyebrows to the ceiling—clearly, the calculation is difficult—but if we are to hold the Government to account for their decisions on negotiations made on behalf of the UK taxpayer we need those figures. Successive Governments may cumulatively—almost unknowingly—have cost the UK taxpayer a lot of money in net terms. By defending that sacred cow of Fontainebleau and by going to the wall and saying that we will fight to retain the UK abatement, we may be doing ourselves an injustice and costing the UK taxpayer more.

It is time to examine the matter in detail, because we shall no doubt return to the reform of the EU budget and the own resources decision in five or six years, when another European Communities (Finance) Bill will appear before a successor Parliament. If we do not get the figures right—if the Treasury and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office do not start to work them out—we shall again get it wrong in future negotiations on reform of the EU budget.

Perhaps we should change our whole negotiating position. Perhaps—I do not know, because I do not have the figures—we would earn an awful lot of prestige and benefit in European diplomacy and in our standing in the European Commission if we said, "Hold on, we are prepared to look at the issue of the UK rebate, but we will only even consider giving it up if all the windfall gains that you previously asked us not to take are given back to us." We might benefit from that approach. Instead of mounting a jingoistic, nationalistic—even prejudiced—defence of the Fontainebleau agreement, we might realise that it was to our benefit to lay a certain sacred cow to rest.

In some areas of the UK, the rebate has negative effects. Hon. Members may be aware that agriculture suffers from the rebate. The argument is complicated, as European financial discussions always are. The knock-on effect of the green pound and the associated calculations is that UK agriculture does not benefit as substantially as it might from agrimonetary compensation.

Mr. Flight: I entirely support the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, but is not the reason for those effects that, under Fontainebleau, the UK is obliged to contribute 70 per cent. of the cost of the exchange rate adjustment and that, over the past few years, the Government have failed to do so?

Mr. Davey *rose—*

Angus Robertson (Moray): The Conservatives negotiated that arrangement.

Mr. Davey: The hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Mr. Flight) is right but, as the hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) points out, the negotiations were conducted by a Conservative Government. If the UK Government pay their fair share of agrimonetary compensation under the green pound revaluation compensation mechanisms, the UK loses out in the following year when the rebate is clawed back. Her Majesty's Treasury therefore never wants to pay out as much as it should in agrimonetary compensation and UK farmers are disadvantaged.

That is a real problem. It is a particularly British problem as more and more countries adopt the euro. We shall be the only country that could receive agrimonetary compensation, so changing the nature of that agreement—only we shall have a real interest in it—will become nigh on impossible. That disbenefit for UK farmers stems from the retention of the UK rebate, so by looking again at the sacred cow of the UK rebate we might obtain a better deal not only for UK taxpayers but for UK farmers.

All those statements are conditional—we do not have the information before us. Even with the best will in the world, my researches before the Committee sat did not produce the relevant information. During my exchanges with the Minister on Second Reading about the definition of "windfall gain" and in her subsequent, kind letter of 16 July, copies of which were sent to the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs and to the Library, it has become clear that the point is of some substance.

We needed those exchanges in order to be sure what a windfall gain was: whether it was a genuine, one-off gain or a cumulative gain. From the hon. Lady's letter, it appears that the gain is cumulative, which is what worries me. We have established that the gain is cumulative, so the UK could have given up an awful lot of money in order to retain its abatement.

The Economic Secretary will be glad to know that I do not expect her to give me detailed figures today, which would be quite demanding, but on Third Reading on 16 October, when the House will be asked to consider whether such agreements are really in the UK's interest, we will need that information. I hope that my contribution will set minds a-thinking in Her Majesty's Treasury and in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about whether the UK could adopt a position at future negotiations that might save us money and might also help our farmers.

Ruth Kelly: I am glad to say that once again we have had an interesting and good-natured debate. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for West Renfrewshire (Jim Sheridan), who spoke with passion about the employment situation in his constituency, and about the need to consult workers and protect their rights. He spoke from his own experience in manufacturing. He also pointed out the need to engage constructively with Europe. I look forward to hearing from him again on this subject, and I am sure that he has a significant contribution to make to the House.

The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Mr. Flight), referred to article 9, which we discussed on Second Reading. I thought that I had dealt with the matter fully at the time and made it absolutely clear that any taxation changes would need to be agreed by unanimity. There is no prospect of the United Kingdom endorsing such an approach. I am, however, glad that he decided to congratulate the Chancellor, and I look forward to his doing more of that.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the definition of GNP. As he said, we discussed that after Second Reading, and I am glad to be able to give him a little more detail about it. I can assure him that all member states calculate three independent measures of GNP: production, income and expenditure. Those calculations are made in accordance with worldwide guidelines on national accounting. The three measures are balanced using supply-use tables. The balancing process ensures that even though certain illegal production can filter into a measure, it will generally be picked up in one of the calculations. For example, income from selling stolen goods may be spent legally and will therefore be picked up in the expenditure measure. I hope that I have reassured the hon. Gentleman on that point.

In an interesting contribution to the debate, the hon. Gentleman also talked about the size of the transfer payments in the EU. As yet, there are no signs of economic and monetary union leading to new fiscal powers for the EU. EMU has left decisions on fiscal

[Ruth Kelly]

policy firmly with member states, and those are co-ordinated, in a non-binding way, through the broad economic guidelines.

Mr. Flight: The specific issue that I raised was not about resisting EU taxation and tax harmonisation, but about whether the euro can succeed as a currency within euroland without adequate transfer payments. I note that the Chancellor has recently attached great importance to being interested in the euro only if it is a success.

Ruth Kelly: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that clarification, but I repeat that there are no signs of such pressure arising, and fiscal authority remains with member states. The question of the euro's success is implicit in the five economic tests, and no sixth test is being introduced.

The hon. Gentleman went on to deal with the common agricultural policy and the forces at work due to enlargement. I assure him that the United Kingdom is at the forefront of the nations urging the EU 15 to expand and encouraging other states to join, as long as they meet the criteria, of course. I assure him also that 2004 is a realistic date. Although the Berlin ceiling provides for market support and rural measures, it does not include direct aid measures for farmers in the candidate countries. We hope that the EU will consider that issue in 2002, so clearly there will be pressure for further reform in the years ahead.

I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's comment that CAP reforms have been watered down by the UK's approach. We are in the vanguard of those pressing for reform of the policy. The agreement that was reached was for the most radical reform of the CAP since its creation. It will provide a benefit to the average family worth £70 a year and achieve significant price cuts for beef and cereals. Of course, we want further, deeper cuts, and we will press for those with our neighbouring countries in Europe. For the first time, funds will be transferred to rural development.

3.45 pm

As the hon. Gentleman so rightly pointed out, at the negotiations at least three approaches to reform were set out: co-financing, degressivity and modulation. The UK endorsed progressive price cuts, and we look forward to reconsidering that in the mid-term review of the CAP. Modulation would provide significant flexibility and, for the first time, countries would be able to transfer resources to rural development. The UK intends to take advantage of that facility and transfer up to 4.5 per cent. of CAP spending to rural development by 2006-07.

I was pleased that the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr. Davey) welcomed the switch to the GNP resource, which is of course a more progressive system. He welcomed also the ceiling of 1.27 per cent. on own resources, which, as he rightly pointed out, imposes the necessary financial discipline on EU countries. He asked detailed questions about the windfall gain and the UK rebate. Those are interesting questions, and I will attempt to answer at least some of them.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are three elements to the windfall gains: that relating to successive shifts from VAT to GNP financing; a new element relating to the switch to GNP as a result of an increase in the amount that member states can retain against collecting the traditional own resources; and a third element that will come into effect only after the next enlargement.

The first element is eliminated by article 4(d) of the own resources decision. That has the effect of setting our contribution at a level equal to what it would have been if the switch to GNP had not taken place. The second element will be eliminated from 2001 by article 4(e) of the own resources decision. That subtracts from the abatement the UK's net gains resulting from the increase in the percentage of traditional own resources to be retained to cover collection and related costs.

The calculation needed to eliminate the enlargement windfall gain will not, of course, arise until the year after the next enlargement. It will involve establishing the amount of pre-accession expenditure in the acceding countries in the year immediately before enlargement takes place, and excluding that amount from the expenditure on which the abatement is calculated. In subsequent years, that amount will be indexed using the euro-GNP deflator, and excluded from the expenditure on which the abatement is calculated. That ensures that, in real terms, what was unabated before enlargement will remain unabated afterwards.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether it would be possible for the Treasury to calculate the cumulative effect of windfall gains forgone. As he rightly pointed out, that is a rather complex calculation of amounts that can vary from year to year. Indeed, it is not at all clear at the moment what will be the value of the windfall gains that will be forgone on enlargement, as that will depend precisely on which countries are eligible for enlargement and on the amount of pre-accession aid that is spent in the year preceding enlargement.

The EU has come up with its own estimate, although I believe that others may come up with different estimates. It would be even more difficult to go back and calculate a cumulative total, and I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we are not even considering doing so. I assure him, as I have been assured, that the total of the windfall gains forgone is not significant compared with the size of the total UK abatement. I hope that I have reassured him and that he does not spend the recess trying to make his own calculations.

Mr. Edward Davey: I am grateful for the Minister's assurance, but it would still be useful for Members to see the figures. Even if I do not spend my summer recess calculating them, I hope that someone from Her Majesty's Treasury will. Perhaps she can confirm that they will. We clearly have historical data on the windfall gains that were forgone after the 1988 and 1992 decisions by the Conservative Government, so it would be fairly easy for the intelligent people in the Treasury to calculate the figures. If the brains exist in the Treasury to produce the formula in the first place, surely its officials can make a prediction, or a range of predictions, for the windfall gains forgone because of the 2000 decision.

Ruth Kelly: I am sure that the Treasury team is extremely flattered by the hon. Gentleman's words, and I shall consider his request. However, it is not a simple calculation and it is not clear whether it would make sense, but I shall heed his words.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the effect of the Fontainebleau agreement on the green pound. He rightly explained that the Conservatives introduced the system when they were in government. Their Governments did not pay out a penny of the optional money that was available for agrimonetary compensation, whereas this Government have taken advantage of it to support our farmers.

In conclusion, the deal is good for Britain and Europe. It maintains financial discipline, shifts financing to GNP and retains the UK's abatement. I hope that the arguments made on Second Reading and those that we have pursued extensively today make the clause acceptable to the Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment.

To be read the Third time tomorrow.

Northern Ireland

3.54 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Jane Kennedy): I beg to move,

That the Police (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 (S.I., 2001 No. 2513), dated 18th July 2001, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th July, be approved.

I was tempted to move the order formally, but I see that some hon. Members are here to debate it.

The order, which was made in Privy Council yesterday under the procedure in section 85 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, makes three essentially technical amendments to policing legislation and comes into effect on 30 July. Before going into those in detail, I want to ensure that hon. Members are in no doubt: the order does not arise from the Weston Park talks. It addresses two issues that have arisen on new police recruits—referred to as police trainees—and takes the opportunity to make a technical amendment on parliamentary procedure, which I hope will be welcome.

I also want to set out for those not familiar with section 85 of the 1998 Act how it works. In brief, Her Majesty the Queen at Privy Council makes the order. It must then be approved by resolution of both Houses of Parliament within 40 sitting days. If it is not, then it ceases to have effect.

The order makes two amendments to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 and a further amendment to the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. The main change concerns the appointment and training of the first new recruits to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The first amendment relates to section 39 of the 2000 Act, which provides for the appointment of police trainees. As recommended by the Patten report and therefore as provided for in the Act, police trainees do not acquire the status and powers of police officers and are not subject to police terms and conditions until they have successfully completed their recruit training. As a consequence, section 41 of the Act provides for the Secretary of State to make regulations setting out the terms and conditions of trainees. It also requires that the Policing Board, among others, be consulted before the regulations are made.

In spite of the Government's considerable efforts to bring about the necessary agreement on outstanding policing issues to enable the Policing Board to be established, it is not yet in place; nor is it likely to be in time to be consulted before the regulations for the trainees are needed. It is planned that the trainees will be appointed in September. The order accordingly substitutes the Police Authority for Northern Ireland for the board for the purposes of consultation, and to undertake any of the board's functions under the regulations until the board is in place. Although that is not what we would have wanted to do, it is a sensible remedy. Put simply, it enables us to go ahead to set terms and conditions for the trainees.

On the second issue that affects recruits, the proposed amendment to the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 exempts trainees from the requirement to hold firearms certificates. That will avoid the necessity for the Chief Constable to issue individual firearms certificates to trainees for the purposes of firearms training. Again, I hope that that makes sense. Police officers United Kingdom-wide are already exempt.

[Jane Kennedy]

Finally, the order will amend section 76 of the 2000 Act. As it stands, section 76 requires that a draft order to renew the 50:50 recruitment provisions, under section 47(3), and draft regulations on flags and emblems for the new policing service, under section 54, must be laid in Parliament for 40 days before they come into effect, but section 76 does not require that they be debated. The amendment applies the affirmative resolution procedure, which guarantees debates in both Houses, and allows the legislation to come into effect immediately thereafter.

To be frank, we thought that we had done that in an amendment to the Police (Northern Ireland) Bill in the other place in response to the report by its Delegated Powers and Deregulation Committee which called for the affirmative procedure to be applied to the powers in those clauses. That is what we meant to do at the time and are now doing through the order. With those brief comments, I commend the order to the House.

3.58 pm

Mr. John Taylor (Solihull): I am grateful to the Minister for setting out the provisions of this short but none the less important order. The Conservatives will not oppose it if it is pressed to a Division.

I do not intend to follow the Minister by going into detail, but the order effectively enables the Secretary of State to consult the Police Authority for Northern Ireland on regulations for new recruits made under section 41 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 rather than the new Policing Board that was recommended by Patten and is legislated for in the Act.

The 2000 Act was, of course, debated at length in the previous Session. Although it was a highly contentious measure, the Opposition welcomed much of it, but there was also a great deal in it that concerned us or that we opposed—the name change; the scrapping of the cap badge; the inclusion on the Policing Board of former terrorists or the representatives of organisations that insisted on keeping their illegal weapons; and the district policing partnerships.

The House will be relieved to know that now is not the time to go over that territory again, but as with the Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 2001, which we passed on Monday, it is important that the House understands why we are debating this order. Quite simply, despite all the painful changes to the Royal Ulster Constabulary that have been, or are in the process of being, made—changes that have led to alarmingly low levels of morale among the police—republicans and nationalists still refuse to give their support to the new policing arrangements. As such, they refuse to take up their entitlement to nominate members of the Policing Board—rightly or wrongly, the central element of democratic accountability over policing in Northern Ireland proposed in the Patten report.

The nationalists' argument is that the legislation that we passed in the House last year does not faithfully implement the Patten report. That is a matter of debate, but I tend to agree with Dr. Maurice Hayes, who served on the Patten commission, that it is better to get 90 per cent. of something than 100 per cent. of nothing. Meanwhile, to the best of my knowledge, republicans have never even endorsed the Patten report—diluted or not. Their attitude seems to be that the Patten report was just a starting point in a process that would lead to their vision of a disbanded RUC.

The fact is that there was a good deal in the Patten report, or the legislation that followed, that none of us liked, but that is not an argument or an excuse for running away from our responsibilities to get behind the police and give them our backing in their efforts even-handedly and impartially to uphold the rule of law in extremely difficult circumstances. I cannot be alone in finding an inconsistency between politicians exercising ministerial functions in part of the United Kingdom, yet at the same time refusing to support the police.

Far from softening their stance, however, nationalist and republican demands on policing have merely increased. Despite the Patten report and the legislation passed in the House last year, policing is now placed on a par with decommissioning and so-called demilitarisation as one of the outstanding issues to be resolved before the full implementation of the Belfast agreement. Well, I am sorry if I missed something, but I was under the impression that the issue had been resolved when the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 became law last year. It seems that nothing will satisfy the republicans on the issue until the police have been left completely demoralised, gutted and unable to perform any effective function in Northern Ireland, while the whole paramilitary infrastructure is left untouched.

Policing formed a central part of the discussions at Weston Park last week, and it will certainly be a key element in the paper that the British and Irish Governments present to the parties in the coming days. May I tell the Minister that the Conservative party continues to have the gravest reservations about giving any more ground on the issue in advance of the clearest evidence that the war really is over, that weapons are being put beyond use and that the structures of terrorism are being dismantled? In particular, we are greatly concerned about any new measure that will compromise the operational independence of the Chief Constable; that removes the bar on independent members with criminal convictions serving on the Policing Board and the DPPs; that allows the DPPs to raise 3p in the pound to spend on additional policing services; that would prematurely phase out the full-time reserve or reduce police numbers; and that would put constraints on the equipment currently available to the police to maintain order.

In that context, we utterly reject the totally naive comments made yesterday by the chairman of the Human Rights Commission, who called for an end to the availability of plastic baton rounds. I ask for an assurance from the Minister that there can be no question of going down that route, which would put the lives of police officers seriously at risk.

As we have seen in the past few days and weeks, politically motivated and carefully orchestrated violence from republicans and so-called loyalists continues to scar life in Northern Ireland. It is left to the men and women of the RUC to hold the line. Once again, we pay tribute to the bravery, skill and sheer professionalism of the RUC in serving the whole community in Northern Ireland and to the Chief Constable, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, as he seeks to guide the force through such difficult times.

Recent violence in Belfast and elsewhere in Northern Ireland, in addition to the prevailing terrorist threat from dissidents or those organisations that have failed to

decommission, highlights once again why we need effective policing in Northern Ireland. We need policing based on common sense, rather than a set of politically correct soundbites. We need a police service in Northern Ireland that is able to get on with the job without any operational interference from politicians and that has the capacity to combat terrorism and the resources that it needs to do so. In short, we need the RUC and the RUC is entitled to the support of the House.

4.6 pm

Lembit Öpik (Montgomeryshire): It is a matter of regret that article 2 of the order, which substitutes the Police Authority for Northern Ireland with the Policing Board, has been required at all. A year has passed since the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 was introduced in the House, and it is disappointing that the board has not yet been set up.

To be frank, by declaring that they will not take their seats on the Policing Board, the members of the Social Democratic and Labour party have effectively held up many of the reforms that they wanted. I would counsel the SDLP to think hard about its position in the hope that it might reconsider it. Having said that, given the decisions made by the Northern Ireland parties, the Government can do little else if they want to maintain the effective and regular policing activities necessary across the United Kingdom and, obviously, in the Province, too.

I seek clarification of the circumstances of individual firearms training. I understand from what the Minister said that the arrangements under the order will bring police firearms training in Northern Ireland into line with the practice in the rest of the United Kingdom. I hope that she will confirm that that is the case in her concluding remarks. She spoke about whether Parliament should debate such orders, and it is very welcome that Parliament can now debate them. That is sensible and it will allow us to cover any outstanding issues.

We shall reconvene three months from now—a long time in politics and a very long time in the politics of Northern Ireland, and who knows what progress may have been made by then. I hope that we really have reached the endgame. We have to take a couple of steps back from time to time as we move questionably forward in the politics of Northern Ireland and the search for stable peace.

I remind the Minister of yesterday's exchange in the House on police funding. Without detaining the House too long, I remind her that the police are talking about the need for adequate resourcing. They estimate that there will be a shortfall of about £117 million in the money that they require to carry out fully the work expected of them in the Province. The Minister gave an assurance yesterday, and I hope that we shall spend more time discussing those issues than having to fall back on technical measures such as the order.

As I look around the Chamber, I see seven of the finest Labour Members and six of the nicest Conservatives that one could hope to meet.

Mr. John Taylor: Seven.

Lembit Öpik: There are now seven, and it is only a matter of regret to me that the leadership campaign is not being fought between the Conservative Members who are here. I also see five of the most enjoyable and pleasant Northern Ireland politicians.

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Lembit Öpik: I shall give way to one of the finest Conservatives that one could hope to meet.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I agree with him. To complete the picture, how many Liberal Democrats does he see as he looks around the Chamber?

Lembit Öpik: We save the very best for these debates. I should clarify that my comments were about the right hon. Gentleman's personality not his sartorial elegance. *[Interruption.]* I am talking about his tie.

Considering the fine quality of politicians present, I hope that common sense will prevail and we shall not be driven to a Division. Such technical orders are an indication of the fact that there is still delay in Northern Ireland politics, as the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) said. There are individuals who could have prevented this order from being required. More to the point, there are those who have it in their capacity to deliver the outstanding issues in the Good Friday agreement.

No amount of technical discussion in this Chamber about police orders such as this will ultimately deliver the long-standing stability that we seek. I hope that we shall not have to make such coarse corrections too often on the way to such stability. I hope that people in Northern Ireland will recognise that the order puts more pressure on those who can deliver what they must in the Province to do so.

4.11 pm

Lady Hermon (North Down): I apologise to Members, and particularly to the Minister, for not being present when the debate began. That was because the Police Federation for Northern Ireland has been in touch with me about the order, especially the pensions regulations. I shall mention those to the Minister later.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this order, which amends the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. As that Act implemented many of what we regard as the deeply flawed recommendations of the Patten report, it comes as no surprise to see it amended so soon. I remind the House that the Patten commission was given terms of reference under the Belfast agreement. The very first paragraph of those terms of reference urged the commissioners to come up with

"proposals for future policing structures and arrangements, including means of encouraging widespread community support for these arrangements."

However, and most regrettably, instead of encouraging such essential widespread community support, the Patten commission has managed to discourage it. The order,

[Lady Hermon]

albeit a short one, serves to highlight two aspects of the Patten report that have greatly alienated Unionist support for police reform in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Taylor: Does the hon. Lady agree that the Patten report was an attempt at a vision of policing in Northern Ireland on the far side of the total fulfilment of the Belfast agreement?

Lady Hermon: It would have been greatly appreciated had the Patten commission endeavoured to encourage widespread community support. Elements of the report have had completely the opposite effect.

The first aspect of the order to which I shall turn my attention is that concerning new police trainees. When I first read the Patten report, I was most impressed by its emphasis on human rights. However, that initial favourable impression quickly vanished. The Patten commission stated that a human rights based approach should be at the very core of the report. That was a welcome initiative. Despite that aim, new police recruits will be selected on the basis of their religion.

Since religious liberty and freedom from all forms of discrimination are basic essential human rights, it is totally repugnant that trainees will be selected on the basis of their religion. It will be enormously damaging to good Catholic recruits undergoing the procedure. They will be chosen on merit, but unfortunately, it will be implied that they have been selected on the ground of religion. That is very sad and will be damaging to them in the long run. I dislike reverse discrimination and religious discrimination enormously, and I am deeply concerned for the new trainees.

I also remind the House that in its third report of 1997-98, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee noted that

"the major reason preventing young Roman Catholics coming forward to join the RUC is the fear of violence which would be offered towards them and to members of their family."

I therefore urge the Minister and her colleagues to ensure that effective measures are quickly implemented to bring an end to the vicious intimidation of young Catholics.

It is also essential that the Government ensure that the Gaelic Athletic Association repeals its offensive and discriminatory rule 21. That was recommended in the Patten report. The Government want full implementation of the Patten report, so will the Minister assure us that they will ensure that that discriminatory rule is abolished?

The Patten report also recommended a new purpose-built training college. The police recruits whom we are talking about have been given an extension for firearms training. All recruits need good, new training facilities and I would like the Government to commit themselves to such provision. There are rumours that the former Maze prison would be a good site for a college. I suggest that that recommendation be completely ignored. It would not be good for morale or anything else to put new police recruits on such a site.

The order makes provision for the Police Authority to carry on in the absence of the new Policing Board. The Patten commission recommended that politics be taken out of policing. Chris Patten said that he wanted "the depoliticisation of policing" in Northern Ireland, but the recipe that he suggested is not a sensible way of achieving that. He recommended a new Policing Board of 19 members, 10 of whom would be politicians—Assembly Members chosen on the same basis as their representation on the Assembly Executive. Consequently, we have given—I hope inadvertently, but it looks deliberate—a huge lever to Sinn Fein and the SDLP to extract even more concessions on police reform. No more concessions can be made on police reform without discouraging the essential widespread support that we need for it to occur.

The matters brought to my attention this afternoon by the Police Federation are serious, and I should like the Minister to address them in her winding-up speech if she can. During the 26 weeks of their training, the trainees will be a new breed of police officer in the United Kingdom. They will not be covered by the pension regulations that apply to other police recruits. So if officers who currently serve in the Metropolitan police or other English or Scottish police forces, for example, transfer to the new policing service, there will be no continuity of pension rights or any other benefits. That is a huge loophole. The trainees' pay has not been negotiated, either.

I am sorry to mention this, but when the training centre was in Enniskillen, it was bombed; if any trainees are injured, or worse still, murdered during their 26-week training, according to present arrangements, their families and relatives will not benefit under pension regulations. That issue was raised specifically by the Police Federation and needs urgent attention; I should be grateful if the Minister would comment at the end of our debate, if she can do so at such short notice.

4.20 pm

Mr. Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry): The proposed Policing Board will experience the same problems that the Police Authority for Northern Ireland has experienced for many years. Many people in Northern Ireland did not give their full undiluted support to the authority. In fact, members of the republican community campaigned against those who would serve on the authority; they picketed their homes and subjected them to attack, both physical and verbal.

Unfortunately, the political representatives of many people in the republican community were associated with the criminal gangs who attacked members of the authority. People in the nationalist community, including members of the SDLP, would not support the authority, and there were many attempts by previous Governments to get members of the SDLP to give their support to the authority, and, indeed, to join it. There were consistent and prolonged campaigns to try to encourage greater nationalist involvement in the authority.

Unfortunately, the same effort was not expended in trying to get members of my community—those in the Democratic Unionist party—to join the authority. In fact, our many entreaties to previous Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland seem to have fallen on deaf ears. We were promised that if a position were to become available, a member of the DUP would be looked on favourably, given that other political parties seemed to have several nominees on the authority. In fact, some minute political parties, with no more than 2 per cent. support in Northern Ireland, seemed to have nominees serving on the authority.

Moving on to the problems that will be encountered now and in future, it appears that the greater the efforts of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to combat crime, the greater the support given by the community to assist, and the more successful that that all is, the greater the intensity of opposition to the RUC in sections of the republican community. Of course, like the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), I do not want to go back to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 and its provisions on insignia and symbols; that created many difficulties in the Unionist community and continues to do so.

The Policing Board will face problems, particularly in relation to 50:50 recruitment. Any recruitment in Northern Ireland that operates according to a quota will be attacked and criticised because the community will infer that people are being selected for service in the police according to their religious denomination rather than on merit and their ability to do the job. That will always create a problem. It should be remembered that in 1920, when the RUC was formed, 20 per cent. of its members were Roman Catholic. That figure diminished in the following decades because of a campaign of intimidation and, latterly in the 1970s and 1980s, a campaign of murder.

We are now faced with an unsatisfactory 50:50 quota arrangement to try to redress the unacceptably low number of Roman Catholics in the RUC. However, we must accept the rationale behind our present position: it is because of intimidation that only 8 per cent. of RUC police officers are Roman Catholic. It is not because Catholics are not acceptable in the RUC; they are. Last week, on television and in our newspapers, there were pictures of a fine woman police constable who faced up to a mob in Belfast and helped to save the life of a male colleague. She was a Roman Catholic.

Many constables, both male and female, Protestant and Catholic, have been attacked, and have been subject to attack, for many years in Northern Ireland. The Government and every Member of Parliament ought to give the police force total support. We want an excellent police service to be made even better. My community has problems with the proposed Policing Board because we do not believe that the essential elements for improving a good police service are present.

There will be other problems with the district policing partnerships. We see grave difficulties concerning possible participation by former terrorists in those partnerships, which will pose exceptionally grave difficulties for members of my community, and will only make the task of the police service in the wider community more difficult, rather than easier.

I shall close with an appeal to the Minister and the Government for greater resources for the RUC, an excellent police service which we should all strive to make better, more independent and more accountable to the people of Northern Ireland. Rather than attack and criticise the RUC or make life more difficult for them, we should try to improve what is already an exceptionally fine police service in Northern Ireland.

4.27 pm

Mr. Nigel Dodds (Belfast, North): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for East Londonderry (Mr. Campbell). I endorse entirely his remarks on the quality of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. As someone who has witnessed at first hand in my constituency the vilest attacks on members of the police force, made as part of an orchestrated plan of violence by republicans, as the Chief Constable himself admitted last week, I believe that everyone in the House should pay tribute to the gallantry and bravery of members of the RUC and the work that they attempt to do protecting decent law-abiding people on all sides of the community.

One thing that has undermined morale at all levels of the RUC is the prospect that the Northern Ireland Policing Board, established under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, will, according to the Patten report and the Belfast agreement, comprise members of Sinn Fein-IRA. Many members of the RUC tell me and other elected representatives that when they stand on the front line trying to protect the community, they see members of the republican movement orchestrating violence, yet, in a short while, they could face the prospect of political representatives of that organisation serving on the Policing Board. For them, that is another reason for lack of confidence about the future and a growing concern about morale in the force.

I note that this is the second time that we have had to deal in the House with legislation relating to the fact that there are problems with the Belfast agreement. Last Monday, we debated elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly. We are approaching 12 August and the six-week period for the election of a First Minister and Deputy First Minister is about to run out, so the Government had to come to the House to rush legislation through to deal with that. We are now dealing with another problem, to do with policing.

If the House were sitting after tomorrow, we would probably deal with other aspects of the agreement too, but all this proves that the agreement is not working as far as the people in Northern Ireland are concerned. Why is it not working? It is because—hon. Members may not like to hear it—the agreement has the support of virtually 100 per cent. of nationalists and republicans, but not of a majority of the Unionist community. That applies to the broad thrust of the agreement and policing reforms, which are a major part of the Belfast agreement and Patten report.

The Patten report flows inexorably and inevitably from the Belfast agreement. There are attempts among some people inside and outside the House to say that the Patten report took those who supported the agreement by surprise. The reality is that the terms and remit of Patten were set out in the Belfast agreement. Those of us who predicted that the commission set up to look at policing under the agreement would come up with the sort of proposals that Patten did, indeed, come up with were pooh-poohed and told that we were scaremongering. Our position has been vindicated.

Lembit Öpik: I understand that the Democratic Unionist party is not happy with the agreement as it stands. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman could briefly summarise the alternative agreement that he believes would command the support of all sides of the community.

Mr. Dodds: I am grateful that someone from one of the major parties in the House is prepared to ask that question. It seems that the Government are not interested

[Mr. Dodds]

in asking what the alternative is. They were not even prepared to invite the Democratic Unionist party and like-minded Unionists who represent the majority of Unionists in the Province to come to discuss an alternative, so I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is showing an openness of mind and a willingness to listen.

We are saying clearly that we must find a way forward in Northern Ireland, based on the consent and agreement of both communities in Northern Ireland—not just nationalists but Unionists. We are prepared to sit down and play our part in trying to find a way forward, but it is clear from the remarks of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that at present he has a closed mind on that. That was witnessed by the fact that other parties were invited to the talks at Weston Park. The Democratic Unionist party has not been invited to take part in any discussions about an alternative way forward in Northern Ireland—so much for democracy.

To return to the order, as hon. Members have said, there is a crisis of morale among the membership of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The order adds to the uncertainty about the future of the force and what will happen. There is a question mark about what will happen to the name, the emblems and badges of the RUC.

What will happen come 1 September? What will happen over the coming months if the agreement is suspended? What will happen to the name of the Royal Ulster Constabulary? What will happen on the issues of the emblems, badges and so on? It would be useful to hear from the Minister what the position is in relation to that particular aspect of the police legislation.

Lembit Öpik: I am sorry to detain the House further. I am pleased that the hon. Member feels that I am listening. I am receptive to views from all parties. Having accepted that, can he briefly summarise which proposals would have been put forward by the DUP to prevent us having to discuss the order today?

Mr. Dodds: Again, I am delighted. Our party will be happy to discuss with the hon. Gentleman and other constitutional democratic politicians at any time our proposals on those and a range of other issues, but there is widespread support within the community in Northern Ireland for the Royal Ulster Constabulary as it stands at present. Surveys that have been independently carried out show that the main reason why members of the minority community, the Roman Catholic community, were not joining the RUC was not concern about emblems, badges, names or anything else but fear of intimidation, threats and violence against them and their families. In the last year before the first ceasefire was called by the IRA, almost 25 per cent. of all applicants to the RUC were Roman Catholics. That is an indication of the widespread acceptance of the force.

The reality is that Patten has got it wrong. The police legislation is not endorsed by the vast majority of the people in Northern Ireland. People look, for example, at the issue of police numbers. As has been pointed out, the police are on the streets virtually every night in Belfast and other parts of the Province keeping the peace and maintaining law and order. What is Patten proposing on police numbers? He is proposing that numbers should be reduced from 13,000 to 7,500. That proposal has been accepted by Her Majesty's Government and is being implemented, even though we still have a crisis in terms of security, even though we have had some of the worst community violence for many years, even though so-called dissidents still pose a grave threat, in the words of the Chief Constable, to security and peace in Northern Ireland and even though the provisional IRA is still fully armed and intact. The proposal, however, is to reduce the number of police in Northern Ireland.

Rightly, in England, Scotland and Wales, both the major parties are vying with each other as to who can be the most macho in terms of the police and put more policemen and women on the beat. People in Northern Ireland are simply saying, "Why is it that in Northern Ireland for political expediency police numbers will be reduced?" I plead with the Minister and with hon. Members to have a bit of common sense on policing issues and to respond to what ordinary people on the ground are saying. Keep our police force, keep the Royal Ulster Constabulary and let us move forward, increasing the operational capacity of the police to deal with the problems that we have. The Government should not continue with political tinkering for the sake of appeasing IRA-Sinn Fein.

As the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) rightly said, many of us believe that Sinn Fein republicans will never be satisfied on the issue anyway. No matter what is done to reform the police, they will still come back for more. It is a disgrace that the police should be used as part of a bartering process.

Some told us that decommissioning would be the only issue on the agenda at Weston Park. Far from it—it is clear that policing, so-called demilitarisation and keeping the institutions in place were very much part of the agenda. People in Northern Ireland are already deeply concerned about the concessions that have been given on policing. If the Government come back and tell the people of Northern Ireland as part of their package of proposals—incidentally, they have told us that we are not even going to see that, even though we have five hon. Members in the House—that in exchange for another fudge on decommissioning more concessions will be given on policing, that will be resisted very strongly indeed.

4.38 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington): I will be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that you have given us a great deal of leeway in the debate on this narrow order and I understand why. Some pertinent points have been made beyond the scope of the order, including the point that was made by the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) about pensions and compensation, which needs to be dealt with urgently.

The order represents further acceptance, I suppose, that the political process is failing again. The process started with the Good Friday agreement. We had a lengthy debate on the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, but we failed to reach 75 per cent. of the amendments that were tabled to it. A thorough debate on them might have led to greater understanding and could perhaps have obviated the need for today's predicament.

The order has been presented almost as an emergency measure because of the failure of the political process to resolve matters. It suggests a slide into crisis for the

six counties. I fear that our last hope is the package that the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister will produce. It is important that all hon. Members, representing all perspectives, receive information on it. Although the House will be in recess, members of the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs and other hon. Members who have consistently taken an interest in Northern Ireland would readily be brought together to discuss the package in detail, use our best offices in the dialogue about it, and perhaps pursue some of its measures to resolve the problems that arise from the gradual erosion of some of the principles of the Belfast agreement.

We face a three-month recess, and the position could become very dangerous in August and September. We could almost drift into war-like circumstances. If that happens, the House should be recalled for a full debate on the matter. The general populace on this side of the Irish sea do not understand the seriousness of the situation, and it behoves us to come together in August and September to discuss the matter if the package proposed by the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister does not resolve the problem of implementing and furthering the Belfast agreement and if the political dispensation that the Good Friday agreement created breaks down. My hon. Friend the Minister should consider that and raise it with the Leader of the House to ascertain the measures that can be put in place to effect that.

4.42 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): There may not be many occasions when I can happily follow the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), but I concur at least with his last point. The Leader of the House and his colleagues should seriously consider recalling Parliament to discuss the package that is being drawn up by the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, especially if it includes a requirement to suspend the Northern Ireland Assembly. Hon. Members may wish to comment on that.

The order is a monument to the intransigence of nationalists and republicans and evidence of the Government's inability to move without their consent. That clearly shows that there is a nationalist veto, although the Government are always happy to go ahead without the support of the Democratic Unionist party, which speaks for the overwhelming majority of the Unionist community on the issues that we are discussing.

My view is different from that of the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon). I believe that the Patten recommendations were in line with the remit that the Belfast agreement gave the commission. It is clear from the detailed terms of reference in the Belfast agreement that the commission was asked to devise proposals on composition, recruitment, training, culture, ethos and symbols. The only restriction was that the outcome should enjoy widespread support from the whole community and the police service should be perceived as an integral part of it.

I challenged the hon. Member for North Down to say whether she was prepared to support the new police service. Both of us were called to order because we were straying wide of the subject of the debate. Of course, the answer is yes. Even though the hon. Lady does not like much of the Patten report, as an elected representative who supports law and order she could do no other than say that she supported the new police service despite her anxieties about the way in which it was set up and some of the changes.

The Patten report has therefore fulfilled the recommendations of the Good Friday agreement because the police force enjoys the support of the community. Even from my point of view, I have to say that people should support the police service, no matter how it is set up. That is the responsible position.

Lady Hermon: Does the hon. Gentleman remember that, on 9 September 1999, the day on which the Patten report was published, the Police Federation issued a public statement, which is in the public domain? The federation said that it was

"happy to welcome much that is in the Patten Report."

Does the hon. Gentleman wish to comment on that?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Lady knows that any report that contains hundreds of recommendations is bound to include something good. It would be a terrible travesty if not one of the recommendations was in the interests of the police service. I am content with the commission's recommendations on training and the new IT equipment. They are good for policing in Northern Ireland, but we must make a balanced judgment on the recommendations as a whole.

As the right hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) said, as a whole the Patten report was "a shoddy job". The hon. Member for North Down recalls the view of the Police Federation clearly; I am therefore surprised that she cannot remember that of her party leader. The Belfast agreement gave the Patten commission a specific remit. The right hon. Member for Upper Bann did a shoddy job in agreeing to a remit that allowed Patten and his team to introduce such proposals.

The order reveals something further. It shows that although the Patten proposals and the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 made major concessions to nationalism, at the expense of good policing in Northern Ireland, nationalists are still not satisfied. Gaining 90 per cent. or even 99 per cent. of what they want is not enough. They will hold out until they get it all. Nationalists are not prepared to sit on the Policing Board and therefore the order has been introduced to allow the Government more time and the opportunity to make further concessions at the expense of policing.

The bottom line for ordinary citizens in Northern Ireland is an inferior police service because of Patten and concessions that the Government have yet to make. For example, we are told that the Government will consider whether all police officers, even existing members, should have to take the oath. I remember the Secretary of State telling us that we were not talking about the RUC being disbanded but about policing reforms and a moving on for the police service in Northern Ireland. There could be no clearer signal to policemen in Northern Ireland that the RUC is being disbanded than that they be required to re-take their oath of allegiance. That would be a clear signal to them that a line had been drawn under their past life in the Royal Ulster Constabulary and that a fresh and new start was being made with a new police service.

I hope that the Minister will address that issue, as it is causing major concern in Northern Ireland's police ranks. It would be greatly beneficial to policemen and

[Mr. Robinson]

policewomen in Northern Ireland if she could scotch that rumour, which started at the Northern Ireland Office, and say that they will definitely not be asked to re-take the oath to which they attested when they went into the job initially. That should certainly not be another concession to Sinn Fein-IRA.

Like the hon. Member for South Antrim (David Burnside), I tabled a question for oral answer on the future of the full-time RUC reserve, to which I am sure both the hon. Gentleman and I have both received a written answer. In reading that answer, I was very concerned that the clear inference was that there is no turning back on the Government's position on the full-time reserve and that they still intend to wipe it out. That message also will cause real concern in the RUC.

At this very moment in Northern Ireland, full-time RUC reserve men and women are out there protecting our society. Recently, many of them have been injured, in north Belfast, in east Belfast and elsewhere. They are prepared to put themselves on the line without knowing what their future will be. I really think that the Government have to stand by those men and women in the full-time reserve. I have spoken to the Chief Constable, and he recognises the very real contribution that they have to make to policing in Northern Ireland. They are an essential part of the police service in Northern Ireland, and the Government should not have them destroyed on the altar of political expediency.

I should like finally to address the issue of the police authority itself. The Secretary of State is required by law to appoint, so far as he can, a police authority that is representative of the community as a whole. That is a legal requirement on the Secretary of State. Repeatedly, however, he has refused to appoint members of the Ulster Democratic Unionist party despite the fact that they belong to one of the four major parties in Northern Ireland. He has appointed representatives of the Alliance party—the 2 per cent. party in Northern Ireland—to the authority, but he has excluded from it a party that is able to obtain 22 per cent. of the vote in Northern Ireland.

Those people are willing to serve their community on the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, with all the risks that that entails in a society such as Northern Ireland, but the Secretary of State is not prepared to appoint them because they do not share his political views. That is contrary to the legal requirement that has been placed on him. If for a further time we remain with the Police Authority for Northern Ireland rather than going to the Policing Board, as envisaged in the recently passed Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, there will remain on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland a duty to ensure that that board is representative of the community as a whole. He cannot fulfil that legal duty unless he appoints representatives from the Democratic Unionist party to the board.

4.52 pm

David Burnside (South Antrim): Following the remarks of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), may I ask the Minister to comment on the position of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's full-time and, potentially, part-time reserve? Currently, 43 per cent. of constables in west Belfast are full-time reserves, and 25 per cent. of mobile support units in Northern Ireland are full-time reserves. Surely it is a dereliction of duty for the Government to wind down the full-time reserve and the RUC's operational capability at a time when the Provisional IRA—I stress the Provisional IRA, not Real or Continuity IRA—is engaged in procuring arms from continental Europe and the United States of America to re-arm. As the Minister should know, the IRA army council includes Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein; Martin McGuinness, current Minister of Education at the devolved Administration at Stormont; and Pat Doherty. They are procuring arms illegally from continental Europe. How can the Minister preside over the running down of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's manpower and its reserve when crime and the threat of terrorism are increasing? I ask for the Minister's reply.

4.54 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): It is interesting to ponder just for a moment the provenance of this order. The Minister slightly glossed over why the order is here and where it came from. There are some clues, of course, even in the instrument itself. It says:

> "Whereas it has been made to appear to Her Majesty that by reason of urgency this Order requires to be made without a draft having been approved by resolution of each House of Parliament."

So there was some urgency, and we have been given a hint as to why. It states on the Order Paper that the motion has not yet been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.

Jane Kennedy: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. The motion was considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments this morning; I am grateful to its members for calling an extraordinary meeting.

Mr. Forth: That is extremely helpful. It shows how flexible the House is that even between the printing of the Order Paper and today's debate we can have such an immediate response from the Joint Committee, which no doubt deliberated seriously and considered the matter closely. That leads one to ponder what scope there is for the House, either in full session, as we are now, or through the medium of the Joint Committee, for example, to consider an instrument of this kind given that it has emanated from no less a source than the Court at Buckingham palace.

We must not take our constitutional role in any way for granted. I shall leave aside for the moment, as you would not want me to digress, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether we might some day consider how far the House has any proper role to play in matters such as this. Northern Ireland is obviously a serious and sensitive subject and matters such as this, which the Government consider to be urgent, cannot be treated lightly—nor can Orders in Council emanating from the Court at Buckingham palace be dealt with lightly.

Having said that, and given the speedy response of the Joint Committee and the fact that we are now considering the matter, one is left wondering just what scope there is for proper consideration or indeed flexibility. Although the Minister, quite properly, made some little play on the fact that the Government's generosity was allowing us the affirmative resolution procedure, you know, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, I know and everyone here knows that although those procedures look as though they are providing an opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny, they cannot be amended, so they are basically a take it or leave it job. I shall not use this opportunity to complain about that, except to note that we are left without the powers that the House of Commons would normally expect to have.

Presumably, when the Joint Committee sat in all solemnity this very morning and gave the matter its consideration, it was in the same difficult position. Perhaps some day we might return to this lacuna in our procedures.

I ask the Minister for some guidance. I am being tentative because I have rarely if ever sought to involve myself in Northern Ireland matters: I am conscious of the fact that those of us who have an imperfect understanding of such matters tread on the ground at our peril. However, I was slightly worried by the exemption of the need to issue individual firearms certificates to trainee police officers.

If I understood the Minister correctly when she said, very properly but rather briefly, that the measure would be of practical value and would bring the Northern Ireland force into line with those on the mainland, I was left wondering whether the argument was that trainee police officers would have no requirement to, and would not even be allowed to, use firearms during their training, or whether it was deemed acceptable that the safeguard of issuing individual firearms certificates and all that goes with it was now to be put to one side and a bulk certificate issued.

As a lay person in these matters, that would give me pause for thought, given the sensitivities about firearms generally. Tragically, there have been recent incidents involving the use of firearms by the police, so our mind should be concentrated on the issue, be it in Northern Ireland or on the mainland. Any measure to alter the arrangements for giving police trainees access to firearms should be considered very carefully.

Are we saying that police trainees are not required to be trained in the use of firearms, or that the existing safeguard of issuing individual licences is no longer necessary? That would worry me, because there must have been a long-standing presumption, which I share, that we should do everything that we can to be satisfied of the suitability of an individual to have access to a firearm, even in the context of all the disciplines of police training.

I am all in favour of proper measures to make all our police forces as effective as possible, but given the current environment, not only in Northern Ireland but here in London, and the anxieties that have arisen in the light of recent events, we should all show even greater sensitivity than usual.

I am sure that the motion will be approved, but we must not allow such procedures to happen too often. I would not want the Government to think that all they need to do is to come up with something that emanates from Buckingham palace, say how important it is, convene a meeting of the Joint Committee, have it nodded through and then put it before the House the day before we leave for the summer recess, reassuring Members that everything had been done properly.

Everything may have been done properly in a strict technical sense, and I am sure that the Minister is about to reassure us in her usual silken way that all is well and that we can go off on the recess without giving it another thought, but I want to put down a marker to say that this should not happen too often. We should not feel that this can become standard procedure. Let us always be aware that matters of such sensitivity and importance must be properly scrutinised.

In the normal course of events, I hope that such a measure would be allowed more time and that the plea of urgency would never be used to evade proper scrutiny. The presence of the Secretary of State and the Minister, with all their integrity, reassures me that that is not the case, but I want to make the point that this should be treated as an exception, not a rule.

5.3 pm

Mr. Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley): I apologise for not having been here for the opening speeches, because of the collapse of the earlier debate.

We are having this debate because the Government are unable to proceed in establishing the new Policing Board, the nationalist parties, and the SDLP in particular, having failed to give the board their support. It is interesting that none of the SDLP's representatives is here to explain why the SDLP is not prepared to support it.

It is fairly clear to observers of such matters that the SDLP has not yet obtained enough concessions from the Government on policing to bring it to the point where it is prepared to support the board. That is most unfortunate, because we need all the political parties in Northern Ireland that have signed up to the democratic process to support the forces of law and order. It is regrettable that one side of the community has so far refused to support policing structures designed specifically to win its support.

Unionists have encountered many difficulties with the proposals on policing that emanated from the Patten report, as the Secretary of State knows. The Government need to be careful if they are minded to make further concessions to the nationalist community, and especially to the SDLP, to win its support for the new policing arrangements and for the membership of the new Policing Board. The effect of those concessions could be to undermine further the Unionist community's confidence in the new policing structures and arrangements so that we would find it difficult to embrace the changes. We already have significant difficulties, as the Secretary of State will be aware.

The uncertainty that arises from the refusal of the SDLP to back the new policing arrangements has had an enormous impact on the RUC's morale. Every day, my colleagues and I receive correspondence and telephone calls from police officers who see their position constantly being undermined. In particular, the full-time reserve members do not know what their future is. They hear rumours and read stories in the newspapers, but their future is being negotiated behind their backs, in secret.

I met the Chief Constable earlier this week. He told me that because of the pressures on his resources he cannot do without the full-time reserve. If we took the full-time reserve out of the equation in the near future, as the SDLP would like, the police could not cope with the present unrest in Northern Ireland, the increasing crime on our streets and the remaining terrorist threat posed by all the paramilitary organisations. I urge the Secretary of State, when he considers how he can win the support of the

[Mr. Jeffrey M. Donaldson]

SDLP for the policing arrangements and the new Policing Board, to be careful not to leave the Chief Constable without the resources to respond to the security threat and the levels of violence on the streets. In that respect, we need the full-time reserve and officers on the streets. My colleagues and I find that the police are unable to cope with the level of crime.

Patrick Mercer (Newark): Surely the most eloquent argument on police numbers is that when there has been a flash of violence, of any size or type, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Dodds), the RUC has had to be reinforced with soldiers from the British Army. To my certain knowledge, a policy has been in place in Ulster for the past 10 years for the British Army to step further and further back and for the RUC to move forward. If troops are deployed almost at the first sign of serious violence, it suggests that police numbers are woefully inadequate.

Mr. Donaldson: The hon. Gentleman is right, and during the talks last week I asked SDLP members whether they wanted the Parachute Regiment drafted into Ardoyne to deal with the riots. More than 100 police officers were injured, some of them seriously, in the riots in Ardoyne. In an earlier riot on the Garvaghy road in Portadown, more than 50 officers were seriously injured. Those injuries occurred because officers were in close-quarters contact with rioters. The rioters were able to get up close to the officers and inflict serious injury. That happened because of the concern in the police command structure that if they fired plastic bullets early in a riot, the police ombudsman would be on their case.

Plastic bullets are being fired only as a last resort, and after many officers have been seriously injured. That needs to be looked at carefully by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland. I and my colleagues reject yesterday's unrealistic call from the chief commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission for the withdrawal of plastic bullets. Police officers must be able to defend themselves and the communities that they serve from horrific attacks. Plastic bullets are important in that respect.

I was pleased with what the Chief Constable said yesterday. I hope that the Secretary of State will back up the RUC in regard to the need to retain plastic bullets. I wish that we did not have riots in which plastic bullets had to be deployed, but we have, and the Secretary of State must resist calls to withdraw those bullets from use.

The Secretary of State must resist the other, unreasonable demands made by nationalists for further reductions in police numbers, especially in the full-time reserve. We need those police officers on the streets of Northern Ireland to deal with crime and riots. They need our support. The present uncertainty must be brought to an end.

I hope that the Secretary of State will put the needs and security of the people of Northern Ireland before political expediency, and that he will not make concessions—to the SDLP and others—that would undermine the RUC's operational capacity to provide effective policing on the streets of Northern Ireland. That is crucial.

In addition, I hope that the Secretary of State will not make concessions at this critical time: to do so would further undermine the morale of the RUC and the confidence in the policing arrangements that is felt by people in the Unionist community.

My party supports the forces of law and order, but we are very concerned about what is happening. The issue of illegal arms held by terrorist organisations is crucial, and we want it to be resolved, but the issue of policing is equally important to us. We will watch carefully to see what the Government do. The Secretary of State should not expect for one moment that we will simply roll over and accept whatever arrangements and concessions he makes with regard to the SDLP and others.

5.12 pm

Jane Kennedy: First, I should like to address some comments to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) and to the Opposition, who agreed to the meeting that took place this morning, and who allowed us to have this debate.

The process is already well under way to bring the first new trainees into the police service this autumn. The Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 provides for their terms and conditions to be set out in regulations. It also provides for the Policing Board to be consulted on the regulations. I understand why some hon. Members missed my opening remarks, but I said then that the board will not be in place in sufficient time for the necessary consultation to take place. The order amends the 2000 Act to enable the Police Authority for Northern Ireland to fulfil the consultation role and any of the board's functions under the regulations until the board is established.

In addition, the order provides for trainees to receive firearms training without the administrative burden of issuing them, individually, with firearms certificates. The hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Lembit Öpik) and the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) both asked serious questions about these issues.

The hon. Member for Montgomeryshire made a speech—the elegance of which was second only to the sartorial elegance displayed by the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst—in which he asked whether the order would bring the training of police officers in Northern Ireland into line with training in England and Wales. I can tell him that police trainees in forces in Great Britain are also exempt from the need to have firearms certificates.

Mr. Forth: Is it sufficient simply to say that, because something is done on the mainland, it is okay for Northern Ireland? I ask that in the obvious context that, although Northern Ireland is rightly an integral part of the United Kingdom, we all recognise that conditions there vary in many crucial ways, as the Minister knows better than me. I ask also in light of the recent incidents involving the police and firearms. Against that background, are the Minister and Secretary of State happy that this is the time to do away with an administrative burden that may provide safeguards of the kind that people want?

Jane Kennedy: Let me try to reassure the right hon. Gentleman. Police trainees will not be issued with a

service firearm until they have been trained in its safe handling and use, including public safety aspects. The recruitment process is such that suitability is tested in terms of firearms and all other aspects of policing. I take a great interest in this matter, given the tragic shooting in my constituency last Thursday night.

Lembit Öpik: Will the Minister confirm whether the arrangements are actually changing in Northern Ireland?

Jane Kennedy: The current arrangements will continue.

A number of arguments have been advanced. The order is concerned with the provisions on 50:50 recruitment and the regulations on flags and emblems, which have to be laid in Parliament before they take effect. I knew that this matter was bound to raise many of the questions that were debated at length in the House during the passage of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

The hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) asked about the Police Federation's concerns about pension and other arrangements. These concerns are being addressed and discussions are on-going. We are listening carefully to the representations of the federation.

Members have referred to 50:50 recruitment. Undoubtedly, intimidation is an important factor. We all want it to end immediately and we condemn it unreservedly, but there are other factors. They include, for example, a lack of identity with the RUC; a fear of loss of contact with family, friends and community; and a lack of encouragement from community leaders, which also plays a part. The Government urge all political, religious and community bodies to remove barriers to those wishing to join the police. It is important to remember and place on record that only 8 per cent. of the current police force is drawn from the Catholic community.

Mr. Donaldson: Why?

Jane Kennedy: I have explained some of the factors that affect recruitment. There has been a good cross-community response to recruitment to the Police Service of Northern Ireland under the new 50:50 provisions. I am not ideologically opposed to such provisions. In fact, I believe that, on occasion, it is necessary actively to seek to recruit from sections of the community that are not otherwise represented, particularly in such an important public service as the police.

The Government aim to develop a modern police service that is both effective and representative of the community that it serves, and commands the widespread confidence and support that it needs to be able to operate properly. Members made the point that the community within which the police will operate must support police officers in carrying out their duties. It is in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland and the police service to have that representative service in place.

The hon. Members for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) and for Belfast, North (Mr. Dodds) and others referred to the talks and to policing. I restate the Government's position. We are committed to implementing the Patten report and we are always prepared to consider matters when parties argue that we have not done enough.

Mr. John Taylor: I repeat a question that I asked the Minister earlier. Is it not the case that the Patten report was a prescription for policing in Northern Ireland once all aspects of the Belfast agreement had been fulfilled?

Jane Kennedy: No, I do not accept that. The Chief Constable of Northern Ireland himself said that the vast bulk of the Patten recommendations were about "good and effective policing." The Government and the police are keen to move forward to introduce such modern effective policing in Northern Ireland. *[Interruption.]* I will not deal with funds as we dealt with them yesterday in oral questions. I refer hon. Members to the comments that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I made then. I have no intention of adding to them today.

The hon. Member for East Londonderry (Mr. Campbell) raised concerns about Democratic Unionist party membership on the police authority, and other hon. Members raised their involvement in the Weston Park talks. The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have met the DUP regularly throughout the process. Indeed, I believe that the Secretary of State will meet the hon. Gentleman's party again soon. The talks at Weston Park were aimed at resolving difficulties and implementing the few remaining aspects of the agreement. Consequently, it was natural that those parties that backed the agreement should be invited.

Mr. Dodds: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Jane Kennedy: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way as I have only two minutes left. I will certainly discuss the matter with him afterwards.

I will not touch on the many questions about other issues that we may deal with in implementing the reforms to the police force in Northern Ireland, because they are not subject to the order.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) said that the order was an acceptance that the peace process was failing. That is not the case and I hope that he will not use that interpretation. He missed my opening comments, in which I said that, in spite of the Government's considerable efforts to bring about the necessary agreement on the outstanding policing issues, it has not been possible to establish the Policing Board, which we regret.

I have warm words for the full-time reserve. The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) referred to morale in policing, yet he then came out with the unfounded and inaccurate comment that the full-time reserve will be wiped out. The position is as I set it out yesterday. It will be phased out, but only when— *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentlemen will care to listen to this. It will be phased out only when the prevailing security situation and policing requirements permit. Those will be reviewed in the spring.

I acknowledge that I have not been able to deal with all the points raised, but I hope that the House will accept the order.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Police (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 (S.I., 2001 No. 2513), dated 18th July 2001, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th July, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord): We now come to the business motion. The Question is as on the Order paper.

Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We now come to the motion on deferred Divisions. The Question is as on the Order Paper.

Hon. Members: Aye.

Business of the House

5.23 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office (Mr. Stephen Twigg): I beg to move,

That, at this day's sitting—

(1) the Motions standing on the Order Paper in the name of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection may be made notwithstanding paragraph (2)(a) of Standing Order No. 121 (Nomination of select committees);

(2) the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on any Motion relating to the membership of Select Committees not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such motion, and such Questions shall include the questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved;

(3) the Motions may be proceeded with, though opposed, after Seven o'clock; and

(4) Standing Order No. 38 (Procedure on divisions) shall apply and the Order [28th June] relating to Deferred divisions shall not apply if, after the time for the interruption of business, the opinion of the Speaker as to the decision on a Question is challenged in respect of any proceedings on the Motions.

I apologise for my eagerness a moment ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall briefly outline the purpose of the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons. In effect, the House is being asked to approve the timing of today's debates on appointments to Select Committees.

The motion sets aside paragraph 2(a) of Standing Order No. 121, which provides that motions proposing nomination to departmental Select Committees must have at least two days' notice. Normally, that provision makes perfect sense and works to the advantage of the House as it prevents it from being bounced into nominations and ensures that hon. Members have opportunities to propose amendments. However, if we did not set it aside today, we would be unable, prior to the House rising tomorrow for the recess, to set up the Select Committees in question and make the other changes identified by the Committee of Selection.

I hope that the House will agree that in those circumstances it is right to consider the new proposals from the Committee of Selection before we rise for the summer. We are allowing up to 90 minutes to debate the appointments to the Select Committees. As I stated earlier in the week, previous Parliaments were only ever given one and a half hours to discuss the appointments to all the Select Committees.

A number of hon. Members wish to speak to the main motion and I hope that we can move on to it promptly.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton): Agreed.

5.25 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): That is all very well. The Minister said 90 minutes. He probably thought that that sounded longer than an hour and a half. Here we are yet again being subjected unnecessarily to an arbitrary limitation on time. After all, we are all in relaxed mood. We are about to be off for almost three months. There is no hurry whatever. It is Thursday evening. Looking around the Chamber, I see colleagues smiling

and anticipating their buckets and spades. So what is the rush? Why do the Government feel it necessary yet again to impose an arbitrary time limit of 90 minutes on an important debate?

I judge from the number of hon. Members present that there is going to be quite a lot to be said in that 90 minutes, so I have no intention of detaining the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Well, with encouragement, I could detain the House, but on this occasion I judge that colleagues are ready to get on to the substance of the debate, as indeed am I. I have a few observations to make on one or two of the proposed Committee memberships. I am absolutely determined that we will not let these matters slide by and allow the Government to impose arbitrary time limits on debates without some protest.

The Government cannot possibly know whether the House is satisfied that 90 minutes to debate the matters before us is remotely sufficient. We shall have to cover such matters as the proposed membership and probe why some of the changes are being made. I want to say a few words about the changes to Committees and the mechanisms whereby they are agreed, or not agreed as the case may be. I have other queries about the membership of other Committees. There is a lot of substance here. It is not a matter that will be skated over lightly. It is not a matter that we will deal with on the nod. It is something that we want to probe, question and query. Whether the House will want to vote on the memberships of individual Committees is something that we will ponder as the debate unwinds. Ninety minutes will almost certainly not be adequate so I record that fact yet again.

Question put and agreed to.

Select Committees

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Janet Anderson, Mr. Ronnie Campbell, Tony Cunningham, Mrs. Janet Dean, Mr. Lindsay Hoyle, Miss Julie Kirkbride, Mrs. Jacqui Lait, Mr. Simon Thomas and Mr. Dennis Turner be members of the Catering Committee.—[*Ms Karen Buck, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord): With this it will be convenient to debate motions 7 to 17.

5.27 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): Well, here we are giving mature consideration to a matter that has caused considerable controversy. This is an opportunity for the House to think again about how we have arrived at this position. We have arrived at it, have we not, because the House woke up rather late in the day to the fact that the way in which proposals were made to us for the membership and chairmanship of Select Committees was less than satisfactory. The reason for that is that, for as long as anyone can remember, and in probably all the political parties, the composition of Select Committees has been dealt with by a process of hon. Members going to the Whips and saying, "Please may I be on this Committee?"

The Whips then deliberate in their mysterious and sinister way on whether hon. Members should be pleased or not. Then, worse than all of that, the usual channels—the Whips and the so-called party managers on each side of the House—come together and divvy up the membership of Committees. That is all bearing in mind, of course, that every Select Committee must have a clear majority of Government Members. That is the absurdity. That of course sets the whole tone and gives the whole flavour, and was all thought to be very satisfactory—was it not? It meant that the Whips and the party managers were able to please certain Members by giving them a Select Committee position and to punish others by withholding such a position. It is from that situation that the discontent that we have seen in the House recently has arisen.

The point that worries me even more than that, and where there may even be a slight departure from integrity, is that we are in danger of accepting that a similar mechanism is at work in the allocation of Committee chairmanships. This whole problem arose in relation to chairmanships, although it has now spilled over into the membership of the Committees. The irony is that we are, I suspect, being asked to sanction the position we would have been in had the whole mechanism not worked to the disadvantage of certain Members: we are about to be asked to sanction, or agree to, the carve-up of Select Committee chairmanships in the same way as we were asked to do for the Committee memberships.

I simply put the question—the next 90 minutes will, I suspect, be the only opportunity for us to do so—are we, as the House of Commons, now satisfied, first, that Select Committee chairmanships should be allocated arbitrarily between Government and Opposition Members and, secondly, that Select Committee members should be expected to accept that as a given? Are they to be told by their respective Whips and the usual channels, "This is the person that we have decided will chair your Committee"?

David Winnick (Walsall, North): When did the right hon. Gentleman become so passionate about this issue?

[David Winnick]

On 13 July 1992, when the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) was sacked—when he was not reappointed to the Select Committee on Health—there was a Division on the issue. I know that the right hon. Gentleman was a Minister at the time, but presumably he did not feel so passionately about the issue as to resign and vote with those of us who thought that the then Government's decision was wrong.

Mr. Forth: That is true. When the hon. Gentleman is a member of the Government, as I am sure he will be shortly when his talents are recognised by the Prime Minister, he knows that he will have to face the same dilemma—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I plead guilty to the fact that I was not prepared to forsake a modest—indeed, a minuscule—ministerial career for the principle that I now advocate. I plead guilty to that. I further plead guilty to the fact that, yes, my view of the world, of the universe, of the House of Commons and of my role has changed since 1992. That may come as a revelation to the hon. Gentleman—I know that he is a bit slower on the uptake than most of us. However, I remind him that as I have had the privilege and the pleasure of four years in opposition, of which I have enjoyed every minute, and that as I propose to continue enjoying it—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]—for the next four years, under whichever leader we choose, I see the matter differently. I make no secret of that, nor do I make any apology for it.

I point out to the House that this will be the only opportunity, possibly for four or five years, for us as a House to express how we feel about the mechanism for deciding, first, who are the members of Select Committees and secondly, and of equal importance, who will chair those Committees. If hon. Members think that they won a great victory during the past two or three days I shall not burst their balloon, but I suggest that we are still sleepwalking through the system. By and large, we accept the system, although in a moment or two I shall have a word to say about the International Development Select Committee which has, rather bizarrely, been an exception to it. In general, it appears that the House and Members are prepared to accept the proposition that the Whips in each party will decide who shall be the Chairman of each Select Committee.

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The right hon. Gentleman and I have known one another for a long time. He was always passionate about things in the European Parliament and has continued to be passionate in this place. I think that we are in agreement that the chairmanship of Select Committees is a matter for the Committees themselves: it is not for the Whips or for the parties to decide between them who should be the Chair of a Select Committee. The rules on Select Committees state clearly that the Committees themselves should choose the Chairman—not a named Chairman, but a Chairman from among the Committee's members. In the debate earlier in the week, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House made it clear that he wants that to happen. That is one reason why the International Development Committee failed to agree on who should be its Chairman.

Mr. Forth: That may or may not be the case, and I shall come to that Committee in a moment.

I want to make a challenge to hon. Members, and I speak as someone who is not a member of a Select Committee, so I have no interest in this matter at all. Although the hon. Lady and I would like the Committees to elect their Chairmen, I hesitate on that point, and I suspect that what I am about to say may lie behind the view of the Leader of the House. As long as the Government have a clear majority of members on Select Committees, the hon. Lady might understand a slight reticence on the part of Opposition Members about freeing up the whole system, as she and I would like, and letting a thousand chairmanships bloom, with Committees able to make their selection. Would there be any protection for Opposition Members in those circumstances? That, I predict, will be the reply from Ministers. The Leader of the House will say that the carve-up that occurs gives protection to Opposition Members.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I do not want to prolong the right hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I must point out that there is a difference between an agreement between the Whips on the principle that certain Committees will have a Chairman from an Opposition party and an agreement between the Whips on a named person. It is the latter that is wrong and objectionable, and the Whips have increasingly been pushing for such agreements in the last two Sessions.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. That may well be a solution, or at least a partial solution, that we should all consider. It would make a lot of sense to me if Committees were given, perhaps not total choice, but at least a degree of choice. The system could allow the chairmanship of certain Committees to be at the disposal of Opposition Members.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): Order. May I remind the right hon. Gentleman that we are discussing not the Chairmen but the membership of Committees?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I will say no more about chairmanships per se. I simply believed that the subject flowed naturally from the substance of the membership of the Committees that we are being asked to consider.

I sense that other Members want to speak—I hope that they do—and I do not want to prevent that, although hon. Members know that I am capable of speaking at length, if I want to. I trust, however, that others want to make a contribution, and this is the opportunity to do so.

I want to say a few words about the membership of the International Development Committee. We will have to return to the issue on another occasion and at greater length. I suspect that some rather disgraceful things have taken place, and I am sad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Mr. Leigh) is to be discharged from the Committee, to be replaced by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Tony Baldry). I suspect that the reasons for that discharge are pretty seedy and will not bear close examination because I do not think that they will reflect any credit on the Whips, the party managers or, I regret to say, the members of that Committee.

I do not want to air the subject now, but I want to state on the record that what occurred in that Committee was regrettable and unfortunate. I hope that some of the

Members involved feel ashamed of themselves. I am not sure that it is any sort of guide as to how selection should happen. Those events give occasion for hesitation about whether we should completely free up the system.

Many issues arise from the motions. I had intended to ask about the to-ings and fro-ings on the Modernisation, Procedure and Public Accounts Committees, but I will leave it to others to do that, if they believe that important issues are involved. Suffice it to say, this is the opportunity for Members to make their points about the membership of Committees. This is the opportunity for the House to express and reinforce its view, not only to the Leader of the House but to my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench, because it affects all of them equally. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will take that opportunity because it may not arise again for quite some time.

5.40 pm

The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook): I am in full agreement with the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) on at least one thing—he can continue to enjoy being in opposition. I assure him that all Labour Members will work to ensure that that continues for as long as possible.

The right hon. Gentleman's observations as a tribune of the people, standing up to the forces of authority and the Whips, would have more moral force if there were evidence that he had done that when he sat on the Government Benches. He may wave his hand dismissively, but that is absolutely the case. My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (David Winnick) referred to the vote in July 1992 when the Government removed the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) from the chairmanship of the Select Committee on Health. At that time, the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst was certainly not sleepwalking because he walked through the Division Lobby to vote him off the Committee.

The right hon. Gentleman has made a clear and commendably frank admission that the Conservative Government did not allow a genuinely free vote on a House of Commons matter. We allowed a free vote on Monday and are here again today because we have acted to put into place the will of the House, which they tried to frustrate when in office.

David Winnick: Is there not another aspect to consider? Not only have the Government rightly accepted Monday's decision, but the Modernisation Committee, as my right hon. Friend confirmed in business questions, is rightly examining the way in which we appoint hon. Members to Select Committees. The current system is unsatisfactory. The Tory Government refused to budge on the issue, as they did on so many others while they were in office.

Mr. Cook: I am happy to agree that the Modernisation Committee has met and considered the matter. I shall return to that topic before I conclude because it is right that the House knows what we intend the timetable to be.

I hope that this debate will prove less controversial than Monday's debate. The motion on the Order Paper puts my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee and my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson) on the Foreign Affairs Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Bennett) intervened on me on Monday to ask whether it would be possible for the timetable for those appointments to be made before the House rises for the recess. I agreed that it would be, but that time was tight. I am pleased that this debate allows us to fulfil that commitment and deliver what we agreed on Monday.

We have also taken the opportunity to bring before the House the members of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee so that that last departmental Select Committee will be approved before we rise. If the House approves the names, there are contingency plans for all three Committees to meet shortly after the debate to choose a Chairman and work out a programme. We have set up the Select Committees within four weeks of the Queen's Speech, which is in record time. That beats even our previous record of doing it within two months in 1997 and is way ahead of the five months that the Conservative Government took in 1987.

Over the past week, things have been said about the Whips Office which have not been unmingled pleasure and flattery. I want to balance that. People worked very hard to ensure that the names were brought before the House on Monday and, as a consequence of the vote then, presented today. We should recognise the effort that went into that. The Whips have ensured that 350 places have been filled from a possible 500 candidates. That is not a bad achievement within a space of a week and a half.

On the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North, the Modernisation Committee is one of the Committees that has met since Monday. It may help the House if I outline how we intend to proceed. We decided at our meeting on Wednesday that our first priority would be to produce a report on the working of the Select Committees. I would expect that report to be comprehensive and to consider the many recommendations made in the previous Parliament by the Liaison Committee, as well as those that we have received from bodies outside the House.

There are several issues to consider—for example, the proposal that the Liaison Committee repeatedly made in the previous Parliament to hold a half-hour debate on matters of topical interest suggested by the Select Committees immediately after Question Time once a week. Another contentious suggestion—I heard voices against it on Monday and since then—is the Liaison Committee's proposal to introduce a salary structure for the Chairmen of Select Committees. The Modernisation Committee should examine that matter and report back to the House.

Another matter, which is recognised universally on both sides of the House, is the presentation and style of Select Committee reports. Leaving aside the excellence and the exciting nature of the contents of those reports, their presentation does not necessarily convey that excitement in an attractive style and format. The reports appear to predate the invention of graphics and colour printing. We should address those issues if we want to ensure that the House exercises its powers of scrutiny in a way that connects with the public and that they find attractive and inviting.

[Mr. Cook]

We have resolved that, to take forward that study, we will take evidence from the members of the Liaison Committee in the previous Parliament; from those who served on the Norton commission, set up by the Opposition; and from those involved in the Hansard Society's recent report. Any report in which all those issues are considered in the round will necessarily take rather longer than is desirable to address the process of appointing Members to Select Committees. That is why it is important that we respond urgently to the need for a report on the nomination process to Select Committees. That is urgent because, in the autumn, we shall be faced with the need to fill vacancies as they arise on Select Committees.

I understand that it must be the will of the House to try to have in place a new system before such vacancies arise and before the House is asked to fill them. That is why the Modernisation Committee has already resolved to meet in September to discuss the issue. This depends on the agreement of the Committee, but I hope that it will be possible to bring a report on nominating Members to vacancies on Select Committees before the House shortly after we return from the recess.

Last month, we were faced with a choice—whether we sought to set up the Select Committees by the recess, or whether we first sought to lever into place a new nominations system for Select Committees. If we had done the latter, we should have been unable to proceed with the nominations for the Select Committees until well into the autumn and, possibly, not until November.

Mr. Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield): I accept the point made by the right hon. Gentleman, but I am sure that he will agree that if towards the end of the previous Parliament better recognition had been given to the growing disquiet about the Select Committee selection systems and the opportunities that were presented—only in Opposition time—to debate such issues had been taken, we could have made progress before the general election, which would have prevented the events that have taken place from occurring.

Mr. Cook: It is always the case that if decisions had been taken beforehand, one would not be faced with the need to take them afterwards. Starting from where we began after the election, we faced the choice that I have mentioned. It is always very nice to think that we can press the fast-rewind button and have a different set of choices, but that option was not available to us.

The Government are entitled to be given credit for meeting the timetable of setting up the Select Committees by the recess. Since Monday, 26 Select Committees have met and have started the process of appointing a Chairman and choosing a work programme. After this debate, a further three will have met, so by the recess, 29 separate Select Committees will have begun scrutinising the Government.

I entirely accept, however, that the message of the past few days is that this is not a time for the Government, having set up the Select Committees, to rest on their oars. We now must apply the same urgency that we put into setting up the Select Committees to the task of implementing a fair system of nomination to them. That is why I give an undertaking that we will work through the recess and immediately when the House returns in the hope that, by autumn, before there are vacancies on Select Committees, we have implemented a new system that is accepted as transparent, seen by all Members as fair and ensures that this Chamber has the final say in appointments.

5.50 pm

Mr. Andrew Stunell (Hazel Grove): I am delighted that the House is faced with another set of Government motions that cover substantially the points raised in debate and by the results of the votes on Monday. It is fortunate, to say the least, that we have had three opportunities in a fortnight to address the fundamental question of how the House can best hold the Government to account. We welcome the change of heart on nominations to the Select Committees on Transport, Local Government and the Regions and on Foreign Affairs. We shall support those motions unreservedly.

However, it would be a mistake to suppose that all the problems have been solved and all the difficulties relieved simply by returning to the subject today. I was pleased to hear renewed assurances from the Leader of the House that the processes of examination and reform will go ahead speedily. I say again to him that the House has debated some clear proposals that would go some way to resolving the problems. I hope that the Modernisation Committee, on which I happily serve, will make proposals that will satisfy the demands of the House.

There are even doubts and reservations among Members about some of today's nominations. The right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) referred to the International Development Committee. Some of us have concerns about the change in its membership and the implication that another Member is to be imposed on it in sequence. Whatever the ins and outs, the appointment has been disputed and difficult. It is to be regretted that revised procedures for nominations will not be established before the Committee appoints a Chairman. The Leader of the House will be well aware, too, of the difficulties over the Information Committee, which was reduced to appointing what it described as a temporary Chairman until October, while difficulties are resolved.

There is no doubt, therefore, that reform must be pursued vigorously. Nevertheless, on balance it is our view that the motions should be supported because it is of fundamental importance that the Committees be up and functioning in some form or another, even if subsequently they must be reviewed and reformed.

5.53 pm

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): Enoch Powell once said to me that gratitude is a commodity in short supply in politics, and never were truer words spoken. The House owes a debt to the Leader of the House because he has responded with alacrity. He took what could have been interpreted as a defeat on Monday with charm and graciousness, and he has honoured his promise, which augurs well for his time as Leader of the House. I for one am grateful to him, as I hope are Members of all parties.

It is essential that if the Modernisation Committee is considering the payment of sums of money to Chairmen of Select Committees, those Chairmen are not appointed

or imposed on Committees by the Whips. It would be wrong if that became another example of patronage. In fact, it would destroy the good effect of the move. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to bear that in mind, and in doing so, to recognise that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) made one very good point.

Mr. Forth: Only one?

Sir Patrick Cormack: Well, I am always a little careful about what I say about my right hon. Friend, for fear of encouraging him to say more. However, he made one very good point, about the appointment of Chairmen, which was taken up and amplified by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott)—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already made the point that we are discussing the membership of Select Committees, not the chairmanship.

Sir Patrick Cormack: All right, Madam Deputy Speaker; of course I accept your strictures. I urge the Leader of the House to bear those points in mind and thank him again for what he has done; I hope that we shall see some good proposals early in the autumn.

5.56 pm

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As a member of the International Development Committee, I should make the situation concerning membership clear. Obviously we accept that the Committee has been allocated to the Opposition, but perhaps we would have liked some discussion of the allocation of various Committees. I hope that in future there will not be a status quo, and there will be more movement in party ownership of particular Select Committees. In this case, the argument is not about who should have the ownership of the Committee; we accept that it is from the Conservative Members allocated to that Committee that we choose a Chairman. We have had two meetings: yesterday the group was split, five Members against five, and again today, so there is obviously deadlock. It is good for Committees to have the opportunity to question candidates for the chairmanship closely, as we did yesterday.

Mr. Forth: Is the hon. Lady aware of such a process in any other Committee? Did the Modernisation Committee, for example, quiz the Leader of the House closely on his credentials for taking an even-handed approach to the so-called modernisation of the House? I am puzzled why that process has taken place in only one Committee, as far as I know. Can the hon. Lady explain why it should happen in the International Development Committee and not, apparently, in any other Committee?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Once again, I remind all hon. Members that we are discussing the membership of Committees. Could they please confine their remarks to that?

Ann Clwyd: Thank you for putting us back on track, Madam Deputy Speaker; I shall keep closely to the path that you have outlined.

The International Development Committee deals with developing countries, and subjects such as the position of women in those countries, and poverty. The Chairman meets many people throughout the world. It is important that the Committee, on which I have served from the start, should have faith in the person who is going to become Chairman; the membership should therefore be able to decide who should hold that position. I do not want to go over the subject again, but there should not be strong intimations about who the Committee should support. The Select Committee rules say—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I really must bring the hon. Lady to order. As I have said before, we are discussing the membership of the Committee; we are not here to debate who should chair it.

Ann Clwyd: Thank you Madam Deputy Speaker. The role of Committee members is important. People who have served on a Select Committee for a number of years should be considered as candidates over and above people who are parachuted in because the Whips have decided who should take the chair. That is why I object to the way things are being done. The Leader of the House has made it clear that he intends to reform all that.

I think that we were all pleased that the Select Committees got under way very early, but perhaps on reflection we should not have put pressure on our Whips to set up the Committees before the beginning of the recess. On reflection, that was a mistake. We should have had more time to ponder the matter.

Mr. Tony McWalter (Hemel Hempstead): Is my hon. Friend saying that the list of members of Select Committees usually has one member who has been put in, parachuted in or whatever, and that the process of compiling the membership of a Select Committee needs some attention?

Ann Clwyd: Yes, I am.

I shall now wrap up my speech, my hon. Friends will be pleased to know. The matter needs a lot more reflection. There should be more transparency. We want to know why some people get on Select Committees and others do not, and why some people who have served on Select Committees are taken off and not given a reason why. I support the proposal by the Leader of the House to make the membership of Select Committees much more transparent in future.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That Janet Anderson, Mr. Ronnie Campbell, Tony Cunningham, Mrs. Janet Dean, Mr. Lindsay Hoyle, Miss Julie Kirkbride, Mrs. Jacqui Lait, Mr. Simon Thomas and Mr. Dennis Turner be members of the Catering Committee.

COMMITTEES

Madam Deputy Speaker: With permission, I shall put together motions 7 and 8.

Ordered,

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

That Mr. Bill Olner be discharged from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and Mr. Austin Mitchell be added to the Committee.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

That Donald Anderson, Mr. David Chidgey, Sir Patrick Cormack, Mr. Fabian Hamilton, Mr. Eric Illsley, Andrew Mackinlay, Mr. John Maples, Mr. Bill Olner, Mr. Greg Pope, Sir John Stanley and Ms Gisela Stuart be members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.—*[Ms Karen Buck, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Edward Leigh be discharged from the International Development Committee, and Tony Baldry be added to the Committee.—*[Ms Karen Buck, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 55.

Division No. 37] **[6.2 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atherton, Ms Candy
Atkins, Charlotte
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin, John
Bacon, Richard
Bailey, Adrian
Baldry, Tony
Barker, Greg
Barrett, John
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Hilary
Bennett, Andrew
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blizzard, Bob
Boateng, Rt Hon Paul
Boswell, Tim
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brady, Graham
Brennan, Kevin
Brinton, Mrs Helen
Brooke, Annette
Browne, Desmond
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burnham, Andy
Burns, Simon
Burnside, David
Burt, Alistair
Cairns, David
Cameron, David
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chaytor, David
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clark, Paul *(Gillingham)*
Clarke, Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colman, Tony
Cook, Rt Hon Robin *(Livingston)*
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Cranston, Ross
Cruddas, Jon
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis-Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
David, Wayne
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Davies, Quentin *(Grantham)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Dodds, Nigel
Donaldson, Jeffrey M
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Drew, David
Drown, Ms Julia
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ewing, Annabelle
Field, Rt Hon Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gardiner, Barry
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gilroy, Linda
Grayling, Chris
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grogan, John
Hain, Peter
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hanson, David
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Heppell, John
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Keith
Holmes, Paul
Hood, Jimmy
Hope, Phil
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Howells, Dr Kim
Hughes, Beverley *(Stretford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Hutton, John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Johnson, Miss Melanie *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Jowell, Rt Hon Tessa
Joyce, Eric
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Keetch, Paul
Kemp, Fraser
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Kumar, Dr Ashok
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lamb, Norman
Lammy, David
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen
Liddell-Grainger, Ian
Lloyd, Tony
Llwyd, Elfyn
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luff, Peter
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCabe, Stephen
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDonald, Calum
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIntosh, Miss Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
Mahmood, Khalid
Mallaber, Judy
Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moran, Margaret
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Jim *(Eastwood)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norris, Dan
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
Olner, Bill
Organ, Diana
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Perham, Linda
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lewisham E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prisk, Mark
Prosser, Gwyn
Pugh, Dr John
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Randall, John
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Cov'try NW)*
Robinson, Iris *(Strangford)*

Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Ernie
Roy, Frank
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Ryan, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Salter, Martin
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Shaw, Jonathan
Sheridan, Jim
Simon, Siôn
Simpson, Alan *(Nottingham S)*
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Angela *(Basildon)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stunell, Andrew
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Gareth R *(Harrow W)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tynan, Bill
Vis, Dr Rudi
Walley, Ms Joan
Walter, Robert
Ward, Ms Claire
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
Weir, Michael
White, Brian
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Wills, Michael
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ivor Caplin and
Mr. Graham Stringer.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Austin, John
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Blunt, Crispin
Brazier, Julian
Burgon, Colin
Cable, Dr Vincent
Calton, Patsy
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Carmichael, Alistair
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clwyd, Ann
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Davidson, Ian
Doughty, Sue
Duncan, Peter
Evans, Nigel
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flynn, Paul
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Francois, Mark
Gerrard, Neil
Goodman, Paul
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Hancock, Mike
Hayes, John
Heath, David
Hoban, Mark
Hopkins, Kelvin
Laws, David
McCafferty, Chris
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWalter, Tony
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall-Andrews, Robert
Morgan, Julie
Öpik, Lembit
Price, Adam
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Sanders, Adrian
Skinner, Dennis
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Tyler, Paul
Waring, Robert N
Watkinson, Angela
Wiggin, Bill
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*
Winnick, David
Wood, Mike
Wyatt, Derek

Tellers for the Noes:
Jeremy Corbyn and
John McDonnell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Madam Deputy Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall take motions 10 and 11 together.

Ordered,

Northern Ireland Affairs

That Mr. Adrian Bailey, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Roy Beggs, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. Tony Clarke, Mr. Stephen McCabe, Mr. Eddie McGrady, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Stephen Pound, Mr. Peter Robinson, the Reverend Martin Smyth, Mark Tami and Mr. Bill Tynan be members of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

Scottish Affairs

That Mr. David Marshall be discharged from the Scottish Affairs Committee, and Mrs. Irene Adams be added to the Committee.—*[Ms Karen Buck, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

Ordered,

That Andrew Bennett, Sir Paul Beresford, Mr. Clive Betts, Mr. Gregory Campbell, Mr. John Cummings, Mr. Brian H. Donohoe, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mrs. Louise Ellman, Chris Grayling, Helen Jackson, Ms Oona King, Miss Anne McIntosh, Mr. Bill O'Brien, Dr. John Pugh, Christine Russell, Mr. George Stevenson and Mr. Bill Wiggin be members of the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee.—*[Ms Karen Buck, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

COMMITTEES

Madam Deputy Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the further motions relating to Committees.

Ordered,

Environmental Audit

That Dr. Brian Iddon be discharged from the Environmental Audit Committee and Mr. Colin Challen be added to the Committee.

Human Rights (Joint Committee)

That Tony Cunningham be discharged from the Human Rights (Joint Committee) and Mr. Kevin McNamara be added to the Committee.

Modernisation

That Helen Jackson and Julie Morgan be discharged from the Modernisation Committee and Mr. David Kidney, Mr. Greg Knight and Anne Picking be added to the Committee.

Procedure

That Mr. John Lyons be discharged from the Procedure Committee.

Public Accounts

That Mr. Edward Leigh be a member of the Committee of Public Accounts.—*[Ms Karen Buck, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Wolverhampton and Dudley Brewery

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Phil Woolas.*]

6.16 pm

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): I am delighted that so many hon. Members are in the House to hear the opening of the debate. I am particularly grateful to Mr. Speaker, who is of course a renowned teetotaller, for choosing the subject of this evening's Adjournment debate, because it is, of course, Mr. Speaker's choice on a Thursday.

I raise a subject of great importance, particularly to those of us who live in the west midlands, and I am delighted to see the three hon. Members representing Wolverhampton in their places. I hope that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South–West (Rob Marris) will be able to make a brief contribution to the debate because the main brewery to which I shall refer is in his constituency.

This is really a story of capitalism. I am a great believer in capitalism, but I believe in responsible capitalism, and in people who are in a position to control others' lives because of what they own doing it responsibly. The Wolverhampton and Dudley brewery is an excellent example of responsible capitalism. The company is in the top 300 in the country; it is the country's leading regional brewer. It has pubs as far apart as Alnwick in the north, Weston-super-Mare in the south-west, Corby in the east and Aberystwyth in Wales in the west. It owns Marston's in Burton, the Mansfield brewery and Camerons in Hartlepool, but the heart of the company is in the heart of England, in the black country in the west midlands. It is a thriving, well-run company and has been a cornerstone of local community life since 1890.

The present managing director is the fifth generation of Thompsons to have had a prominent position in the Wolverhampton and Dudley brewery. The company has contributed greatly to the life of the local community. There are two charitable trusts which have education as their particular objective. It has grown over the years, but its growth by acquisition has been based on success and a sense of responsibility. It is a fiercely independent company in an industry that is increasingly dominated by a few big breweries. It has 1,800 pubs spread around the country, most of them concentrated in the west midlands.

In my constituency there are pubs like the Dudley Arms in Himley, the White Hart in Kinver, the Greyhound in Swindon and the Plough in Trysull—all wonderful English names for good English pubs, each one of them different from the others, each with its own distinctive character and ambience. That is what we mean by an English pub. The plastic uniformity of the theme pub is not for any true Englishman. I would resist to the end the development of pubs in that direction.

The company is now threatened by a hostile and aggressive takeover by Pubmaster, a company that is entirely foreign-financed. I am not a little Englander—I am a great believer in our place in Europe—but that does not diminish my fierce local pride and patriotism, and I do not want the Wolverhampton and Dudley brewery to fall into the hands of foreigners who neither know nor care about the English pub.

What is worse, we know that if Pubmaster acquires the company, it will sell off the breweries and keep the pubs. The ales that people enjoy would then be at risk. There is no guarantee that the breweries would all survive, and if they did, they would certainly be swallowed up by one of the big conglomerates. That is where the Minister comes in. I am most grateful to her for being here. She should carefully consider referring the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): The hon. Gentleman has spoken eloquently about the uniqueness of the pubs associated with the Wolverhampton and Dudley brewery, and they are indeed wonderful pubs, but I declare my interest as a dedicated Banks's boozer drinker. It is not the pub but the booze that attracts me. The beer is wonderful. The uniqueness of the beer brewed at the Park brewery at Wolverhampton is at great risk. Not only the beer and the pubs but 1,700 or 1,800 jobs at the breweries are at risk. We really must keep our beer—Banks's beer, Marston's beer—brewed where it has always traditionally been brewed.

Sir Patrick Cormack: That seems to have been a mini-speech in the middle of mine. I have a great affection for the hon. Gentleman and I agree with every word that he says, even though he has stolen some of my best lines. He probably knows more about beer than anyone else in the House, and I hope he will soon be reincarnated as Chairman of the Catering Committee.

If the hostile bid succeeded, there would be asset stripping of the worst sort. Furthermore, the pubs themselves, which Pubmaster says it wants to keep, would be threatened by the plastic uniformity of the theme pub, with everything, including the menu, the same in every one. That is the negation of the English pub, which is unique to this country and is already under threat. There are far too many villages and parts of towns where the pub is at risk or has closed. The figures are frightening.

We are talking about a thriving company, not one that needs bailing out, yet it is at risk. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) talked about jobs. The total number of jobs involved is 17,000, and the number of jobs at risk in our part of the world—I checked the figures this afternoon—is 4,500, if we take into account the drivers and all the others involved.

Pubmaster's unscrupulous approach was seen this week when the brewery had to take legal action over Pubmaster's divulging of information to potential buyers of breweries when it has bought the pubs.

We are dealing with a real human story that is repeated in many homes in my constituency and those of all the hon. Gentlemen attending this debate. A cloud of uncertainty hangs over many lives. In some cases, we are talking about families who have given two, three, four or five generations of service to this local company and have been well treated, showing a wonderful corporate spirit in return. I spoke about the charitable doings of the trusts established by the family, but the workers give enormous sums of money to the Compton hospice. They have a corporate and community identity and spirit, and it is at risk.

I appeal to the Minister to consider a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, because of the threat to the breweries. I also wish to appeal through the

Minister to the institutional shareholders. There is no doubt that if the individual shareholders had their say, the sale would never take place. However, the final outcome of the hostile bid will be determined not in the homes of Wolverhampton or south Staffordshire but in a few boardrooms in the City of London. I wish to say to those institutional shareholders, "You have a thriving company here in which many people take great pride. You have jobs that are secure and a product that is appreciated and enjoyed. You have pubs that are visited by people who regard them as their locals and who enjoy going there. Do not put all that at risk for the sake of a quick buck".

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): The hon. Gentleman speaks well. He said that he supports the notion of capitalist means of production, which has indeed brought great wealth across the world. However, he speaks like a socialist and that is welcome. On a serious note, the danger of international capitalism of the type that he has eloquently described is that it can be completely disconnected from its localities and become hostile to the very people who ensure results for the shareholders. Will the hon. Gentleman make a personal appeal to the institutional and other shareholders to recognise that their profits are at risk if they continue with that folly?

Sir Patrick Cormack: The hon. Gentleman is being a little mischievous. I am not a socialist. As he well knows, I am an unrepentant capitalist, as I made plain earlier. However, I believe in responsible capitalism, which has done so much to help the countries of western Europe, including ours, enjoy our present standard of living. In fact, I am involved in an annual award for responsible capitalism, which was presented last year by no less a person than the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We made common cause on that issue and we will continue to do so.

The company is a good example of responsible capitalism, but it is in danger from an avaricious, inhuman capitalism—there is good and bad in everything—and I repudiate that. I hope that those who have the ultimate say will also repudiate it, so that the people whose lives have been so clouded by uncertainty will be able to relax this summer. The bid is not in the best interests of the industry, of the midlands, of those who work for the company or of the consumers who enjoy the products that are produced.

6.28 pm

Rob Marris (Wolverhampton, South-West): I should declare a slight non-pecuniary interest, in that my constituency office is rented at a commercial rate from the brewery and I am currently negotiating a new lease. I find it surprising but pleasing that the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir Patrick Cormack) is coming around to the views of Labour Members about responsible capitalism and, if his current trajectory continues, he may even cross the Floor.

On a more serious note, the hon. Gentleman and I are at one on this issue. The breweries are local institutions and they support other local institutions, namely the pubs of which he spoke so eloquently. Pubs are a fine British, as well as English, tradition.

I am especially concerned about the jobs in Wolverhampton, South-West, as the Park brewery is in my constituency. I may not be as big a beer drinker as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner)—few hon. Members are—but I do drink beer and am concerned about the brands made by the Wolverhampton and Dudley brewery.

The Campaign for Real Ale has always been very clear that that company—Britain's largest independent regional brewer—does a great job. We must protect the brands that it makes, and the fear is that the pubs will be sold off if the takeover goes through. The brands would then also be sold off, with the result that they would not be brewed in the original breweries. That would be a loss to the nation's taste buds.

I thank the hon. Member for South Staffordshire for raising the matter in this Adjournment debate.

6.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Miss Melanie Johnson): I join in congratulating the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) on securing this debate. He and my hon. Friends the Members for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner), for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), for Wolverhampton, South-West (Rob Marris), for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson) and for Dudley, South (Mr. Pearson) clearly all feel passionately about the subject of the debate.

When I realised that I was to reply to the debate, I did not appreciate that it would also be about socialism and capitalism, and about good and bad. Wide new horizons have opened up of which we were unaware when we began. I fully recognise that this is a key concern to the hon. Member for South Staffordshire, and to other hon. Members whose constituents also work for the brewery concerned. I accept that the hon. Gentleman is a passionate consumer.

I am sure that the hon. Member for South Staffordshire will appreciate that I cannot comment in detail on Pubmaster's proposed acquisition of Wolverhampton and Dudley, as the merger is being considered by the Office of Fair Trading under the Fair Trading Act 1973. In due course, the Director General of Fair Trading will advise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on whether the merger should be referred to the Competition Commission for further investigation.

What I can do, however, is set out some background to the Government's overall approach to competition policy. I can also sketch out the process for examining mergers such as this, the wider position within the beer market as a whole and the future direction of merger control.

On competition policy, my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made it clear when they announced proposals for an enterprise Bill last month that the Government intend to tackle the challenge of enterprise and productivity in the UK economy, of which an effective competition policy is a key part. It is at the heart of the Government's strategy to close the productivity gap between the UK and our industrial competitors. Competition is a key driver for innovation, productivity and growth.

Competitive markets provide the best means of ensuring that the economy's resources are put to their best use by encouraging enterprise and efficiency and

[Miss Melanie Johnson]

widening choice. Competition policy is used to ensure the efficient workings of markets, and to prevent abuses of markets that lead to less innovation, higher prices, lower choice and lower quality than would result from efficient competition. That may link up with the points made earlier about what capital at its best—as represented by the hon. Member for South Staffordshire—might consist of.

Part of the Government's competition policy is the regulation of mergers. The principal provisions for the control of merger in the UK are contained in the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Mergers qualify for investigation under the Fair Trading Act if they either pass an assets test—if more than £70 million of assets are being acquired—or a share-of-supply test. The latter applies if a share of 25 per cent. or more in the supply of a particular good or service in the United Kingdom is created or enhanced.

Under the Act, the independent Director General of Fair Trading advises the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether qualifying mergers should be referred to the Competition Commission for full investigation; the Secretary of State then decides whether to refer or not. The Commission investigates whether a merger is against the public interest and reports its conclusions to the Secretary of State. If the commission concludes that a merger may be expected to operate against the public interest, the Secretary of State may prohibit the merger, allow it to proceed subject to conditions or allow it to proceed unconditionally. There are no powers to block or impose conditions on non-newspaper mergers unless the commission reaches an adverse finding.

As I said earlier, the proposed acquisition of Wolverhampton and Dudley is being considered by the Office of Fair Trading. It might be useful, therefore, if I explain in a little more detail the analysis that the OFT undertakes. Where a merger qualifies for investigation under the Fair Trading Act, in the first instance it is the officials of the DGFT who undertake an analysis of the merger. The main aim of their evaluation of a merger is to establish its potential effect on competition, although other possible public interest issues are assessed where they may be relevant.

Ever since the monitoring process was first introduced in 1965, a primary concern of the reference policy of successive Governments, Conservative or Labour, has been the control of mergers that would have an adverse effect on competition in the United Kingdom. It is the policy of this Government to refer merger cases to the Competition Commission for further investigation primarily on competition grounds.

It is open to the DGFT and to Ministers to consider other issues, which can be broadly categorised as public interest issues and could include, for example, the effect on employment, regional development, or national security. As the DGFT's own published guidance states, however, it would only be in exceptional circumstances that such considerations might be a decisive factor. The primary purpose of our merger control policies is to consider and, if necessary, block or amend those mergers that are identified as having adverse effects on competition in markets.

As I am sure the hon. Member for South Staffordshire will appreciate, no two merger cases are identical, but the DGFT's assessment follows a similar pattern. In the first place, he will identify the markets in which the parties to the merger are involved. Where markets directly overlap, there is the most obvious possibility that there might be a reduction in competition, but competition issues may also arise where the merger involves markets that are linked vertically—where the parties are involved in different stages of the production or supply of the same goods or services.

Secondly, the structure of the markets affected by the merger is analysed so that the likely effects of the merger on the nature and degree of competition in those markets that are relevant can be assessed. Factors that may be taken into consideration include the extent and impact of any barriers to market entry and the buying power of customers. The judgment that the DGFT then makes is whether the merger would give rise to a degree of market power that would allow the merged company to raise prices or reduce quality to the detriment of its customers, or to operate in some other way that could be against the public interest.

Once the OFT has assessed the merger, the DGFT advises the Secretary of State whether the merger should be referred to the Competition Commission for further investigation. I listened to what the hon. Member for South Staffordshire and my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West said in this regard. In October last year, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tyneside, North (Mr. Byers)—the then Secretary of State—announced that he had decided to accept the DGFT's advice on reference in all but exceptional cases. This remains the Government's policy.

Such exceptional cases are not expected to arise often. It may be appropriate for Ministers to intervene, for example, where a merger raises national security issues or where there is a material change after the submission of the DGFT's advice, or where the advice of the DGFT conflicts with the views of sectoral regulators.

Should the Secretary of State decide, in the light of the DGFT's advice on a merger case, to refer it to the Competition Commission, the commission will assess whether the merger will operate against the public interest. The Fair Trading Act requires it to take into account all matters that appear to it to be relevant in the circumstances in determining whether a merger operates or may be expected to operate against the public interest.

With that background in mind, I will deal briefly with the case raised by the hon. Gentleman. Pubmaster is a pub landlord with about 2,000 pubs throughout England and Wales. Its proposed acquisition of the Wolverhampton and Dudley was notified to the OFT in June. The merger is still being assessed by the OFT and the DGFT has not yet advised Ministers whether it should be referred to the Competition Commission for further investigation. In view of the Secretary of State's role as statutory decision maker, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I cannot comment on the substance of the case.

The OFT has issued a public invitation for third party comments on the merger. I will, of course, ensure that the OFT is aware of the views that the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends have expressed today. If anyone has any comments that they wish to make, they should contact the OFT directly as soon as possible so that their views may

be taken into account in the consideration of the case and so that the DGFT can reflect them in his advice to the Secretary of State.

Mr. David Drew (Stroud): May I remind my hon. Friend of the history? Pubmaster came into being because of Whitbread's divestment under the 2,000 tied houses rule. Is it not worth reconsidering that issue? In my area, pubs were handed over haphazardly, which led to much disagreement in the intervening time. It may be worth looking at the history to find out whether the business can be managed better in future.

Miss Johnson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I have listened carefully. I cannot respond on the particular, but it may be helpful if I set out some more general observations on the brewing industry as a whole and on competition within the sector.

Historically, the beer sector was and remains the most important alcoholic drink industry in terms of UK production. Both consumption and production of beer have fallen in the past 10 years. Since 1989, the beer sector has seen considerable restructuring in the wake of the beer orders of 1989. The number of national brewers has reduced from six to three and the break-up of large, national brewer-owned pub estates has given rise to independent pub companies such as Pubmaster.

The UK brewing industry was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation in 1986. That investigation resulted in measures, known as the beer orders, being taken to weaken the links between brewers, especially large national brewers, and pubs. The orders are the Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order 1989 and the Supply of Beer (Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices) Order 1989.

The tied estate order required national brewers owning more than 2,000 pubs to release from tie half the pubs they owned in excess of that number by 1 November 1992. It also gave the national brewers' tied tenants the right to serve a guest beer and source wines, spirits and soft drinks from any supplier of their choice from 1 May 1990. The loan ties order enabled recipients of brewers' loans to terminate them without penalty on giving three months' notice, required brewers to publish wholesale price lists for their beers and prohibited brewers from imposing restrictions on the future use of licensed premises when they are sold.

The Office of Fair Trading monitors the brewing and pub industries closely and investigates any suspected anti-competitive practices, but structural changes in the industry such as the closure of breweries, or contractual matters such as the treatment of tied tenants by breweries and pub chains, cannot be dealt with under competition law.

There have been major developments in the industry since 1989, including the growth of pub chains as a counterweight to the market power of the large national brewers. The DGFT announced a review of the beer orders on 14 January 2000 and submitted his report to the Department last summer. He recommended the retention of some parts of the beer orders: the provisions relating to loan tie agreements, the prohibition on refusing to supply beer for resale and the requirement to publish wholesale prices. He recommended the removal of the remainder—the cap on the size of brewers' tied estates, the requirement on large brewers not to tie drinks other than beer, the guest beer provision and the ban on brewers preventing a pub from continuing to be used as a pub when sold—because they were no longer needed.

In his response to the DGFT's recommendations, the then Secretary of State said that the beer orders were radical and necessary in their time but that, more than 10 years on, the market had changed and some of them had now served their purpose. He agreed, in particular, with the DGFT's recommendation that the 2,000 cap on the number of pubs that a brewer can own should be revoked.

There is no doubt that the introduction of the cap in 1989 encouraged the subsequent major growth and development of retail pub chains by forcing on to the market 11,000 divested brewers' pubs. In that sense, the beer orders have served their purpose in that the cap has been instrumental in creating the market power of the retail pub companies, which is now ranged against the national brewers. Moreover, it is right that the cap should go because, as the DGFT said in his report, it is restricting the growth of those larger regional brewers that want to continue to brew.

Competitive changes in the beer industry are also affected by individual decisions on merger cases. Such cases are considered on their merits. On occasions, mergers raise competition concerns that justify a reference to the Competition Commission—for example, Bass and Carlsberg-Tetley in 1997, Whitbread and Allied Domecq in 1999 and Interbrew and Bass last year. On other occasions, competition concerns can be remedied by undertakings in lieu of a reference, as was the case for Scottish and Newcastle and Greenalls, and the Punch Group and Allied Domecq in 1999. Other transactions raise no competition concerns and are cleared, such as the merger between Grand Pub, Inntrepreneur and Spring Inns in 1997, or Wolverhampton and Dudley's acquisitions of Marston, Thompson and Evershed and of Mansfield Brewery in 1999.

As with all these cases, I can assure hon. Members that the merger that we are discussing today will be considered on its merits by the Secretary of State in the light of the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading and, in undertaking this consideration, the competition effects of the merger will be the key issue.

Sir Patrick Cormack: I intervene because we are not so time-constrained as usual in Adjournment debates. I am grateful for what the Minister has said. Will she give an absolute assurance that the social impact will be taken most seriously into account, as well as all the other factors?

Miss Johnson: I have already indicated some of the factors that can be taken into consideration, including employment issues. I cannot give him an on-the-spot undertaking on the points that he has raised, but I can assure him that these things will be properly considered. Perhaps that is the assurance that he seeks. I cannot comment further on these matters due to the nature of the consideration that Ministers need to give to them. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that. However, I hope that what I have said has shed some further light on the situation.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to Seven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 20 July 2001

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Summer Adjournment

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Pearson.]*

9.34 am

Harry Cohen (Leyton and Wanstead): Before the House adjourns for the recess, I ask it to reflect on the Government's handling of the London underground and to consider committing itself to a future debate on the subject.

I have four tube stations in my constituency, so the matter is of considerable concern to my constituents, who are also the main users of a fifth station. When I read the letters in my postbag and meet people on the streets of Leyton, Leytonstone, Wanstead and Snaresbrook, I am aware of increasing concern about the Government's handling of the underground. They promised billions of pounds of investment before the 1997 general election, but Londoners, who have been very patient, are still waiting for it to come to fruition. There was a reason for the delay: legislation had to be introduced to establish the Greater London Authority, and we had to elect a Mayor who, we were promised, would have power to improve the underground. There is now no excuse.

The Government have received a hostile press regarding the underground, but that is a little unfair, as their intention is genuine. They have promised to invest big money—£13 billion over 15 years—but the way in which they are dealing with the matter risks jeopardising much-needed improvements to the tube. The public perception is that the underground system is at risk of becoming a dog's breakfast because of the method of financing that was chosen and the obfuscation of clear management responsibility.

Before the election, I wrote to Bob Kiley, the Mayor's choice to take over the tube as Commissioner of Transport for London. I asked him about the public service comparator that will be used to check the financing for the two types of bid. Bob Kiley has a splendid record of managing underground systems around the world. His sacking this week by the Government, for their purposes, should not detract from his outstanding record.

Bob Spink (Castle Point): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman, who knows much about the subject. In view of his remarks about Bob Kiley's record and professionalism, did it not concern him greatly to hear Mr. Kiley talking about the possibility of loss of life occurring on the underground as a result of Labour's policies?

Harry Cohen: Safety is a clear issue and is tied to the need for managerial responsibility and clear management lines. I shall deal with that point in due course.

I asked Bob Kiley about the public service comparator that is used to check methods of financing to ensure that the taxpayer—especially the London council tax payer—will get the best value for money. In reply, he stated that the comparator would be used as

"the basis for LUL's selection of its preferred bidders".

The system of preferred bidders has been attacked in the past week or so by the European Union, which has called it anti-competitive, but that is a matter for another day. Mr. Kiley went on to state:

"I felt that LUL's action was unduly hasty because, aside from the safety concerns that arise from the scheme, the financial case for PPP was not proven despite the positive verdict given to the bidders.

We have always stressed that the eventual contractual proposals for the Underground would have to meet the PSC test. However, the preliminary National Audit Office (NAO) report into the Government's application of PSC raised a number of serious questions. For instance, the performance standards for the Infracos were proposed to be measured against a level of service worse than today's. On the other hand, the PSC assumed that public sector performance would remain constant in spite of the improvements that were being proposed. Furthermore, it was accepted without question that financial risk would be transferred, wholesale, to the private sector"

—that is part of the Government's case—

"when in fact this would not be the case."

Clearly, some of the risk will stay with the public sector. Bob Kiley continued:

"It was the view of the NAO that these factors undermined the ability of the PSC to deliver an accurate answer with regard to the future performance of the bidders."

He went on to say that, before considering the public service comparator,

"we have been more immediately concerned with the full value for money analysis".

His conclusion was not that different from the Government's position. He stated that,

"we can find an integrated solution to the future management of the Underground that takes advantage of private sector expertise, but recognises and provides for the risks that must continue to be borne by the public sector."

I raised obfuscation of managerial responsibility with the Leader of the House at business questions yesterday. Confusion exists and could continue. London Regional Transport and London Underground Ltd. currently run the tube, but they will eventually be subject to the control of Transport for London. The Leader of the House did not appear to know that; he did not say that in his reply to me yesterday. Although the Government have sacked Bob Kiley, provided that he remains Commissioner of Transport for Transport for London, he will take over running the tube if the plans go ahead.

I presume that, if the board members are unsatisfactory to Bob Kiley and the Mayor, their days will be numbered when the transfer goes ahead. Confusion therefore exists about the role of the current LRT board and London Underground Ltd. There is a great deal of secrecy about the infrastructure companies, which are responsible for maintenance and repair and are supposed to contribute money, too. We do not know the details of their role—for example, the sort of risks that they will take. We do not even know their identity. I presume that Transport for London will run the whole system; at least, it will have a co-ordinating role. However, it will have no impact on the maintenance and repair functions.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell): The hon. Gentleman has graphically described the current confusion about the future management structures and the process for dealing with London Underground. Does he share my anxiety that months are passing, yet we are further away than ever from any genuine improvements to the underground? I believe that the process will drag on for years.

Harry Cohen: There is no need for the process to drag on for years. Delay is a serious problem, which I shall discuss shortly.

I want to consider managerial responsibility, because the Government are setting up the system and will therefore be responsible for the future running of the underground. Yet there is a risk that they will not answer the questions of London Members of Parliament on the subject. They may claim that the tube is the responsibility of Transport for London, the Mayor and the infrastructure companies and that they are not therefore answerable. That would be a serious abuse of the House when the Government have such a hand in establishing the system.

I have read the Government's briefing, which states that the proposed system for London Underground Ltd. is not the same as that for Railtrack when the Conservative Government privatised the railways. I support the Government on that, but I am worried about the obfuscation of managerial responsibility, which continues to be imported, albeit in a slightly different form, into the Government's system. That is unacceptable; it is not a decent way in which to run a railway.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend's excellent contribution. Is he aware that one of the Government's defences is that they must have some control over London Underground because £13 billion is being invested in the system? It is unclear how much of that comes from public sources and how much will be raised through a private finance initiative. Does not that negate the principle of devolved government for London? We will end up with no one being accountable.

Harry Cohen: My hon. Friend makes a good point, which shows that confusion exists about future managerial arrangements and accountability. I do not know whether the Government said that they will have some control over the system; I believed that they were going to hand it over to Transport for London. That reveals the confusion about the current position.

Cost and delay pose a problem to the proposed new system. The *Evening Standard* reported this week that £80 million had been spent on consultancy fees on the Government's public-private partnership. That money would have been much better spent on the trains. The Government appear to believe that, because they have spent such large sums, they have to go ahead with the consultants' recommendations. That is a problem.

Let us consider the rate of return for the infrastructure companies. There is great secrecy about that, but I have read that it is likely to be some 15 to 20 per cent. per annum on the capital investment; perhaps we will find out later this year. If the figure is correct, it would be cheaper to finance the tube publicly.

The public-private partnership means vast extra expense simply because the international institutions and the Treasury follow the unnecessary ideological dogma that private is good and public is bad. That is simply not the case, especially for the tube. We could lever in private funds, but at a lower cost than is proposed. Even managers who are responsible for private finance initiative systems and public-private partnerships do not believe that the Government's proposals for the underground make sense.

The International Project Finance Association, which represents the interests of private sector companies involved in project financing, conducted a poll of its members on the PPP deal. It asked three questions. The first was:

"Do you think the Labour government is correct to pursue a PPP scheme for LU?"

The result was that 78 per cent. voted yes and 22 per cent. voted no. The second question was:

"Do you believe that the proposed PPP structure for London Underground is the correct structure to use?"

The result was that 37 per cent. voted yes and 63 per cent. voted no. The third question was:

"Do you believe that the PPP scheme will be implemented successfully and ensure LU is modernised and updated to the expected standards?"

Forty per cent. voted yes and 60 per cent. voted no. The Government are not even winning in the constituency that one would expect to support them.

The Government rightly embarked on a programme of devolution, which applied to London. A Mayor was elected to run the underground. The Government should let go and let him get on with it. He is directly elected and Londoners will hold him accountable for his actions on the underground. The Government are confusing matters by keeping their hand in and obfuscating.

I wish to make two final points. First, big players in the Cabinet have been dealing with the underground for a long time, but they are not Londoners; even the Minister for Transport, who has responsibility for the underground, is not a Londoner. There is a growing feeling among Londoners that those big players have little knowledge, care or regard for London. That is a serious problem, which could hurt the Government.

Secondly, there has been much talk of grudges between some of the big players and the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone. I do not mind their having political differences and spelling them out in detail, but they should not use London as a playground, because the underground suffers. Londoners should not be the subject of a feeble political feud.

There is a strong case for a full debate on the underground, and for the Government to think again about the public-private partnership and to start working with the Mayor of London so that we can get the best of what they both want: the big cash investment that the Government want, and the clear managerial responsibility that the Mayor wants. I call for that debate.

9.50 am

Mr. David Amess (Southend, West): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen). He and I became Members on the same day. We have nothing whatever in common politically, but he has always been a very straightforward politician.

Before the House adjourns for the summer recess, I wish to raise a number of points, the first of which concerns mobile phones. I am sick to death of them. The

nation is obsessed with mobile phones. As I drove here this morning, there seemed to be a mass of people walking along the embankment with bits of plastic stuck to their ears. Worse than that, everyone seemed to be on the mobile phone in their cars, completely oblivious to the fact that that represents a danger to other people.

During the general election campaign, the issue of mobile phones was raised continually on the doorstep. I am sure other hon. Members found the same thing. I found myself scaling great heights to look at some of the very ugly antennae that are stuck on top of buildings. I would be grateful if the Government would get their act together when we return in the autumn, and tell the House what they intend to do about the Stewart report. My constituents still have doubts about the danger of radiation and cancer. We want a lead from this rotten Government. We want to hear what they intend to do about the planning laws; local authorities and the Government cannot bounce responsibility back and forth. Someone must take responsibility.

Jeremy Corbyn: I hesitate to hold up the hon. Gentleman in full flight, but is he aware that there is provision for local authorities not to grant planning permission for mobile phone masts, and certainly not to allow them to be placed on council buildings? Many local authorities—perhaps even the hon. Gentleman's own—are trying to make a great deal of money out of putting them on local authority buildings.

Mr. Amess: This is the joy of the summer Adjournment debates. I am delighted to take an intervention from another straightforward politician. The hon. Gentleman is entirely right in part of what he says, but my local authority would say that if it turned down an application, a huge amount of money would be expended when the case went to appeal and that it would get absolutely nowhere. I want the Government to give us some straight answers on this matter.

A few weeks ago, a huge articulated lorry went into the side of the vehicle that I was driving, which had my children in it. The lorry driver was completely unaware that he had gone into the side of the vehicle, because he was on the phone. I gave chase when I eventually recovered. The lorry was so filthy that I could hardly read the registration plate, but it was from somewhere in the north of England. We need some leadership from the Government about the dangers of people driving vehicles while talking on their mobile phones.

My second point is on education.

Mr. Stephen Pound (Ealing, North): I am reluctant, as are most people, to interrupt the hon. Gentleman as he races through the streets of Basildon, or wherever, in pursuit of northern lorries. Will he remind the House of the fact that the last Conservative Government, of whom he was such a distinguished supporter, so deregulated the planning process in relation to mobile phone masts that they were allowed under permitted development without a smidgen of public consultation? Did the hon. Gentleman vote for or against those measures?

Mr. Amess: I am delighted to take an intervention from my fellow co-chairman of the all-party parliamentary scout group, who is another straightforward politician. However, I have to ask Labour Members to get a life. This is their second term in office and if they do not like the law, they have a huge majority with which to change it. We heard nothing in the Queen's Speech about changing the law on that issue.

Before I was interrupted, I was about to talk about education. Last night, I had the privilege to be at a presentation to the deputy head teacher of Eastwood school who was retiring after 37 years. I pay tribute to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, who gave me a hand-written note to give to Mrs. Jackie Howarth. When it was presented to her, it meant a great deal. In years to come, such occasions will no longer arise, because no one will serve as a teacher for 37 years.

There is a crisis in the teaching profession. In Southend, we have 22 vacancies in our secondary schools, and 14 in our primary schools. I am advised by Essex county council that there were 318 vacancies in January; the figure has now risen to 388. There is an absolute crisis in education, as hon. Members will know from having canvassed in the dreadful general election campaign. Will the Leader of the House or his deputy tell us what the Government are going to do about it?

The graduate training programme has been a success, but I want to ask the Government to look at the minimum age for the programme, which I think is currently 24. When I met teachers last night, I could not believe what they told me: 16 teachers were leaving from one school, and 25 from another. This is a crisis. Will the Government reconsider the minimum age, and perhaps reduce it from 24 to 22? Will they also consider reducing the time that classroom assistants have to spend training from three years to two?

On law and order, all hon. Members know from the dreadful general election campaign that their constituents are disappointed with the way in which crime is being fought. Policewomen and policemen in my constituency do a fantastic job, but they are under establishment. We have all these cameras up and down the country. I do not know whether they have films in them.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton): They have.

Mr. Amess: My hon. Friend says that they have. We now have a wheeze involving unmarked cars with lights flashing at us. That is all wonderful, but my constituents think that there are not enough police. What is the good of us meeting here in Parliament and making laws, if there is no one to enforce them? It is a complete waste of time. Look at all the laws we have. This morning, people were riding their bikes on the pavements, dogs were fouling the footpaths and people were dropping litter. There is not a chance of the law being enforced.

Chief constables might say that they are going to have a purge on a particular issue, but if someone gets caught, they say that it is unfair and that they were jolly unlucky. Since 1997, when this rotten Government came to power, police morale has sunk to rock bottom. In 1979, the Conservatives had to sort out the mess left by Labour and we implemented the Edmund-Davies report. This is all about pay and conditions.

If any Member of Parliament feels that the health service is delivering a satisfactory level of service to their constituents, I do not know who they are talking to.

[Mr. Amess]

There has been a huge drop in morale in the health service throughout the country. We do not have enough nurses. For the first time, general practitioners will be going on strike. During the election campaign there was a meeting of GPs who have small surgeries. They are up in arms about what is happening. In our area, there has been a complete breakdown of the mental health service and two centres are closing. We are left with only one consultant psychiatrist who is looking for a job elsewhere. There is an absolute crisis.

Last night, I asked one of the graduate teachers, who is 27, what he did before going on the programme. He was a paramedic, so I asked why he had left the job. He said, "Because the pay was absolutely appalling." According to him, paramedics start on one level and 25 years later, apparently, they receive the same pay. *[Interruption.]* That is what the chap said last night and I do not think that he is a liar. I am a member of the Health Committee and I hope that it will consider the issue. There is an absolute crisis in our health service and the Government must address it.

A constituent has written to me about the amount of credit being advertised, and I hope that we address that.

I also hope that the Government do something about care homes. Morale has broken down because of all the different regulations and homes are closing right, left and centre even though we have an ageing population.

The Government must also do something about the community health councils; that issue will not go away.

I love Parliament and the new Leader of the House tells us that he loves Parliament, but if Members want to know why only one person in four voted for the Government, I shall tell them—Parliament has been completely diminished. There is a great cry for modernisation, but modernisation has not encouraged people to come out and vote. What happened with the Select Committees is an absolute disgrace and if the stories in the newspapers about my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Mr. Leigh) not being approved as Chairman of the International Development Committee because he is a Catholic—*[Interruption.]* The Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office shakes his head. I am saying that if that is true, it is an absolute disgrace and Members should be ashamed if they took that decision.

I hope that when the new Leader of the House considers reforms, he will bring power back to this place. General elections are all about voting for people who can produce good law, so it is outrageous that spin doctors who no one voted for have been given power even though they were never entrusted with it by the British people. It is also outrageous that the media continue to hear about matters before the House does.

We have a rotten Government. There are good women and good men in that Government but overall, they have no strategy and half the time we debate a lot of rubbish. During the long summer recess, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends reflect on our position and that we get away from the obsession of having a career in Parliament, because Members should concentrate on their job as constituency representatives. We must unite and fire all our guns on the Labour and Liberal parties.

Whether Members spend their summer recess in Mexico, Scarborough or Southend, West, I wish them, Mr. Speaker, his three deputies, the Leader of the House and officers of the House a happy time and I hope that we return reinvigorated.

10.4 am

Mr. Siôn Simon (Birmingham, Erdington): I hardly need tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, or any other Member how overawed and inadequate I feel. It seems that the eyes of the world are on me, even though they probably are not. I am bearing in mind the one piece of advice that all the wise old stagers have given me, "Remember, this may be a big moment for you and your mum, but it is of no interest whatever to anybody else."

In these dying hours before the summer recess, I feel embarrassed to inflict my clumsy first stab on a House accustomed to much better. Nevertheless, I am glad of the chance to say a few words about my distinguished predecessor, Robin Corbett, who, having entered the House almost 30 years ago, has a lot of friends here. Happily, although they have to make do with me as his replacement, they have only to walk to the other end of the building to find the noble Baron Corbett of Castle Vale in all his ermine finery and splendour.

Robin Corbett is a good man who served our community in Erdington admirably for many years and, as well as much else, did great service in the House as Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee. Since I took over from him, he and his wife Val have been extraordinarily kind and helpful to me and I have no doubt that those who visit the other place will find him sticking up for our part of Birmingham with the same vigour and valour as he displayed here for so many years.

Erdington is a place worth sticking up for. I grew up in the adjoining constituencies of Perry Barr and West Bromwich, East, the northern parts of which melt into Erdington and Kingstanding, and those places are special for the same reason—their people. I shall not pretend that my constituency is the most conventionally beautiful corner of England. As it happens, I love Spaghetti Junction, which is lucky, because I live almost directly under it. But that is okay—I am a Brummie. I was raised among the concrete and the canals, so I feel the same way about contraflows and flyovers as did Priestley about the Pennines and Ted Hughes about the corncrakes, the kittiwakes and all that country malarkey that I am not au fait with.

I cannot pretend that Erdington is bucolic, but it has its graceful nooks and crannies. At Rookery House, Peter Hulse's beautiful gardens are an oasis of tranquillity and peace, but I must take this chance to call on Birmingham council to ensure not only that Rookery House remains the great amenity that it is, but that it is developed into an even better amenity, with the house itself brought into full public use.

My point, despite the delights of Rookery House, is that people are Erdington's great strength. This nation's second city is, unusually, its most patronised and least appreciated. There is almost no aspect of Brummagem that escapes the attention of comedians from elsewhere, but I am glad of the chance to assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we really do not care about that. We can easily live with all the jokes about our shopping centres and our accent, because we have an indomitable sense of who we are and where we come from.

I am not at all embarrassed to describe the people of Birmingham as the very backbone of this country and that is true not just because of what we do or what we make, although that is still what we are most famous for, and rightly so. In Erdington, we make the S-type Jaguar, which is a beautiful British car that is keeping alive a great British brand. We also make some of the world's finest machine tools at Cincinnati, the overwhelming majority of which are exported. At Valor heating, we make the famous old gas fires that still keep Britain warm in winter. Members will not be astonished to learn that, at Dunlop Aircraft Tyres, we make an extraordinary variety of aircraft tyres.

Until recently, we made the tyres for Concorde, but under the Concorde safety review, the contract was unilaterally and disgracefully awarded to a French tyre company, even though there is no reason to believe that its product is any safer than Dunlop's. Even though that happened before I was elected, the inability to do anything about it already feels like my first failure as an MP.

By any standards, the recent efforts of those and other Erdington companies have been outstandingly impressive. Neither the strong pound nor the weak euro is doing any favours to exporters, but those companies are soldiering on because they have a solid mixture of good management and progressive trade unionism, which is the bedrock of modern manufacturing and will continue to be so.

As I keep saying, it is not what we do but who we are that makes me proud to represent Erdington, Kingstanding, Pype Hayes, Castle Vale and our other communities. What is special about us is how normal we are. By "normal", I mean what normal normally means, not what Norman—or should that be normal—Tebbit means by normal.

Mr. Pound: You mean normal.

Mr. Simon: Yes, I mean normal. What is normal about my constituents is that, whatever else they are, they are ordinary, decent, straightforward people who work hard and play by the rules. They do not want special favours or extravagant deals; they know only too well that the world does not owe them a living. They do not expect to be cosseted and cuddled from the cradle to the grave; all they ask is a fair crack—a reasonable chance of a reasonable job, a decent education for their children, decent health care and housing, and streets that they can walk without fear.

To many people, that does not seem like a particularly ambitious prospectus; it hardly seems like too much to ask. Yet we have failed to provide those things for generations. As a partisan politician—which we all are—I believe that much of the blame for that failure lies at the door of the Conservative party. However, the Labour party, too, has made its share of misjudgments. During the 1980s, in particular, we let people down too. My point is that the whole political class should share responsibility for failing to satisfy such basic aspirations. It is hardly surprising that people do not trust us when we consistently fail to deliver such fundamentals.

By the same token, and with reference to what the hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) said earlier, it is hardly surprising that people do not bother to vote. Perhaps a low turnout is a symptom not just of our failure to engage, connect or other such vague words, but of politicians' consistent failure to deliver the basic things to which people feel entitled. Voter turnout in Erdington on 7 June was 46 per cent, which is not good. It was particularly disappointing because, as hon. Members all know, it was disproportionately the younger people who did not vote. Notwithstanding my previous point, we must redouble and redouble again our efforts to engage them.

My worry is not that the average age of a Member of Parliament is 50.3. There is nothing wrong with that; some of my best friends are 50.3. My problem is that I am 32—

Mr. Pound: It may change.

Mr. Simon: Yes, it may. None the less, on the doorstep I was struck by how incredibly old and out of touch I seemed to those young people, who subsequently, sure enough, did not vote. I have no magic answers to this problem, but I truly believe that it can be solved. The fact that we have not done so thus far is not fundamental, systemic and unchangeable, but simply a function of the fact that we have not tried hard enough. It may sound as though I have a naively simple faith in our ability to change people's behaviour, but it is nothing more than a simple faith in democracy, which is another way of saying a simple faith in people. We all know that politics does make a difference. We must convince our younger constituents of that. I am convinced that we can do so if we try harder.

I would not like older Members—for want of a more gentle phrase—[HON. MEMBERS: "More experienced Members"]—and more experienced Members to take this youth manifesto as a slight on their seniority. I have been touched by the generosity with which old hands have given me wise counsel and warm friendship, without treating me too much like an irritating son-in-law. Continually being taken for a researcher is becoming a little wearing, although it beats being barred from the Terrace, as I was a couple of weeks ago, on the grounds of my uncanny resemblance to a member of the press.

As my wife was supposed to give birth a week ago but has not—I do not blame her, any more than I blame hon. Members for being old—I probably should not quote the line from Jimmy Baldwin:

"all the sons I might have had mean nothing, for I have a son".

It expresses exactly how I feel about becoming a Member of Parliament.

Whatever we may have done or been before, being elected to this place for the first time presents the most arduous challenge and the most awesome responsibility. After only six weeks, I am already well aware of how much harder this job is than it looks. I only hope that, in a couple of years or so, I may start to get the hang of it.

10.16 am

Mr. John Baron (Billericay): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech today. I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) on his first speech, which I found interesting and humorous. I wish him well in his constituency and hope that his wife delivers shortly. Given what he said, I hope that she has a daughter and that he enjoys the experience.

[Mr. John Baron]

In standing before the House for the first time today, I am reminded of the comment that there are only two things more difficult than making a short address: the first is trying to climb a wall that is leaning forwards; and the second is trying to kiss a girl who is leaning backwards.

Needless to say, it is a great honour and a privilege to be addressing the House and I thank the voters of Billericay and district for sending me here. As we all know, the first duty of a Member of Parliament is to be a good constituency Member and I shall do my utmost to serve the interests of all my constituents, regardless of how they voted or whether they voted at all. I also thank my family and friends in the constituency for all their support, without which I would not be here. In addition, I thank Thalia, my wife, for being by my side for the past 10 years.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my predecessor. Teresa Gorman represented the Billericay constituency diligently and effectively after becoming its MP in 1987. Essex is known for the independence and entrepreneurial character of its people, and Theresa earned the respect of many by not being afraid to make up her own mind on things and speaking out on what she thought was right. During her time here she championed a wide range of worthwhile causes, including those of small businesses and the self-employed. She battled against trade union closed shops, the Post Office monopoly and the creeping loss of our sovereignty to Brussels and the European Union. Theresa was never afraid to stand alone and challenge conventional wisdom. I am sure that the House joins me in wishing her and her husband Jim all the best for the future.

I am fortunate to represent the Billericay and district constituency. It is a diverse constituency, comprising four townships, broadly one in each corner of the constituency: Billericay, Wickford, Laindon and Pitsea. Each has its own character and sense of community. In the middle is beautiful greenbelt land and green fields, which is part agricultural but includes villages of various sizes, such as Crays Hill, Ramsden Bellhouse, Little Burstead and Great Burstead.

My constituency has some of the most interesting churches and listed buildings in the land. It also has some excellent markets—in Pitsea and Wickford there are always bargains to be had. Indeed, with its four townships, my constituency is a shopping paradise, with its wide range of merchandise for sale and its excellent pubs, inns and restaurants.

As for Billericay itself, the town has historical connections with the Pilgrim Fathers. Christopher Martin, who led the expedition, and his family left Billericay to sail on the Mayflower in 1620. That journey is symbolised in Billericay today by the many references to the Mayflower—for example, Mayflower school, the Mayflower and Pilgrim pubs—and by the numerous small businesses that include the word "Mayflower" in their name. Christopher Martin road is on the edge of my constituency. There are several towns in New England itself called Billericay, and one called Billerica, which is the original spelling. Those men and women were escaping the heavy hand of government, which at that time would not allow people to worship or lead their lives as they saw fit.

I should like to take this opportunity to make the Government aware of one of the key issues concerning many entrepreneurs who live in the constituency today: that is, the rising burden of regulation and taxes on small businesses and the adverse consequences that flow from that for my constituents and for the country as a whole.

One of the main reasons why I am a Conservative is that I believe the relief of poverty should be one of the main objectives of politics. But this can better be brought about if we foster personal freedoms within the rule of law, if we encourage enterprise, and if we allow businesses, especially small businesses, to breathe and thrive. Such an approach will create a more prosperous economy and more wealth from which the Government can take their rightful share in order to help the truly disadvantaged in society.

That will not happen, however, if Government pile regulations and costs on to business, because that will hinder enterprise and, eventually, our ability to help those most in need. Yet this Government continue to make life difficult for entrepreneurs. During Labour's first term, red tape costs increased by £15 billion according to the British Chambers of Commerce. Regulations such as the working time directive, the working families tax credit, the data protection directive and student loan repayment have all contributed to those increased costs. And the burden of red tape always falls disproportionately on small firms. Figures from the Institute of Chartered Accountants show that the cost to small businesses of implementing new legislation doubled in the period 1990-2000. Such a cost is meaningful to small businesses.

As for tax, the Confederation of British Industry has calculated that overall taxes on businesses have increased by about £26 billion since Labour came to power. Examples of that include IR35, the climate change levy and the highest fuel duty in the European Union. The many self-employed in my constituency, and the 3 million across the country, also pay more tax courtesy of a national insurance regime that has become more onerous since the 1999 Budget.

The Conservative party has pledged less regulation, and would exempt small firms from a raft of regulations, including the working families tax credit. We have pledged to abolish IR35, to cut fuel tax, to abolish the climate change levy and to reduce business rates. I believe that we should go further in reducing the overall level of taxation, especially for the self-employed, whose level of income tax and national insurance contributions is far too high. I ask the Government to consider this issue, which is causing concern to a large number of my constituents.

I would also ask the Leader of the House to reconsider the Government's attitude to two further issues that are troubling my constituents, and which also show how the heavy hand of government can adversely impact on individuals and local communities in their daily lives. The first relates to greenbelt and greenfield development. In short, the Government seem determined to force Essex county council to build 5,200 houses a year for the next 15 years. That will put tremendous strain on our already overburdened infrastructure. My party believes that local authorities and local communities should decide on the right level of local development, not politicians sitting in Westminster. I urge the Government to consider that proposal.

The second issue relates to incinerators. There is strong evidence that incinerators emit dioxins, which can cause cancer, yet the Government refuse to match the Conservative party's policy to instigate a moratorium on the building of new incinerators. We believe that they are a health hazard until proven otherwise. Would the Government please reconsider that proposal, as that would help to ease the concerns of many of my constituents?

There is no doubt in my mind that the vast majority of hon. Members, regardless of party, are here because they want to try to improve society. We differ on the method of achieving that goal. The Conservative party has greater faith in the individual than in the state, believing that politicians can sometimes be the problem not the solution. That is so whether the issue is freeing our entrepreneurs from stifling regulation and costs, allowing our local communities to make their own decisions about greenbelt development and incinerators, giving our local police forces more say in how they police their local communities, allowing our local doctors and nurses, governors and teachers more say in the running of their hospitals and schools, or guarding our country's sovereignty against the unelected politicians and bureaucrats in Brussels.

We must guard against an overpowerful Government who tend to encroach on the personal rights and freedoms of individuals, and instead encourage individual initiative and enterprise, which will benefit society as a whole. I am conscious of my constituency's historical link with the Pilgrim Fathers. I look forward to playing my part in achieving that goal in the years ahead, and hope that no one has to set sail from my constituency while I am the MP.

10.26 am

Linda Perham (Ilford, North): Controversy is raging in the columns of my local papers about whether Ilford is or should be part of London or Essex. As someone who was born in London and who may or may not be an Essex girl, I welcome the new hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and congratulate him on his interesting and thoughtful maiden speech. I am interested in history, so I was fascinated to hear about his constituency's connection with the Pilgrim Fathers. He paid deserved credit to his famous, feisty predecessor, Mrs. Gorman, who was one of the House's great characters. With no disrespect to her successor, I am sorry that he is an Essex man and not an Essex girl.

In response to the hon. Gentleman's concerns about regulation, let me say that I believe that not all regulation is bad. It is often necessary for accountability, safety, fairness and justice. I have a constituent whose monthly income has almost doubled as a result of the working families tax credit, and she told me how much that had helped her and other people she knew. Their lives have been transformed by the extra money.

I pay tribute to the self-deprecating and humorous contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon). I share his concerns about low voter turnout. My solution would be compulsory voting, but there is still quite a debate to be had about that.

I want to focus on a couple of matters of concern in my constituency. When I was elected as a local councillor 12 years ago, I was warned that the most difficult problems to be resolved were those involving planning applications. Not only did that prove to be the case, but the complexities of the issues and the high emotions generated by planning matters have pursued me, and I am sure many other hon. Members, into the House.

The first matter of concern is an application by Wiggins plc to build a horseracing course on Fairlop plain, which is a greenbelt area on the borders of London and Essex. The 124-hectare site at present comprises public open space with a country park, a golf course, a sailing lake, an indoor children's amusement and activity centre and a bar-restaurant. It is part of an extensive open area directly linked to other open land to the east stretching into the rural areas of neighbouring boroughs and districts in Essex.

The proposal is to redevelop the land to provide an all-weather racecourse, grandstand, stables, health and fitness centre, a hostel for grooms, veterinary facilities, enclosures, parking for cars and coaches, internal estate roads, landscaping and alterations to the public highways. On 25 May 2000, the local planning authority, the London borough of Redbridge, rejected the application. At the time, it also included provision for a hotel and night club.

The application was rejected on the grounds that it was contrary both to national policy guidance in PPGs 2, 9 and 13 and to a raft of policies in the council's own unitary development plan, and as an inappropriate development in the metropolitan green belt. A particular objection was made to the proposed grandstand, whose proportions are 37 m high and 320 m wide according to current projections. Because of its design, mass, height, prominence and position, together with the associated buildings and so on, it was felt that the grandstand would have an over-dominant and intrusive visual impact on the open landscape of Fairlop plain, as well as a serious and adverse effect on the amenities of nearby residential properties.

The council also believed that the proposed development would be likely to encourage unrestrained car use and would generate unacceptable levels of road traffic, thereby increasing congestion on local roads. Furthermore, there was great alarm about the threat to a site of nature conservation importance, where there would be a direct loss of habitats, including grassland and water, as well as an indirect effect on remaining habitats owing to increased activity, noise, disturbance and light pollution.

The developers mounted an appeal and a public inquiry was held this year, from 1 May until mid-June. Just before the general election, I spent a day giving evidence to the inquiry. In addition to opposition from Redbridge council, a long list of interested-party objectors appeared before the inquiry—starting with myself and including the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidates for the Ilford, North seat, local councillors, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the London Wildlife Trust, local environmental organisations, the Agenda 21 group, the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association and even the Redbridge Pensioners Action Association, who are great fighters in my constituency. Written objections were received from other national and local environmental groups, neighbouring local authorities and two nearby schools.

My evidence concentrated on the unrealistic expectations of the developers with regard to access by public transport. I was especially interested in the

[Linda Perham]

comments about the underground made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen), as the development relies on several thousand racegoers using the last-but-one station on my branch of the Central line. Several thousand people would have to exit from a small suburban station over short periods during the evening peak and late at night. The impact on rail and bus services and the increased traffic congestion would be horrendous.

As the local MP, I received, and continue to receive, a large number of objections from constituents—more than 100 to date and the number is increasing. As a local resident for nearly 30 years, I share their concerns about the potential damage to the environment and nature conservation, as well as the grave traffic and transportation consequences, should the application succeed. As the planning inspector is now preparing his report for the Secretary of State, I want to draw the attention of the House to the strong feelings among my constituents about the proposed development.

The other matter that I want to raise in my contribution has already been referred to by the hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess), who is unfortunately no longer in his place—*[Interruption.]* I see that he has crossed the Floor—temporarily, I expect.

Mr. Tony Banks (West Ham): We will not have him.

Mr. Pound: We are full.

Linda Perham: I always enjoy the contributions of the hon. Member for Southend, West on these occasions. Although I have not previously contributed to the summer or winter Adjournment debates, I always read the report of the speeches. The hon. Gentleman manages to raise many issues—about 10 last time. They are always matters of concern and on this occasion I share his concern about the controversy over the siting and possible health effects of mobile phone masts. That concern was shown throughout the last Parliament in a series of early-day motions and a constant stream of parliamentary questions, which have continued in this Parliament, requesting information and updates on Government action on the planning and health-related aspects of those masts. During the last Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Stourbridge (Ms Shipley) introduced a ten-minute Bill on the subject, and I tabled a parliamentary question on 5 March 2001 asking what research was being undertaken to assess the safety of radiation levels from the masts.

I have had the privilege of serving on the Select Committee on Trade and Industry since 1998 and am pleased to be able to continue to serve on it. When it was suggested that the Committee should take evidence on mobile phone masts, I strongly urged that we should do so, because of the concerns that had been expressed in my constituency. We produced a report on 27 March 2001. One of its recommendations called for local planning authorities to be given

"explicit guidance as to what weight to give to anxieties over the possible health effects of masts."

The hon. Member for Southend, West asked what the Government were doing about those concerns. The report of the independent expert group on mobile phones was published in May 2000, and I am pleased that the Government have accepted Sir William Stewart's recommended precautionary approach. They have introduced a range of measures, including the publication of leaflets about mobile phones, base stations and health to give people the latest information and advice, which is most important. A national database has been set up with details of base stations, to ensure that all base stations meet the international exposure guidelines. An audit is being undertaken of mobile phone base stations and masts to assess emissions, focusing on schools, about which there was particular concern. That came across in the evidence taken by the Select Committee.

Some comfort may be drawn from the information provided by the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Ms Keeble) in response to inquiries I made on behalf of a large number of residents who were concerned about the proposal to erect a mast in Clayhall avenue in my constituency. In her letter of 11 July, my hon. Friend told me that the first audits showed that maximum levels of exposure were at a tiny fraction of the guidelines. That is reassuring.

In a further initiative, the Government set up a £7 million joint Government-industry research programme. That was announced in December 2000, but I understand that the first group of research proposals is not due to be undertaken until October. Both Sir William Stewart's report and a statement by the World Health Organisation in June 2000 refer to gaps in our knowledge of the assessment of health risks. The WHO states:

"None of the most recent reviews have concluded that exposure to the radio frequency fields from mobile phones or their base stations causes any adverse health consequences."

However, the statement also notes:

"It will take three to four years for the required radio frequency research to be completed and evaluated and to publish the final results of any health risk."

That is an extremely long time, given that people are so concerned about these issues. I urge the Government to expedite our own research programme so as to address the real and immediate concerns of our constituents.

10.38 am

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Sleaford and North Hykeham): I associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Ilford, North (Linda Perham) in welcoming the maiden speeches of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron). In respect of my hon. Friend's contribution, I suspect that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench—especially the Whips—will be hoping that he is not as idiosyncratic as his predecessor. However, both he and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington made robust speeches; the House enjoyed them and we look forward to hearing many more speeches from both hon. Members.

I want to say something about the health service in my constituency. I want to identify at least three points at which the health service is breaking down in a grave manner. Those examples are intended to illustrate that, on the ground, there is a serious problem in the delivery of the national health service to our respective constituents. I do not for a moment pretend that the Government and Ministers are exclusively to blame for what has happened,

but they are now in a position to address the problems and therefore the responsibility is theirs. It is right that we should look to them to bring about solutions.

I shall focus on three issues within the NHS. The first is beta interferon. The second is the fact that in my constituency, particularly around Sleaford, it is impossible for my constituents to get on to the national health service dental list. Lastly, my constituents are waiting 68 weeks to get an appointment to see a consultant neurologist after referral to Pilgrim hospital. None of those things is right, and they point to a serious deficiency in the service.

Many hon. Members have constituency problems to do with beta interferon and will be familiar with them, but the House should know the problem in my constituency. Many patients from my constituency are suffering from multiple sclerosis. Beta interferon has been prescribed by their consultant clinician but they are not getting it. The reason why they are not getting it, it is said, is because there is not enough money. The health service has set aside £200,000 per annum to fund that particular drug, and once that funding has run out there is no more available.

I have a letter, from which I will quote in part, from Professor Blumhardt, who is a man of great distinction at the University hospital Queen's medical centre and who has been made responsible by Lincolnshire health authority for dealing with patients from my constituency and, indeed, from others. He has written to me many times but I shall quote from a letter of 17 December 1999; the position is still broadly the same. He said:

"Since July 1995, I have been screening at the specific request of Lincoln Health, all patients referred from their Region for this treatment. There have been 99 referrals of whom 44 were unsuitable for this therapy. 55 referrals were suitable and in my clinical opinion needed this treatment as soon as possible. Lincoln Health"—

that is, Lincolnshire health authority—

"provided funding for 11 of these patients, ie. only 1 patient in every 5 . . . In my clinical opinion as a consultant neurologist, I have prioritised all 55 for treatment. It should be noted that it is not possible to prioritise patients within that 55, as we cannot predict who might respond better or who might be in greater need of this therapy outside of the current evidence base . . . Many of the 44 patients who are untreated have continued to deteriorate for variable lengths of time between 1995 and the present. They have suffered from unpleasant disabling neurological attacks, sometimes requiring hospital admission and have undoubtedly accumulated further disability and are at higher risk of significant progressive disease in future years as a result of not being treated.

In other words, there is no way that we can clinically justify treating 11 patients out of the 55 prioritised cases in Lincoln. There is no rational way for me or any other clinical neurologist to choose patients from within that 55 that I have . . . found to be eligible."

In a subsequent letter, he summarises the position:

"This means that the current unmet need for interfe.on over this period of several years amounts to 81 per cent. of the patients for whom I wished to prescribe this effective treatment."

Eighty-one per cent. of the patients for whom that distinguished clinical consultant has recommended treatment will not get it. That is a scandal. I find it extraordinary that, in a civilised country, 81 per cent. of patients who have seen the clinical consultant responsible for their cases should not be treated.

Bob Spink: My right hon. and learned Friend raises an important point. I will raise the matter in my own speech, but does he recognise that it is a fact that the earlier the treatment is given, the more likely it is to be successful, and that if treatment is not given early, irreparable damage and disability can follow from the delay? Will he say a word about the delay by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, which the Government have allowed, in bringing forward its recommendations? It has been considering the matter for two years. Surely the rule should be that beta interferon can be used while we wait for the recommendations to be made. We should not have to wait for those recommendations.

Mr. Hogg: I agree that if the treatment is not administered early, it is likely that damage will be done to the patients and that they will suffer. I also agree that the delay in receiving the NICE report is too long. I believe that we will receive it in the latter part of this year, but it is a long time since it started work.

There are two points of principle in any event. First, why is it that in Lincolnshire patients are getting a worse deal than in many other parts of the country where beta interferon is more readily available? Secondly, why should Lincolnshire health authority, by cash-limiting the budget, frustrate the recommendations of the clinicians to whom it has entrusted the task of distinguishing the patients who need it from those who do not? I am very worried about the situation.

The second issue covers much the same ground: dental services in and around Sleaford, where it is impossible—I mean impossible—for persons who are not on NHS dental lists to get on to them. There are no vacancies on any NHS dental lists in and around Sleaford. A few months ago, the health service was bullied, by me inter alia, to establish an emergency clinic. It is using a retired dentist. I do not say that in any critical sense—I am grateful to him for providing his services—but the clinic will be open one day a week and for emergency only. The advice given to my constituents who want to be on an NHS list for routine treatment is, "Get it out of county." What kind of service is that, in God's name? My constituents are simply being denied what they have a right to expect: NHS dental facilities for ordinary treatment.

I do not want to be unfair to the health service. A clinic in the adjoining village of Heckington will be opened, I hope, at the end of this year, but for months and months and months the service has not been available. I have written to Ministers and to the health service many times. I get told about emergency schemes, initiatives and this and that, but my constituents still cannot get on to NHS dental lists. I suspect that the reason why they cannot is because the Government are not prepared to put the money into the remuneration of dentists. Whenever I have talked to dentists about why they are not willing to come to Sleaford, it comes down to fees. That is the responsibility of the Government.

Jeremy Corbyn: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the NHS employing many dentists as salaried practitioners would be one way out of the problem of dental treatment being unavailable on the NHS? At the moment, many private dentists do NHS work only if they cannot get enough private work to keep them going. Is not the issue one of asking a dentist to work for the public as a whole through the NHS?

Mr. Hogg: I have suggested to Lincolnshire health authority that it should contemplate engaging dentists on a salaried basis in order to provide routine NHS work

[Mr. Hogg]

until such time as other practices can be established that are willing to do NHS work, so to that extent the hon. Gentleman and I agree. There may well be a need for salaried NHS dental practitioners in order to provide routine treatment. That is a suggestion that I have made to the health authority.

My next point is on consultant neurology, and specifically on two constituency cases that I have encountered since the last general election. One particular person, whom I shall call Mr. H as I do not want to be more specific, had a heart complaint. He went to Pilgrim hospital, in Boston, which is the hospital that services my constituency in some important respects. Staff there identified the fact that he might have Parkinson's disease, and consequently that he required an appointment with a consultant neurologist.

Mr. H sought an appointment with a consultant neurologist. He was told, however, and I have the letter to hand, that it would be 68 weeks—17 months—before he would be seen for his first appointment. He is not the only person in that position. I have another such case—someone to whom I shall refer as Mrs. H is in a similar position. In the past three weeks, therefore, I have encountered two constituents who require access to a consultant neurologist but who have been told that they will have to wait 68 weeks before being able to see one.

I tabled a parliamentary question on the matter. The Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), to whom I am grateful, replied:

"The vast majority of neurology outpatients—about 95 per cent.—are seen within 26 weeks and the average waiting time in England is 11.04 weeks. More than 58 per cent. of hospitals are able to give appointments within 13 weeks."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 2001; Vol. 372, c. 71W.]

But in Lincolnshire, the wait is 68 weeks.

I wrote to the consultant to express surprise at the delay. I do not want to be unfair to him; he may have thought that I was trying to bounce one constituent ahead of another in the queue, which is not what I intended to do. He may have misunderstood what I was doing. I want to make that clear because of what I shall now say about the reaction that I received. That particular gentleman's response was to suggest that he did not particularly like to spend his time replying to that type of complaint. I got the very clear impression that the clinician to whom I wrote did not feel that he had to account for that type of delay. As a matter of fact, he blamed the delay on funding, and he may well be right about that.

My point is that professionals are indeed obliged to account for things. The day has passed when professionals, whether they be legal or medical, can simply say that they are living in a tower and should not be approached and obliged to account for their behaviour. As a member the Bar and as an hon. Member, I have to account for my behaviour, and I expect doctors and surgeons and the like to do so as well. When I write on behalf of my constituents, I expect a prompt, full and courteous reply. When I do not receive one, I want to know the reason why not.

I have one other point to make on Pilgrim hospital, and it is again not a very happy situation. Another constituent of mine was suffering from secondary cancer. He attended Pilgrim hospital and was referred to Leicester for a consultant's appointment. After a rather long wait, he went to Leicester. When he arrived, he found that Pilgrim hospital had not provided his medical records or X-rays. Consequently, the appointment was a complete waste of time. It could not be conducted, and another appointment has to be made.

People like me are not experts in the health service and I do not pretend that I am, but I can draw the lessons from what people say to me and what is disclosed to me in correspondence. The service is breaking down. Beta interferon is not available; national health service dental facilities are not available; 68 weeks to wait to see a consultant neurologist—intolerable; and papers and X-rays not furnished at the appropriate time.

There needs to be a proper grip on the health service. I do not dispute that it may be in part a question of money, but by God it is also a question of management. We need to have that service managed properly. If that involves introducing private sector management schemes and new means of funding, I am in favour of it. Above all, we have to make it absolutely plain to the Government that our constituents are not receiving the service that they require. The Parliamentary Secretary and other Ministers are responsible for delivering that proper service.

10.55 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Linda Perham) and the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) rightly congratulated the two maiden speakers whom we have heard today. All hon. Members know that making a maiden speech is something that we have to do on being elected to the House, and we fully understand that regardless of the experience—which we shall learn of in coming years—that those two speakers bring to the House, one's first speech in the House is an ordeal.

The hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) paid tribute to his predecessor, Teresa Gorman, with whom many of us served in Committee. She was a very outspoken lady and, whether or not one agreed with her, always lively and controversial. As a London Member, I have some knowledge of the part of Essex that the hon. Gentleman represents. He glowingly described many of Essex's villages. He also mentioned small business. Regardless of whether they are in government or opposition, all hon. Members have many small businesses in their constituencies, and our constituents raise with us many of the small business issues that he described. We shall listen to him with great interest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) paid warm tribute to Robin Corbett, whom many of us have known and worked with for a very long time. I am delighted that Robin is now in the other place. My hon. Friend also mentioned that he represents our country's second city. Those of us who have been privileged to be Members of this place for many years know that, some distinguished Members on both sides of the House, have represented Birmingham constituencies. My hon. Friend described the various professions and occupations in his constituency and made it clear that his roots are there. He really does know the area that he represents, which will be greatly beneficial both to him and to his constituents.

We welcome both new Members to the House, and we shall listen with great interest to their speeches.

I also extend a warm welcome to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office, who is held in high regard by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Many of us have worked with him on an issue that we, like him, hold very dear—Cyprus. Even now, there are in the Chamber hon. Members on both sides who have a deep commitment to that issue, but none has a commitment deeper than his.

I am sure that my hon. Friend has already discovered the depth and variety of our debates on matters to be considered before a forthcoming Adjournment. Although they are fascinating debates, an attempt was once made to stop them. I hope that my hon. Friend will ensure that that does not happen.

Jeremy Corbyn: I agree with my hon. Friend that these debates are important. Does he recall that there was a time when Back Benchers could apply for and be granted debates on motions to be debated and voted on in the House? They gave considerable power to Back Benchers. Does he hope that the reforms ahead of us will again make possible such debates?

Mr. Cox: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. I was pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on the Front Bench for quite some time this morning, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will refer to that point. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House attach enormous importance to these opportunities.

I recently asked my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary

"if he will provide extra financial resources to Wandsworth prison for improvements."

Wandsworth prison is in my constituency. It is one of the oldest in the United Kingdom and I am aware that over the years large sums of money have been spent on it, but like all old buildings, it requires a great deal more and the works are extremely expensive.

In the reply that I received from the Under–Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Beverley Hughes), I was told:

"Wandsworth had received an additional £511,565 from the Spending Review 2000 for a range of measures against drugs, and . . . for specific purposes."

I welcome that. The reply continues:

"However, as part of the SR2000 settlement, the Prison Service has to make cashable efficiency savings of 1 per cent. per year in its baselines, and Wandsworth's baseline has been reduced to contribute to this."

I very much regret that part of the reply.

In February, I initiated a debate on Wandsworth prison. I paid a warm tribute to the governor of the prison, Mr. Stephen Rimmer, to the members of the board of visitors and to members of the Prison Officers Association for their commitment to the major changes being introduced there. Those changes are continuing. Wandsworth prison is now a very different establishment and has lost the image that it had for so many years. That shows that leadership and commitment enable meaningful changes to be made in penal establishments.

I have quoted part of the reply that I received to the question that I asked on 5 July. However, I still hope to tell the House what I see as the key aspect of it. It continues:

"There is no prospect of future changes in Wandsworth's financial allocation this financial year."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 534W.]

I deeply regret that. There are several reasons why I think that it is wrong and that Wandsworth prison should be allocated extra funding. The governor, the Prison Officers Association and the board of visitors at the prison attach great importance to education. Sadly, prison inmates throughout the system, be they men or women, often have poor educational backgrounds. People serving prison sentences in prisons with modern educational facilities are generally encouraged to make use of the opportunities. Hon. Members who have prisons in their constituencies know that if there are no modern educational services in a prison, prisoners will not make use of what is available. We need to develop a wide range of courses because all the evidence shows that prisoners make use of educational opportunities.

Ideally, when someone is discharged from prison they will have a job to go to and not return to prison. However, the figures on that score are not very hopeful. They show that more than 60 per cent. of young people in prison had left school before they were 16 and that, when they leave prison, some 60 per cent. of prisoners are ineligible for more than 90 per cent. of jobs. Sadly, prisoners often have speech or communication problems, which is yet another reason why a prison such as Wandsworth, which has had an on-going commitment to building a modern, efficient education service for inmates, should be entitled to extra funding to develop that work.

It is estimated that it costs about £20,000 a year to keep a person in prison. That is yet another reason why we should try to keep people out of prison. If we provide modern facilities to educate prisoners, we will have the chance to achieve that aim.

During the debate in February, I also spoke about asylum seekers. At the time, Wandsworth was awaiting the first of the asylum seekers to be sent there, and it now has some 50 of them. In February, I spoke of the pressures and strains that that would put on the prison and the need for specific funding to be allocated to Wandsworth and other prisons where asylum seekers are being held.

I pay the warmest tribute to the chair of the board of visitors, Mr. Akerman, and to all on the board of visitors at Wandsworth prison, for their great commitment week in, week out and their involvement in the day-to-day running of the prison. Mr. Akerman has told me that the arrival of asylum seekers at Wandsworth prison has indeed placed additional pressures and strains on the prison.

Sometimes I wonder whether the people who are involved in making decisions, including Government Ministers and senior civil servants, really understand what happens when asylum seekers are sent to penal establishments. Although those men and women may indeed have immigration problems, we must remember—and I hope that the Home Office remembers—that they are not criminals. They have not been convicted, nor are they on remand for a criminal offence. They are being detained for immigration reasons, and come from a wide range of countries. Many of them speak different

[Mr. Cox]

languages and have a limited knowledge of English. Clearly, they need advice and help with their cases. Sometimes they need help trying to find or keep in touch with their families at home. They also need to build a relationship of trust with the prison officers.

I pay the warmest tribute to the people from the Wandsworth Refugee Council and similar organisations who regularly visit prisons and give enormous help to people detained because of immigration irregularities. The Government, the Home Office or the prison authorities could not provide such help.

Many of the 50 asylum seekers in Wandsworth prison were abused or persecuted in the countries that they fled. One can understand how people who have suffered abuse, often in prisons or detention centres, must feel when they are again imprisoned. They wonder what will happen to them. Thankfully, little if any abuse takes place in our prisons, but detainees would not know that and would be enormously fearful.

To their credit many hon. Members on both sides, take an interest in the welfare of asylum seekers in prisons, but we do not know what checks are made regarding their background and why, and for how long, they are detained. Wandsworth has well over 1,000 inmates. It is impossible to run two systems in such a major prison: one for the vast majority who have been convicted or are on remand, and one for those who have not been convicted of anything.

The chief inspector of prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham, has repeatedly said that he does not believe that it is the Prison Service's role to hold asylum seekers in custody. He said:

"Asylum seekers will come under prison rules, yet have committed no criminal offence."

That puts great pressure on governors, wing governors and prison officers. It is time that the whole thing stopped.

People being questioned about alleged immigration irregularities should not be in prison, but if they are, it is intolerable that no extra funding should be allocated to offset the additional costs faced by the authorities. I realise that this is not the Minister's department, but I hope that he will convey my deep concerns, and those of many others, to his Home Office colleagues.

Sir David Ramsbotham is soon to retire. He has criticised aspects of the regime in Wandsworth. I am pleased to say that his recommendations have been followed. Those of us who take an interest in prisons and have studied his reports know that he always gave his honest opinion, whether it pleased the Home Secretary of the day or not. He spoke of improvements that were needed not only for the inmates but for the staff. He has done an excellent job and will be a very hard act to follow. I pay him the warmest tribute.

All those involved in running prisons say that we cannot keep sending more and more people to prison while continuing to cut prison budgets. The policy has no credibility, and I am sure that many of us hope that it will cease. Proper funding must be made available.

11.17 am

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) on their maiden speeches. I made mine no less than 31 years ago, so I took to heart the latter's remarks about youth and age. Perhaps in 31 years' time he will reflect on this occasion as I now do on my maiden speech.

I am glad that we have heard from different parts of the country, including Birmingham and Sleaford, as the London area tends to dominate these occasions. We have heard about a huge number of subjects, although not everyone contrived to cover every subject in one speech, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) did.

What has been notably absent is any contribution from the Liberal Democrats. Given how they boast of their prowess and assiduity in our constituencies, it is remarkable that they are entirely absent from this important and traditional part of our parliamentary year.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West covered so many subjects, I will restrict myself to one—a self-denying ordinance, perhaps. It is a subject on which my constituents feel extremely strongly and it has been of particular concern over the past few months: commuting, and the state of the railway lines running into and out of London, which is an extremely important part of many people's daily lives.

I am especially concerned about safety and overcrowding. The problems that we face are a microcosm of all the problems faced on railways throughout the country.

Safety is a particular concern in my area. Only a couple of weeks ago, there was a serious near miss just north of St. Mary Cray when, it is thought—there will obviously be an inquiry—a driver passed a signal at danger and nearly collided with a train travelling the other way. That happened at about 5 o'clock in the evening; there were 200 or 300 people on both trains and the situation could have been extremely serious. Fortunately, the driver realised his mistake and the other driver also put on his brakes, so a collision was avoided.

That was only two or three months after a similar incident at Hither Green further up the line, again in the rush hour, when the trains did collide. The accident was not serious, but it resulted in huge chaos throughout the day, with people being stuck in trains and having to walk along the line. Those two incidents in short succession could have been extremely serious had it not been for the quick action of those involved.

As a result, I asked various questions in the House about the number of recent SPADs and I spoke to local railway people, in particular Olivier Brousse, managing director of Connex South Eastern, and the manager of my local railway station, Dave Chapman—both outstanding men who are fighting hard for better conditions for passengers travelling regularly in and out of London.

The statistics provided by the Government in response to my questions showed that SPADs have decreased in the past three years, about which I am glad, and, in particular, that Connex South Eastern has improved its record. I also learned from Olivier Brousse that the number of serious SPADs had been halved during the past 12 months, all of which is excellent.

One reason for such an improvement is that railway companies in my area have introduced a simulator, which enables drivers to understand the problems. It is astonishing that drivers can pass signals at danger. If a car

driver were to pass a red light, it would be a serious incident, and for it to happen so frequently on the railways is a matter of concern. However, good management practices and new techniques have improved matters.

In addition, a train warning system should have been installed by 2004. Its installation for the complete system is some way off and I hope that in the meantime real progress can be made, but that is to be welcomed. Railway safety is being tackled reasonably seriously, at least in my part of London.

The situation on punctuality and reliability is more mixed. For example, the regular commuter watch report in the *Evening Standard* shows that punctuality on trains in and out of London is still poor, but clearly there have been significant improvements since the dreadful days after the Hatfield accident on the east coast line. There has been something to shout about there, but there is still considerable room for improvement.

The real worry is overcrowding—an enormous problem of which those of us who commute regularly are well aware. It is unpleasant and tiring to stand throughout a journey, and for even longer in the event of a breakdown. Commuters who are packed like sardines wonder what would happen to them in the event of a collision or near-collision if they were so jammed in that they had no means of exit. That weighs on people now in a way that it did not in the past.

Having talked to train companies, local railway managers and Railtrack, I see no prospect of improvement in the years to come; indeed, there may be a worsening. The new 375 stock that is being introduced on many lines in my area, and no doubt elsewhere, can accommodate fewer passengers. There is a crumple zone at the end of each coach for safety reasons, which I welcome, and there is improved access for disabled people, but that has led to the loss of about six seats from each coach. The modern coach has certain advantages, such as closed circuit television, and the coaches are brighter and more comfortable, but they have less capacity than the existing slam-door coach.

If platforms are the same length and signals are at the same point, a train cannot carry more coaches, and so has less capacity but the same number of people trying to board it. Ultimately, overcrowding will be more of a problem than it is now. It is true that new coaches are being introduced slowly at off-peak times, but despite their many advantages they will not solve the problem of overcrowding.

Overcrowding on commuter trains can be dealt with only by further investment in the railways to increase the length of platforms and to re-site signal boxes so that trains can have 12 coaches rather than eight and so have the capacity to deal with an increasing number of passengers. Hundreds of thousands of commuters travel into and out of London, which is the backbone of the economy.

During the past two years manufacturing industry has declined, and unemployment is declining only because the service industries are expanding. The biggest service industry of all is the City of London and the west end, which provide many jobs. London is the heart of the economy, and if transport conditions deteriorate further there will be serious consequences for London as a major centre of the economy and the quality of life for the many who work here. That is a serious matter.

I hope that the Government will consider the matter carefully. Will they say clearly what investment can be made? Not a lot of money is needed to lengthen platforms and improve signalling. For example, on my line the figure is thought to be about £100 million over several years. There is to be a meeting in September between those involved in such changes and the Strategic Rail Authority.

I hope that Railtrack will consider such investments seriously, but the problem is how it can raise the money. It has been almost completely destroyed by the Government over the past four years, and is no longer the vehicle for raising money that was envisaged four years ago. Given its current share price, it can no longer do that.

There is a real problem in raising finance through the private sector via Railtrack, so the Government must clearly put something into the system. We do not know what the Government intend. The figure of £60 billion over 10 years has been bandied around, but we do not know what that means in terms of a strict timetable and what projects will be given priority, so we need to hear something specific from the Government in the short term.

I hope that the matter will be considered during the recess before Parliament resumes in October, and that some clear decisions will be made to the benefit of my constituents, perhaps at the meetings in September. I want the companies to improve their management to deal with incidents of signals passed at danger; I want the train protection and warning system brought in more quickly and more thoroughly than is at present intended; and I want the Government to reconsider the investment issue and make it plain, with a timetabled allocation of resources, exactly how they can contribute to more investment to deal with the severe problem of overcrowding, which affects my constituents every day of their working lives. I will want clear answers when we return after the recess.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Banks.

11.30 am

Mr. Tony Banks (West Ham): A popular call there, Madam Deputy Speaker. I accept that I was a fraction late, and it was appropriate that I came in during a speech about public transport, which was the reason why I was slightly late. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) will no doubt agree that a distinguished, vintage—rather than old—Member can be allowed a little flexibility in addressing the House. I am grateful to be given the opportunity to do so.

It is always good to participate in the summer Adjournment debate. We have heard a couple of good maiden speeches today, but usually one sees the usual suspects lining up for this end-of-term whinge. Indeed, it is often referred to as whingeing gits day, and I hope that it will long remain so. As several hon. Members have observed, such opportunities to raise matters about which we and, we hope, our constituents feel strongly are important to us as Back Benchers, as those opportunities are so often missing from the business of the House.

Bob Spink: Will the hon. Gentleman join me in deploring the fact that the Liberal Benches have been

[Bob Spink]

empty from Prayers until now? The Liberals do not care about raising important issues in the House, yet they call themselves the real party of opposition. What utter rubbish.

Mr. Banks: There is a down side, but there is also an up side: that means that there are more opportunities for us to get in, so we should encourage the Liberals to stay away from our proceedings for the day.

I shall raise two issues, both of which are close to my heart. The first concerns animal welfare; the second, sport.

On 11 July I secured a debate in Westminster Hall on the subject of whaling. In my speech I described what I called the barbarous process involved in the slaughter of the great whales—those wonderful warm-blooded social creatures that we admire so much, but have so often killed in the past. I alerted the House to the current practice adopted by the Japanese of effectively bribing smaller, less well-developed countries with tied aid to use their votes in the International Whaling Commission to support the Japanese in their attempts to restore commercial whaling. As a reference point for my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, whom I am so glad to see on the Front Bench, those countries were Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and the Grenadines.

Following that debate a press release was issued by Lehmann Communications, a City-based public relations agency, which was headed "Japan accuses pressure group funded MPs of misleading the House during whaling debate". It stated:

"Masayuki Komatsu, Japan's Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) today issued a stinging rebuke to MPs Tony Banks, Jeremy Corbyn and Peter Bottomley for misleading the House of Commons during a debate on whaling on Wednesday."

The press release continued:

"These MPs who are all funded by the radical animal rights organisation IFAW have simply fed the House of Commons a diet of misinformation and untruths about whaling. They trotted out the same old animal rights falsehoods about whaling that the general public is beginning to see through."

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and congratulate him on the debate in Westminster Hall and his speech today. I take the opportunity to put it on record that the press release issued by that company is disgusting and totally inaccurate. I have never been funded by any organisation such as the one mentioned. My views on whaling are my own, and I am sure that those of my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Worthing, West (Peter Bottomley) are their own. It is important that that should be put on the record and that company dealt with appropriately.

Mr. Banks: I am glad to have been able to give my hon. Friend that opportunity. In effect I, along with my two colleagues, was accused of lying to the House and having financial links with the International Fund for Animal Welfare, which were not declared prior to the debate and—far more seriously, had that been the case—were not included in the Register of Members' Interests. I make it clear that I do not tell lies in the House and, like my hon. Friend, I have no financial links whatever with IFAW. Such allegations are intolerable and unacceptable, and I have instructed my solicitors accordingly. I trust that Sue, Grabbit and Run will make sure that Lehmann Communications never forgets what it has done.

It is a serious matter to accuse Members of Parliament of lying and of having interests that they do not declare. I am not being pious or righteous, but I feel extremely angry about this. Such accusations might pertain to other legislatures around the world but never, I hope, to this House. Through the House, I inform Mr. Komatsu, who I understand is in London attending the IWC meetings in Hammersmith, that he should not judge hon. Members by his own corrupt standards. Bribing members of international organisations might be okay in Japan's book, but it is not acceptable here.

The same Mr. Komatsu said on 18 July in Canberra:

"The minke whale is a cockroach in the oceans."

That is what he said, live, on radio in Australia. I do not know where that places Mr. Komatsu in the great chain of being, but I find such comparisons odious and ludicrous. They sum up the arrogant and venal approach so often adopted by the Japanese towards the world's animal resources.

It is true that Japan is a great and powerful nation, but that does not give it the right to dispose of the world's living creatures as though they belonged to the Japanese alone. The moratorium on commercial whaling was effected to prevent countries such as Japan and Norway from driving the great whales into extinction. Having saved them from that fate, it would be criminal madness to resume the process of commercial whaling now. Commercial whaling must never be allowed to re-commence, and we should move further to end the practice of scientific whaling used by the Japanese and the Norwegians to get round the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Mr. Komatsu went on to say that he believed that the whales were killing too many fish. It is over-fishing by industrial fishing methods that is causing the serious depletion of the world's fishing stocks. It is stupid to describe the great whales or the seals as being responsible for something for which we alone are responsible—over-exploitation of the world's resources.

The Japanese commissioner to the IWC also linked whaling with the rights and cultural heritage of Japan and asked us to respect them. Of course we respect other people's cultural heritage and their rights, but butchery can never be part of any country's right or cultural heritage. In the past, the United Kingdom and the United States of America slaughtered far more great whales than the Japanese ever did, but we would not use a plea of cultural heritage or rights as a justification for resuming commercial whaling. History shows that we have far more rights in that respect, although others would say, as would I, that what we did was a crime rather than a defence of our rights. We cannot allow some spurious claim by the Japanese that it is part of their cultural heritage as the basis for them to resume commercial whaling. I trust that at the IWC the Government will support those who are trying to defend and maintain whales, a great species that has a right to live with us in peace and not be slaughtered, as they have been in the past and, regrettably, as they are at present.

On the Olympic games and Wembley, I offered on behalf of the House of Commons congratulations to Jacques Rogge, the new president of the International

Olympic Committee, and to the citizens of Beijing on being selected to host the 2008 Olympic games. Many people were worried about the human rights aspects of China being selected to host the games, and one can understand and respect the views of those who said that the games should not have gone Beijing. The question of whether the awarding of the games will improve human rights in China is a close call. I believe that it will, but that it will be a close call.

The critical eyes of the world will be on China and the issue of human rights for the next seven years. Once the process has started, it will be difficult for the Chinese to reverse it and we should support them. We should be critical and warn them that if there are any more human rights excesses such as another Tiananmen square, God forbid, the games will be boycotted. The Chinese understand that and we must give them a chance to improve their human rights record.

The decision to take the Olympic games to Beijing means, effectively, that London comes into the frame as a possible host for the 2012 games. I support the call for London to make that bid, but we must learn from our errors. We cannot drift into a bid; that would be the worst thing to do. There must be the widest possible debate. There are arguments for and against any city hosting the massive event that is the Olympic games. In the end, we must be certain that our decision was the right one, based on the fullest debate and consultation.

The role of the Government is critical. A bid would involve billions of pounds of expenditure. We do not want the Government just to say that it would be a good idea for London to bid. London can bid only if the Government are prepared to stand fully behind the capital city in making that bid. That means not just moral support, but financial support; without that, the bid will not work. That is how it has worked successfully in other countries, most gloriously in Sydney in 2000, where the games had enormous support from the state and federal Government. That is how it will work in Athens in 2004, because I know how closely the Greek Government are involved in the process. If we bid and are successful in the selection process, a Cabinet Minister must be appointed to oversee the arrangements.

Clearly, there are questions about where the event should be hosted. Wembley, as the site of the national stadium, is the obvious choice, although other locations have been discussed such as Stratford in my constituency or the dome site. When I was a Minister, I went to see both Ministers who were in charge of the dome to say that it would be the perfect legacy for the dome if the site were to be used for the Olympic games. Unfortunately, I received no support but we could still come back to this arrangement in future.

I believe that the national stadium ought to be at Wembley and that athletics ought to be included in the national stadium. The delay over constructing the new stadium is a perfect example of how not to do something. We have had Government interference, but no Government money, over a number of years, which means that the project has still not even commenced.

When I stood down as Minister in July 1999, I thought that we had a done deal over Wembley. I thought that we had a national stadium incorporating the design potential for athletics with the deck proposals. We all thought that was the answer. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), the then Secretary of State, described it as a stunning design. He was right. It was and remains a stunning design.

My right hon. Friend is a close personal friend of mine. I warned him throughout the process that people were whispering in his ear and behind his back and that they were misleading him in respect of Wembley and the potential for athletics. They said that the design was unsatisfactory for athletics: it was not. It remains satisfactory and I suspect that we will come back to it again, and all we will have done is to waste two years.

The people who were whispering in my right hon. Friend's ear and behind his back had their own agenda and they are responsible for something that is now approaching a scandal in respect of the national stadium at Wembley. I believe that Picketts Lock will not happen and that we will return to the plan for a national stadium at Wembley, having lost two years. That is a terrible thing, but at least if we get the process started we can forget the errors of the past and produce something that is fitting for the great national game of football and provide the potential for hosting the Olympic games in London.

The process of selecting a city for the Olympic games is invidious. We saw corruption over Salt Lake City and all sorts of dodgy practices. It is not satisfactory and has dragged the great Olympic movement into the mud. I hope that Jacques Rogge can restore the image of the Olympic games, which are an inspiration to the whole world and have been ever since the modern games were started at the end of the 19th century.

We should consider adopting a different method for issues such as human rights and whether a city can afford the games, bearing in mind that only the richest cities in the world can afford to host the games. My preference is to establish a permanent Olympic site that all the countries of the Olympic family can endow. The site should obviously be in Athens. That would link the ancient and modern games in a way that would restore the image of the Olympic movement and avoid the excess, commercialism and corruption that so often now pervade that great movement. I hope that it is possible to get support for this idea from the Government and we could perhaps send back the Parthenon marbles as our seal of approval.

11.47 am

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip–Northwood): We look forward to the recess not least for these debates and the classic performers who take part in them. We had the end-of-the-pier show from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess). However, he did not speak about the pier this time but about a range of important subjects which are of great concern to his constituents. That has been the theme of the debate. The hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen) made an important speech about the London underground. The situation is important to his constituents and those of many other hon. Members from London and the country as a whole.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) referred to the state of the railway system, and we are grateful to him. His constituents suffer intolerable conditions in their daily commute to London, as do mine.

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

I was moved by the speech of the hon. Member for West Ham (Mr. Banks) about whaling; the House is indebted to him for his conscience on the matter and for his words on the importance of a national stadium at Wembley. I back him wholeheartedly on his clear message that sport in this country and the possibility of London attracting the Olympic games depend on the construction of the national stadium at Wembley. Of course, good surface transport links will also be needed, and the improvement of the tube is of central importance.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) spoke with great eloquence about the dire state of the national health service in his constituency. We share those problems in my part of London, but they are especially acute in my constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) avoided controversial subjects in their maiden speeches, which were impressive and made with circumspection and tact, but if they had been more forthright, they might have admitted that their constituents, too, are worried about the state of the national health service. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington, whom I welcome back to the Chamber, spoke about the basic aspirations of his constituents. We are all moved by such aspirations, as we feel how far short we fall of meeting them. I have that feeling not least in relation to the national health service in my part of north-west London.

On 16 October, the Secretary of State for Health will have the opportunity to answer a question on the future of regional specialist hospital services in north-west London. I tabled the question, and I trail it in advance so that the Leader of the House can warn the Secretary of State about how vital the issue is not only for the people of Ruislip–Northwood, but for those who reside within the catchment areas of Harefield hospital, the premier cardiothoracic hospital in this country, and Mount Vernon hospital, a premier cancer centre that draws patients from as far afield as Bedfordshire and beyond.

A few days ago, we celebrated the 21st anniversary of transplantation at Harefield. It was a grand occasion. All those who work or have been patients there, as well as local people, took pride in the fact that Harefield has been a pioneering centre for transplantation. It has carried out more heart transplants than any hospital in the world, and yet the Government are prepared to allow it to close in favour of a new hospital that will be opened at vast cost in the most congested and polluted part of London—Paddington basin.

How will we get to that new hospital? We all know about the tube. Should heart patients in my constituency have to strap-hang their way to central London, any more than those in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington? Even the hale and hearty ones cannot easily endure going into central London on the train. What about road-service charges? I presume that patients from the south-east and their relatives will have to pay road-user charges—and where will they park when they get to the new hospital? Harefield hospital is in idyllic rural surroundings. It is easy to get to and has an outstanding track record.

I urge the Government to think again, especially as the economy is clearly starting on a downturn. I forecast that, by 2006, when the new hospital is due for completion, the resources for such vast capital spending will not be available. It would cost only some £20 million to modernise Harefield, as opposed to a net cost of some £135 million to build the new hospital at Paddington.

Just before the end of the previous Parliament, I attended a very interesting meeting. It was addressed by Rosie Varley, who is conducting a review of cancer services on behalf of the NHS in the eastern region. It occurred upstairs and was attended by a dozen or so hon. Members from various parties, all of whom represented areas served by Mount Vernon hospital's cancer centre. It was most instructive to all of us, including Rosie Varley, to learn that we agreed unanimously that the best location for their cancer services was not some greenfield site in Hertfordshire—a proposal that is currently being considered by the NHS in the eastern region—but the wiser and more cost-effective Mount Vernon option, which is also under consideration. Co-located at the Mount Vernon hospital are research facilities of incomparable international repute: the Gray laboratory, the Macmillan centre for cancer care and Michael Sobell house, which is a wonderful hospice.

I put to the House the important issues of quality of life that affect my constituents' basic aspirations. I believe that, with imagination and good will, the Government can meet those aspirations. I ask them to think long and hard during the recess about the issues that I have raised and to give us the right answers, when we return in the autumn, regarding modernisation of the tube and encouragement of the further development of Mount Vernon and Harefield hospitals.

11.56 am

John Cryer (Hornchurch): Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to speak in this end-of-term debate—or morning's whinge, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Mr. Banks) called it. First, I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) and to the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) for their maiden speeches. The latter follows a great anti-European and DIY enthusiast who certainly made her mark in this House. I am sure that they will do the same.

I intend to speak about a couple of constituency issues, but before I do so, I should like to deal with a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen), who spoke about the proposed public-private partnership for the tube. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House feel strongly that it was just not good enough that the announcement that sneaked out a couple of weeks ago was not made on the Floor of the House, and that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions was not present to answer our questions about one of the most momentous announcements on London transport that has been made for a long time.

There are grave questions about the viability of the PPP. The biggest single fear at the back of people's minds is that it could, to some extent, replicate the disasters of railway privatisation under the previous Government. No clear line of management responsibility was established when the railways were privatised. Contracts can fly all

over the place, so there is no bottom line. However, when it comes to safety, a clear line of responsibility is exactly what is needed. If that is not achieved on the tube, we could witness the replication of some of the problems that have arisen on the railways. I would like the former Ministers who privatised the railways to be called before a public tribunal of inquiry to explain exactly what they were doing and tell us why they privatised the railways in the way they did.

I should like now to deal my two main constituency issues. First, I want to speak about mobile phone masts—a controversial matter for many hon. Members. The hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) expressed grave anxiety about his unplanned erections. He was very excited about them. Who can blame him? Two days ago, I attended a protest at St. Mary's Catholic primary school in my constituency. Approximately 100 parents and teachers turned up to protest about a mobile phone mast, which is being built roughly 50 yards from the school. Neither BT nor the local council undertook any consultation; that is not good enough. The entire process flew in the face of the findings of the Stewart report and the recommendations of the former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in March. Both the report and the DETR made clear it that it was not acceptable to build mobile phone masts close to primary schools. The skulls of children under the age of 12 are not sufficiently developed to withstand the impact of the radiation that mobile phone masts can emit.

The Stewart report and the DETR proposals recommended that the normal rules for planning permission should be applied to mobile phone masts below 15 m as well as to those above 15 m, as currently happens. Clearly, the recommendations have not been followed in the case of the mast near St. Mary's school. It could have been resisted; consultation could have taken place. Consultation is not compulsory, but there is nothing preventing a council or BT from engaging in a consultation exercise that would at least give parents, residents and the school some warning. I intend to work closely with the head of St. Mary's, parents and local residents to try to reverse the decision.

Bob Spink: Does the hon. Gentleman support the Opposition Front-Bench policy of giving local people and councils the right to decide about the installation of mobile phone masts?

John Cryer: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the previous Government—to be fair, he was not in Parliament at the time—weakened planning legislation to make it easier for big companies to build such masts. However, I agree with him. Councils should have the power to resist. They currently have limited powers, but they should be extended. I suspect that the big companies such as BT and Orange are building the masts as quickly as possible because they fear that the Government will introduce regulations to make it tougher. They want to build even the third generation masts now, so that they do not have a battle in 18 months' time. It is highly likely that the Government will introduce regulations in the next few months. I hope that they will do that as quickly as possible. The big companies will have to begin consulting and local councils will have the power to prevent such developments.

Secondly, I want to consider capital investment in schools. It is a matter of record that investment in schools has increased sharply under the Government, especially in the past two years. However, there was under-investment for a long time and the fabric of many schools was allowed to deteriorate. That problem is reflected in constituencies throughout the country. In my constituency, lack of investment has caused all sorts of problems.

Two schools in particular spring to mind. Edwin Lambert primary school in Hornchurch stands on a quadrangle. On one side, the school is Edwardian, but the other side was burned down in the 1960s. It was replaced by a typical, flat-roofed 1960s building, which is now crumbling. There is no capital to replace it.

The second school is Parsonage Farm junior school in Rainham, in the south of my constituency not far from the River Thames. That has a problem with demountables, which are crumbling. Again, there is a lack of capital resources to replace them and do a proper job.

I support public investment in schools, not part-privatisation or private finance initiatives. I have no objection to genuine partnership with the private sector because local government has always had such partnerships. However, we need to be careful that we do not adopt partial or full privatisation of parts of health or education.

The finance house, Capital Strategies, believes that outsourcing from local education authorities to the private sector will increase from £1.6 billion today to £5 billion in five years. We must be careful about that, and consider what has happened in America. In Baltimore, nine schools were handed over to a private sector company called Education Alternatives in an £85 million contract—a pretty big contract, by any standards.

This has all been documented by Nick Cohen in *The Observer* newspaper. I know that a warm glow will envelop those on the Treasury Bench at the mention of his name, considering all the paeans of praise for the Government that he has produced. He documented what happened in Baltimore with Education Alternatives. The company took a large chunk of public money to run nine schools. Within a few months, it was claiming all kinds of miracles on behalf of the schools. It claimed that they were cleaner and better run, that the results had improved and that truancy levels had gone down.

Then, over the following year or two, more and more facts started to emerge as to what had actually happened in those schools in Baltimore. Truancy levels had increased, not gone down. The new technology was not there. The company was sacking teachers—it got rid of 25 per cent. of them—and crowding 40 children at a time into classes. Baltimore's *The Sun* then exposed the fact that Education Alternatives was falsifying the figures for exam results, which were actually getting worse rather than better. That is the kind of thing that is happening.

A second example is the Edison Project. This will be known to some hon. Members because it is run by a man called Chris Whittle, who is already trying to get his slimy claws on the British education system. Like many of the companies that have become involved in the American system, he thinks that he can make a lot of money out of this. He was a pioneering figure in American education, in that he managed to get his

[John Cryer]

television channel, Channel One, beamed into primary schools. It was loaded with adverts but had a very limited number of educational programmes.

The Edison Project's British salesman is a man called James Tooley, who was once hired by Chris Woodhead. Now that is a rich irony. This bloke James Tooley apparently approves of American primary school children watching Marilyn Manson videos. That is one of the things that used to be beamed into their classrooms. For the benefit of more senior Members, Marilyn Manson is a band fronted by a man who tends to eat live bats on a stage that is awash with blood. All the members of the band are named after particularly notable serial killers. So that hard right-wing *Daily Mail* sort of figure, that figure of morality, James Tooley, thinks it is all right for primary school children to watch that kind of nonsense. He was hired by Chris Woodhead, another hard right-wing *Daily Mail* sort of figure.

Mr. Pound: *The Daily Telegraph.*

John Cryer: I am sorry. Yes, Chris Woodhead went to *The Daily Telegraph*. He thinks that it is all right for teachers to have affairs with pupils, from what I remember. These are the kinds of figures who are menacing British education.

Chris Grayling: I was intrigued by the hon. Gentleman's comments about rail privatisation and his belief that the Ministers responsible should be brought before a public tribunal. Does he think that any Minister who follows the United States course that he has just described and introduces private companies to our schools should also face a public tribunal?

John Cryer: So far as I know, no one has been killed in British schools. I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is referring to. I was talking about two accidents, Ladbroke Grove and Hatfield, which resulted in deaths. That is why there should be a public tribunal. I do not recall anyone being killed in British classrooms so far. In any case, the issues that we are discussing here are in their infancy, so we cannot really discuss them in those terms.

I have a son who is already in education, and my daughter starts primary school in September. It worries me that companies such as the Edison Project and Education Alternatives might start to get involved in British education. They are certainly eyeing our schools and education authorities extremely greedily. I want to see proper public investment in schools, not privatisation.

12.9 pm

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak. Before I discuss the area on which I want to focus, I must tell the hon. Member for West Ham (Mr. Banks) that he is not alone in the House in his concerns about whaling, which are shared by Conservative Members. We would encourage the Government to take the strongest possible action to ensure that the trade is not revived.

I follow in the wake of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) in bringing to the Minister's attention the issues that face far too many of our schools: the huge teacher recruitment problem and the great challenges in meeting basic curriculum levels in the term ahead. Yesterday, a head teacher in my constituency told me, "I have never seen a situation as chronic as this before." That is after more than 15 years in the profession.

It is worth echoing the comment of my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) that it is surprising, to say the least, that we have no support today from the Liberal Democrats, despite the concerns that they continually raise about education. They should be here to echo the comments being made by the real Opposition.

There is growing alarm in my constituency and across Surrey about the teacher recruitment problems. Let me talk the House through the example of a school in my constituency. As of today, it lacks a No. 2 in its English team. It lacks a No. 2 in its maths team as well as another maths teacher. It lacks two technology teachers, which means that pupils will not be able to receive technology classes next term. It lacks a geography teacher. It has a new music teacher. The head told me that that person has never taught a class before, but was the only option for next term.

Let me share with the House some of the head's comments about his situation: "We can cobble things together, but it will not be satisfactory. I can no longer guarantee consistency of teaching. We are now having to downgrade our targets for next year." That head's predicament is shared by his colleagues across Surrey and, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West, across the south-east of England, as well as many other parts of the country.

The situation has become so desperate that Surrey's director of education has sent parents a letter expressing his concern and warning of what lies ahead. I shall share some of the letter with the House:

"Dear parent,

Media coverage of the national shortage of teachers will not have escaped your attention. The situation this year is the worst I have ever experienced. In common with schools throughout the country, Surrey schools are finding it increasingly difficult to fill vacant posts. Here, we have the added factor of high housing costs, which deter many teachers from living and working in Surrey.

Throughout the summer period, the local education authority will continue to support our schools in seeking to fill all current vacancies. However, it would be unrealistic to expect all posts to be filled by the beginning of the new academic year—there are simply insufficient teachers to meet all of our needs. Schools will respond to any staff shortages they have in different ways and, probably, at short notice. It may be necessary to make changes to the way classes are organised, the number of subjects offered and even the length of the school week.

I do not wish to be alarmist, but I do want to be open and realistic with parents. Next term is going to be a challenging one for us all and I ask you for your understanding and forbearance in any action your Headteacher and Governors may need to take."

That is the reality of education in Surrey today.

The Surrey county council education department has put as much pressure as it can on the Government in asking them to help. The director of education wrote to the Secretary of State a few days ago to draw her attention to the extreme problems being faced, such as nearly 500 vacant full-time posts for next term:

"Part-time schooling is looking inevitable for several Surrey schools."

This is, in all senses of the word, a crisis, and the Government need to address it as a matter of priority, not simply when we return to this place in the autumn but

immediately. Why is the crisis happening? Head teachers tell us that the first and most obvious reason is that too many good people are leaving the profession. One told me that he had just lost a couple of people who had said, "We have just had enough. We want to get a life."

Teachers face huge amounts of unnecessary paperwork. I served for a few years as a school governor and remember being bemused by the amount of unnecessary forms, documents and initiatives with which we had to deal. Most of those landed on the head teacher's desk. On one bizarre occasion, a letter from the LEA read:

"In order to cut down on unnecessary paperwork, would you please fill in the attached form?"

In addition, teachers tell us that there have been constant changes to the curriculum, and those changes continue. Too often, the changes are ill-managed, as we have seen in the case of AS-levels this year. One teacher told me, "We warned the Government that this would be a mess. No one listened, and now it is a mess."

An unsatisfactory situation is developing in respect of key stage 3 tests, too. Most schools in Surrey are asking for their papers to be re-marked because of the extraordinarily erratic nature of the marks. They have called into question the availability and quality of markers. Teachers who have worked all year to get their pupils through those tests, and who see erratic marking that calls into question the quality of teaching that they have been delivering, are bound to feel that their morale is being undermined.

It is often said that it is simply a money issue, but in reality it is much more. The head of one school in my constituency told me that he had been looking for an English teacher for months and had advertised three times, increasing the financial package each time. He had yet to receive a single application.

One extraordinary discovery that I have made since my arrival in this House is that, until now, the Government have done no research on why teachers are leaving the profession. A couple of weeks ago I tabled a written question to the Secretary of State on the subject. Happily, there is some money in the Budget in this financial year to do that research, but I want to know why it was not done years ago.

In the past three or four years, the rate of departure from the teaching profession has increased by 30 per cent. More people now leave the profession in the middle of their career than retire at the end of it. That cannot be right. In my constituency and in the south-east generally, one of the biggest problems is housing. There are no easy answers to the housing problems of the south-east, but schools are losing young teachers because, as one head teacher told me, they no longer want to live with their parents. The Government need to understand, when considering housing policy for key workers, that whereas previous generations had council houses, that is no longer enough. Teachers do not want council houses. A much more careful and thoughtful approach is needed to real shared ownership for key workers.

The Department for Education and Skills has stated clearly that there is no crisis in the teaching profession, yet every teacher and head teacher in this country knows full well that there is indeed a crisis, and that it will get worse. One head teacher told me that even the supply of supply teachers is drying up, and that those who are available are of a lower quality than in the past and cost heads more money.

The only comment that I have heard from the Government in that context is the usual, "We shall be spending more on this in the years ahead"—spending promises for the future—and the usual attempts to blame the Conservative party. Let me read the end of a letter from a community college in Sussex—it is not in my constituency—which concluded:

"The situation is a clear contrast to the situation five years ago when we were disappointed if we received less than twenty applications for any post, and averaged over fifty."

Today, that college is still looking for staff, and it receives virtually no applications.

The Prime Minister was first elected on a platform of education as his number one priority. If I am not mistaken, he is now in his fifth year in office. When will the Government do something about this problem? When will they find a strategy to put teachers back into our schools? What do they intend to do this autumn to support head teachers, who are at their wits' end trying to work out how they can deliver the teaching that pupils need and deserve?

12.20 pm

Dr. Ashok Kumar (Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) on their fine maiden speeches, and I look forward to their future contributions. Like my hon. Friend, I pay tribute to his predecessor, Robin Corbett, who is now in the other place. I have known him for more than a decade, and he has been a good friend and a great campaigner on many issues. I am sure that he will make the same contribution in the upper House.

I want to say a few words about the operation of the planning and licensing system, and how it has affected a democratically elected councillor in Teesside. I am aware that proposals have been made to look into the operation of the planning process and the court system, and especially to consider how to streamline the appeal process and how to make the court process more effective.

Last year, a major retailer, the Safeway group, applied for a liquor licence on a site in Low lane, Middlesbrough, on the boundary line of my constituency. The application raised strong objections in that pleasant residential part of Middlesbrough. There are a number of schools in the vicinity: Acklam Grange secondary school, King's Manor secondary school and St. David's comprehensive school. Further afield there is Coulby Newham secondary school, whose catchment area is affected. All those schools had concerns about the increased ability of their pupils to access liquor. Local residents were also unhappy about the proposal.

The proposal was for the sales point to be a mini-market on the site of a large garage and filling station. Many people felt that having an outlet for alcoholic drink on a site almost solely accessed by motorists drove a coach and horses through any attempts to cut down on drink driving. In their initial hearing, the magistrates took those objections fully on board, and the application was refused. Safeway, as is its right, lodged an objection to that refusal. That was when the fun began.

My colleague and friend on Middlesbrough borough council, Councillor John McPartland, had represented his constituents faithfully in their objections. He formally

[Dr. Ashok Kumar]

asked to be an objector, and to be allowed to speak at the appeal hearing on his own behalf and on behalf of Kader ward community council. He was to appear at the hearing with Mr. John Bate, the head of Acklam Grange school, as his key witness. There was an exchange of correspondence between Councillor McPartland and the solicitors acting for Safeway, Messrs Cartwrights of Bristol.

In that exchange, the spectre of a possible application for costs against Councillor McPartland as an individual was suddenly raised by Cartwrights. That naturally alarmed Councillor McPartland, and in my view he correctly took advice from the Court Service, which was bleak and to the point. The Court Service itself took advice from His Honour Judge Fox QC, who stated:

"Mr McPartland may continue to object, and in addition to giving evidence himself, may call the other three people as witnesses with or without them having given notice of what they may say, although it would be fair and courteous to the appellants so to do.

Alternatively, all four people may object afresh, in which case they should notify the appellants of their objections.

The principal difference would be that if they were separate objectors and the appeal were allowed each could be liable for the appellant's costs. If only Mr McPartland objected and he lost, he could be ordered to bear the whole of the appellant's costs."

On receiving that advice, Councillor McPartland withdrew his objection. As he put it in a letter to me:

"This potentially placed me in a position of possibly facing bills that I couldn't pay, as I am a retired teacher living, principally, on my teacher's pension. But of course that is not the real point. The real disgrace is that an elected Councillor was unable to represent the people who elected him because the present state of law in the country could make him pay dearly for that privilege, in opposing the commercial plans of a massive concern such as Safeway".

The practice of applying for costs is well established both in courts and in planning appeals. It serves as a deterrent to a planning committee or licensing body so that they do not make decisions that are frivolous or that fly in the face of established and agreed plans and policies. However, on the occasions when such applications were made and granted, they were against a corporate body, such as a local council or planning committee, but not against an individual. In all my years of political experience, I have never before come across such an implicit threat to an individual objector.

This matter should be re-examined in the review of the planning and court procedures that I mentioned at the beginning of my speech. To remove such a threat against an individual, while retaining it for a corporate body, will not lead to the appearance of a flood of frivolous or malicious litigants mounting cases against a planned development or a liquor licence. It will mean that a councillor such as John McPartland can represent his or her constituents adequately and fully with the fear of punitive costs banished from their mind.

We are talking about the balance of forces between massive multinational corporations and the individual: the balance of forces and resources between highly profitable companies with deep and well-lined pockets and local people who do not have the comfort of such institutional, financial and legal backing. That means that all must be equal before the law, but that is not the case at present: some are far more equal than others. I want the Leader of the House to take up that point. It needs to be addressed and I hope that it will be considered when our Government undertake the proper review of the planning and licensing system.

I look forward to an outcome that will satisfy Councillor John McPartland and others in similar situations, and indeed everyone who wants to ensure that the ordinary man and woman can have their say at the bar of public opinion.

12.29 pm

Bob Spink (Castle Point): I am sure that the House welcomes the presence of the Leader of the House at this debate. It shows that he attaches proper importance to such occasions. He and the House shared a great treat when we heard excellent maiden speeches from my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon). Both spoke with insight and wisdom, gave vivid descriptions of their constituencies, and paid generous and courteous tributes to their predecessors—as indeed they should, because their predecessors were excellent. We are in for a treat when those two hon. Members speak again. I look forward to it.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise several important issues that affect my constituents in this Adjournment debate, the first that I have managed to speak in since my re-election to this place. I shall start with a word about education, and that is right because education is the key issue in society today. It is an investment in our future. It affects all our futures. If we get it right, we will create the ability to resolve all our other problems. If we do not get it right, we will be for ever firefighting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) spoke with great force about teacher shortages, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess). We have teacher shortages in my constituency too but I will not add to their arguments. I simply associate myself with their comments. I am delighted to have been given the privilege of serving on the Select Committee on Education and Skills, where I can perhaps help to guide the Government as they seek to develop education policy.

I shall also raise health, the environment and our road infrastructure. I would like to speak about many other issues but time will deny me that pleasure. For example, the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) mentioned the problem in Cyprus and the need for a solution. I will work with him and hon. Members on both sides of the House to find a just solution to the Cypriot problem. I hope that Cyprus's European Union membership can be a catalyst for resolving it.

Last night, I attended the Canvey schools partnership awards evening. Eighty-seven children from 15 schools on Canvey Island were there to receive awards. Hundreds of parents and many dedicated teachers and head teachers were there to celebrate the effort and achievement of Canvey children as a whole as well as the 87 Canvey children who received specific awards. We saw an excellent array of talent and potential, as Paul Lincoln, director of learning services at Essex county council, rightly said.

The Canvey schools partnership is a local initiative. I congratulate those who thought of it and who have carefully advanced it a considerable way. The 15 head

teachers in particular must be congratulated on working together to raise the issue of education on Canvey Island. We on Canvey Island should all be working together with the three local sixth form options—Furtherwick school, King John school and Seevic college—to drive up recognition of the importance of education.

Like the parents, I was proud, and indeed a little humbled, to see so many bright, positive and cheerful children receiving their awards. I congratulate each of them, particularly those who had overcome adversities during their years in education. I recognise that, like all the children in Canvey Island, they benefit from excellent and dedicated teachers and staff in their schools, whom I congratulate.

I emphasise the part that parents play in their children's education. Many factors influence outcomes in education. Perhaps one of the most important is the involvement, interest and encouragement that parents can give to their children. The Canvey schools partnership is a good initiative. The awards evening was a worthwhile event. I hope that it will be repeated to help to reinforce the importance of education for all my constituents.

I wish to raise an important health issue. Multiple sclerosis is a very difficult disease that afflicts many people. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) mentioned it earlier, and I shall not repeat the points that he made with more eloquence than I could emulate. He raised the matter with great passion.

A number of people in Castle Point suffer from multiple sclerosis, including one of my constituents who is a young lady, very young to get the disease, and to whom I shall refer as Miss A. The clinical evidence shows that treatment with beta interferon can help to arrest the disease. In certain circumstances, the growth of demyelinated plaques can be slowed if beta interferon is used at an early stage. Beta interferon is particularly effective when used early in the course of the disease, and any delay can result in irreparable damage, which is a cause of great concern to Miss A. She fits the criteria for beta interferon use that the Multiple Sclerosis Society has established, but she has been denied the right to receive the treatment.

I do not know when the Government will get their act together on the issue and start focusing on helping patients in need. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence report has been delayed for about two years, and now it is not expected until November, but it should be made available more swiftly if possible. Even an interim report would be welcome. Regardless of that, I do not know why we have to wait for the NICE report to allow the use of beta interferon. There is enough clinical evidence showing that it gives real benefits and it should be used now.

On 18 July, the Prime Minister said that the delay in making beta interferon available was justified. I thought that that comment was outrageous. Of course it is important for NICE to get its investigation right and carefully consider the facts, but it is also important to treat patients now, when they really need that help. I think that all hon. Members know that if it were the Prime Minister's child who needed beta interferon, that help would be delivered right now.

The continued Government delay is disgraceful and is more about NHS rationing than about clinical decision making. It is about saving money for the Government. Ministers are acting irresponsibly, and I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary will address that issue in his reply. I shall seek every possible way of raising the issue in future.

Another important issue is Pitsea tip, with which my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay is also dealing because it is in his constituency, although it is largely my constituents in Benfleet and Canvey Island who live in its shadow and suffer its effects. I shall work closely with him on the matter, and we have already tabled 10 to 15 questions to try to hold the Government to account on it. That is a job that we shall do. So far, except for one question, we have received only holding answers. Suddenly, as the House rises for the summer recess, one answer slipped through. The timing raised some suspicions in my mind. When I read it, I realised that the Government have something to hide.

I was first alerted to the problem of Pitsea tip by the *Evening Echo*. Within one hour, I had raised the issue with Mr. Speaker, and within two hours I had raised the matter on the Floor of the House with the Leader of the House. One of the questions that I tabled to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs requested the dates when deposits of poisonous ash at Pitsea tip were first suspected and when they were stopped. The Secretary of State replied:

"deposits of mixed bottom ash and precipitator ash at the Pitsea landfill site began in early 1998 . . . the Environment Agency became aware of the use of this ash to provide temporary cover for household waste. The Agency estimated the dioxin levels in the mixed ash to be 735 ng/kg."

That is a remarkably dangerous level of contamination.

The Secretary of State continued:

"the Agency wrote to the licence holder in July 1998 instructing them to cease using the mixed ash as cover material . . . acceptance of the ash for disposal at the site ceased by the end of 1998."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 2001; Vol. 372, c. 292-3W.]

So there we have it. The timing is critical to my constituents in Benfleet and Canvey Island who live in the vicinity of the tip and have been exposed to dangerous deposits and contaminated poisonous ash for a year longer than they should have been—from early 1998 to the end of 1998 when the disposals were stopped—even though the Government were aware of the danger.

The responsibility for this is clear. There was a Labour Government in 1998, a Labour Member of Parliament for Castle Point and a Labour borough council. I want to know why no action was taken. I took action within an hour—not a day, a week or a year. I want to know why Castle Point people were not told what was going on and who they can hold to account for that lapse. If the Labour Government told the Labour Member of Parliament for Castle Point and the borough council, why did they not make the information public? If the Labour Government did not tell anyone, why not? It is clear that Castle Point people have been betrayed by, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West says, a rotten Labour Government who put spin before people's safety.

There must be an inquiry into who knew what, when they knew it and what has been done to ensure that action can be taken now to minimise the risk that we have lived with for too long in Castle Point. Dioxins are nasty substances; they kill people and they damage our environment. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay and I still await assurances that action will be taken to

[Bob Spink]

remove the risk. We also await answers to the rest of our questions, which were tabled some two weeks ago under the priority written questions rule, for answer within three days. We have a duty to protect our constituents and we will work together to do that.

I now turn to the third road for Canvey Island. This is not just about congestion and convenience; it is about safety, access for emergency services and escape in the event of, God forbid, another flood. We all know that the tides are getting higher every year. Last week, Canvey Island was blocked off by a simple damaged sewer pipe that brought much of Benfleet and the whole of Canvey Island to a standstill for several hours.

There used to be an ambulance station on Canvey Island, but Essex ambulance services now proposes to move the ambulance off the island and station it on the mainland. If someone collapses with an asthma attack, anaphylactic shock, a heart attack or a stroke, the speed with which an ambulance can get to them and then get them to an accident and emergency department at Basildon or Southend hospital is critical to their chances. If the ambulance first has to get on to the island and then get back off it, that will create problems and may result in my constituents suffering damage that they would not otherwise have suffered. Some may die. I will continue to fight to keep the ambulance on the island. The roads to the island are often completely blocked, so if the emergency services were stationed on the mainland they could not even get on to the island, let alone back off it.

Councillor Ray Howard, known locally as "Mr. Canvey", is the key champion of the third road. This week, he rightly said:

"The Government needs to sit up and take notice of Canvey, otherwise we might never get our third road. Labour Government Ministers are the key to the third road decision."

Neighbouring authorities are also key players, and they have been a bit protectionist, obstructive and nimbyish. I think that they are a little misguided. Thurrock has consistently refused to accept a route to Corringham from Canvey, and Basildon has also been obstructive. We in south-east Essex must work together for the benefit of the community at large.

There is now a real chance to make progress. There are three factors that can help us. The first is the Thames gateway regeneration project, which can help to provide funding for the infrastructure. The second is a positive attitude from Ministers, whom I thank and commend for taking the time to go to Canvey and see the situation. I hope to invite them again and again, until we finally get our third road. The third is a commitment of all the local communities and authorities to work together for the benefit of the wider community in south-east Essex. Those three ingredients, working together with synergy, might provide the answer that has been long sought.

The preferred route now is to the west, probably up to the Five Bells roundabout in Basildon. I warmly welcome Basildon council leader John Potter's statement in the *Evening Echo:*

"I can understand the problem Canvey residents have and we will have to sit down and look at any proposals carefully and see if we can come up with a solution."

He has shown courage and foresight in making that offer. I hope that he means what he says. We must be able to find a solution that fairly balances people's needs and the importance of our infrastructure development. I welcome John Potter's generous offer to talk, and hope that the talks can now take place.

The public will not forgive any political party that holds up progress on Canvey's third road. The Basildon Labour party must think carefully about that, and I hope that it will decide to put nimby instincts aside and work constructively for a solution for Canvey's third road.

Let me say how much I have enjoyed my return to the House. I know that I have much to learn and to re-learn before I can match the skills of those who sit on the Benches around me, on both sides of the House.

12.48 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (North–East Derbyshire): I congratulate the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) on their maiden speeches. There is much that I would like to say arising from their contributions, but I am conscious of the time constraints.

We have just been through a general election, so it seems appropriate to talk about electoral issues. There are questions that, in logic, should precede the questions that people traditionally want to debate, such as proportional representation versus first past the post, poor turnouts and compulsory voting, and which candidates people should vote for. Those are morally important questions, but we need to discuss other matters that, although they are procedural, should be first on the agenda—they need to be got out of the road first.

First, there is the need for full electoral registration on registers that are convenient for people and enable them to exercise their franchise rights. The Representation of the People Act 2000 went some way towards achieving that objective by introducing rolling registers, but in our highly mobile society, advanced technology should enable us to do more. We have started out down the road of rolling registers, but they are still slow and halting. We need a system that quickly picks up people who have moved and ensures that no one is missed.

I have often argued for the registration of homeless people. The ideal solution would be to have no homelessness and so no need for special registration for such people. The Representation of the People Act introduced certain measures and, in terms of technical provision, we have done well in advancing the case for the registration of the homeless. It is now for those organisations that assist or comprise homeless people to ensure that such measures are used. Perhaps other techniques could also be used to search out the homeless and ensure that they are registered.

People who are part of the society in which they reside should be on the electoral register, so I am not in favour of overseas registration—the expat vote—and I certainly do not support the current periods involved. Such people have become part of the society to which they have moved.

Britain should allow registration of all foreign nationals resident here. They are part of this society and that facility should not be available only for people from the Republic of Ireland and the Commonwealth. Others who reside in Britain are equally part of our society and should be taken into account.

The exclusion of prisoners from registers is no longer relevant. Such people are members of society and should have a vote. They will not dominate the electoral game and they are serving a sentence for their crime, so the franchise should not be taken away from them.

As a result of my attitudes to electoral registration, I have concluded that those aged 16 and over should be enfranchised. Britain should move to an identity card system and the time for identity cards and electoral registration is when people move out of schools into higher education or jobs. Those approaching 16 should be involved, despite a possible low turnout, as we experienced among 18 to 21-year-olds. Practical steps, such as civic education in schools, might provide a way forward.

Even if all those matters were dealt with, a problem still exists for a particular group. Even with full and proper registration, there is a gap in the arrangements. I refer to access for disabled people to polling stations. Even if disabled people have the same rights as everyone else to be on the electoral register, they have a serious problem if they cannot get into polling stations on the same basis as able-bodied people.

The Representation of the People Act extended the facilities for postal and proxy votes to everyone—able-bodied and disabled people alike—and certain returning officers may have thought that that solved the problem of disabled people. However, disabled people should have the same right as anyone else in society to turn up at a polling station and exercise their rights. If they decide to arrange a postal or proxy vote, that should be on the same basis as anyone else would decide to do so—they may be off on holiday, or there may be family reasons or other inconveniences that make it difficult for them to vote. It should not be a matter of their disability. They should still be able to get into the polling station and exercise their right. Indeed, they might turn up at a polling station to exercise the proxy of one of their friends or relatives.

For most people, voting at a polling station is still the proper exercise of their franchise rights. It gives them the chance for a last-minute change of heart and the opportunity to share in the atmosphere of what should be an important public occasion. The more we detract from that, the less people will be inclined to participate in the electoral process.

The 2000 Act made only minor but nevertheless welcome changes to assist disabled people to vote. It contained provisions for equipment at polling stations to enable the blind and partially sighted to vote unaided, and gave people who cannot read the right to have a companion to vote on their behalf. Physical access to polling stations has not yet been tackled in legislation, apart from some weak provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. No measure applying specifically to disabled people has been adopted in representation of the people legislation.

Scope recently published a third report entitled "Polls Apart". The first report revealed the extent of the problems following the general election in 1992. The second report dealt with the situation in 1997. The third report refers to the recent general election and is based on a nationwide survey of 1,965 polling stations. It revealed that, despite improvements since 1997, only a third of the polling stations covered were fully accessible.

The survey covered 474 constituencies. Common problems were steps, dangerous ramps and slippery floors. In some cases, disabled voters had to vote in the street or have their ballot papers marked by others. Some were simply turned away and disfranchised. At a polling station in Streatham, a notice stated, "If you need assistance, please ask someone to fetch one of the poll clerks."

That is not adequate. It reminds me of Lady Olga Maitland, who said, in opposing civil rights legislation in this House, that a bell outside a shop was an advance in disability provision. She has now gone, and that may have been one of the reasons. I do not know how much access her constituents had to polling stations, but I would think that disabled people made considerable efforts to get into the polling stations where she was standing.

Draft legislation is available to introduce full access to polling stations. I proposed two private Member's Bills when I fell lucky in the draw and had time on a Friday to pursue them. The first was the Representation of the People Bill 1993, which had the access to polling stations provision added to it. The Bill referred mainly to the rolling register, but I thought that that was not enough.

I fell lucky again two years later, and proposed the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill 1994, which was debated in 1995. Again an improved version of the access proposals was included in the Bill. During discussions on the Representation of the People Act 2000 on 13 January 2000, I tabled an amendment based on the previous draft legislation. The measures are there for people to examine, and it is possible for the Government to propose them, based on the principles contained in my Bills.

I can claim some prime ministerial support for those of my proposals that were included in the 1993 Bill. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was shadow Home Secretary at the time, and he sent a note to Labour Members, saying:

> "The second reading of the private members Bill from Harry Barnes MP on improvements to the process of electoral registration is scheduled for debate on Friday 12th. It is vital that there is a maximum turnout of Labour MPs for this debate as there is likely to be a sustained boycott by Tory MPs."

I will not read the rest of the letter. This does not quite amount to a Whip, which would have violated the requirements of private business. It was an encouragement. If it was a Whip, it was notoriously unsuccessful. John Smith, as leader of the Labour party, and the bulk of the Shadow Cabinet turned up. We had a great attendance from the top end of the party, but not enough Back Benchers turned up. The closure motion was carried by 78 votes to nil and, as the House knows, we need 100 people in the Lobby for a measure to proceed.

On the next occasion, the Bill containing the access to polling stations proposal was carried by about 176 votes to nil, but was sidelined in Committee by the then Government. The person who led for the Government and blocked the measure was the right hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague).

Any of us could at any time face disability. Potentially, we all belong to the group of disabled people. I have been through the experience. In the House of Commons on 4 June 1998, I was sitting next to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in the front row below the Gangway when I suffered a stroke. I was taken from the House to St. Thomas's by my hon. Friend and the present Speaker of the House. I was in a very bad

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

state and was temporarily disabled. It can happen to any of us at any time, so we all have a personal interest in disability, as well as a general interest on our constituents' behalf.

1.5 pm

Colin Burgon (Elmet): I join in congratulating the hon. Members who made their maiden speeches today. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) has a hard job in following Teresa Gorman. Obviously, he will not step into her shoes—at least, I hope that he will not do so—although he has wrapped himself firmly in the Eurosceptic flag. The other maiden speech was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon), who made an extremely witty contribution. He was also perceptive, as he described Birmingham as the second city of the country; obviously, he recognises that Leeds is the premier city. However, his contribution had one slightly depressing aspect: he bordered on ageism by telling us that the average age of Members of Parliament was 50.3. Unfortunately, I fall on the wrong side of that divide.

Jeremy Corbyn: Which is the wrong side?

Colin Burgon: I am not quite sure.

I welcome the opportunity to speak about a key Government objective: the introduction of measures to improve standards for pensioners. As about 50 per cent. of social security expenditure—approximately £100 billion—is spent on pensioners, it is clear that this subject is one of the major considerations that exercise the minds of those in government, as well as those who want to be in government one day.

Organisations representing pensioners have correctly told us that older people are not a special interest group with unique demands and interests. I agree entirely with that view. Older people share with others the hope of living in a stable society in a nation at peace. They want an economy that offers a high quality of life to all. Along with the rest of us, they are interested in education, health, transport and law and order. They are full citizens of this country and their voices must be heard whenever decisions are made that affect them. We must have structures for participation and the Government must be committed to listening to their concerns.

The achievement of independence and security for older people requires a basic pension that offers all of them, in all circumstances, an adequate and acceptable standard of living. The quest to deliver that desired outcome will be accompanied by even greater pressures as the years go by—my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington will share them—and our country grows older. There are now 12 million people over the age of 60 in the United Kingdom. By 2030, there will be 19 million, which represents about a third of the population. They will outnumber adults aged under 40.

In my experience, pensioners are very assertive in putting forward their views, especially in my patch in Yorkshire. They also show a greater tendency than other people to take part in social activity and what we class as civic society. The fact that they have a higher rate of participation in voting in elections is a point of interest for politicians, whether aspiring or otherwise. We are all aware of the phenomenon of grey power, which was first identified in the United States. Indeed, one or two of its proponents might be sitting in the Chamber now.

I am always glad, as I am sure my colleagues are, of the chance to meet pensioners in my constituency and to discuss the issues that concern them. I am very lucky, as I am always welcome at the pensioners' federation that meets at the King Edward VII working men's club in my home village of Allerton Bywater. Discussions with that group help me to keep my feet on the ground and understand the issues that they regard as important. To that end, I started meetings at the club to publicise the minimum income guarantee and encourage our local pensioners to opt into the big take-up campaign that the Government organised. I organised similar meetings in my constituency, in such exotic places as Swarcliffe, Swillington and Micklefield.

As hon. Members know, the minimum income guarantee is specifically aimed at the 2 million or so poorest pensioners who have missed out on the rising prosperity that the rest of the nation has experienced. It is right and proper that the Government's first significant action for pensioners was to concentrate on that poorer group. It is an excellent example of redistributive politics; some might call it socialism in action. Meetings, discussions and correspondence with pensioners showed that the Government's aim of targeting the poorest pensioners was not initially greeted with widespread enthusiasm. That resulted in a vigorous exchange, which became a learning process for us all.

We all had to study some history. I had to find out when pensions were first introduced. No doubt other hon. Members could say immediately that the first state pension was introduced in 1908. It was a means-tested scheme for those aged 70 and over. In the 1920s, pension provision was widened slightly. It is interesting to note that, when the state pension was first introduced, only one third of those born 65 years earlier were still alive. Today, the amount is three quarters, and by the middle of the century 90 per cent. will still be alive. Demography shows that we have a problem in future.

I do not want to go on for too long because several hon. Members wish to speak, but the next date in the history lesson is 5 July 1948, when a Labour Government introduced the Beveridge report. *[Interruption.]* I am told that that is also the birth date of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Pound). A Labour Government introduced the basic state pension. It was a universal pension in return for flat-rate contribution paid by all workers, except married women who could opt out. Many people failed to grasp the key fact about that move. The state pension was intended to provide a minimum on top of which individuals were expected to save more for themselves.

The group considered changes in the 1950s and 1960s, and the growth of second-tier pensions. The state earnings-related pension scheme was introduced in 1978. We held a key debate about the Conservative Government's decision in 1980 to break the link with earnings whereby the pension had been uprated for some four years. I could go on but there is a limit to people's capacity to absorb historical facts and figures.

During our meetings we have had vigorous discussions about the relative value of flat-rate increases and means-tested or targeted support. I am pleased that many

common assumptions in both arguments were challenged. I was made aware that many pensioners in what I would class as the middle third group—not the middle way—were aggrieved that a small occupational pension disqualified them from receiving additional state help. Many pensioners in my constituency have built up those small occupational pensions through mining, engineering and tailoring; reasonably regular employment and, I stress, good trade union organisation helped them to do that.

I would class those people not as being in the top 20 per cent. of well-to-do people, but as hard working and respectable. By building up a small occupational pension and saving, they have managed to provide a little extra for themselves on top of the state pension. Like many colleagues, I listened with sympathy to the case of those pensioners because I understand their point. I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and various Ministers and asked them to take up the case. No doubt many other colleagues in the House did so as well. I am happy that, perhaps as a result of that pressure, the pension credit is to be introduced in 2003.

I welcome the introduction of the pension credit because it will clearly help to address the unfairness—perceived or otherwise—that the middle third group of pensioners feels that it experiences. It will address that unfairness in several ways. It will maintain guaranteed minimum incomes for pensioners, which will be raised in line with earnings over time. It will ensure that no pensioner will get less than the decent minimum that they need to live on. The pension credit will abolish the minimum income guarantee capital rules. Pensioners will have their entitlement to support assessed on their income, from whatever source—state pension, state second pension, building society interest earnings and so on—but not on their savings.

The pension credit will end what is often classed as the intrusive weekly means test. Pensioners' incomes tend to vary less than those of people of working age, so longer-term assessments of pension entitlements can be made—more like those made under the tax system. The pension credit will reward those who, because they have saved for their retirement, have a small or moderate income from savings or a private or state second pension in addition to the state pension. As things stand at the moment, it is projected that all single pensioners with an income below £135 a week, and all pensioner couples with an income below £200 a week, will benefit from the introduction of the pension credit.

Although I warmly welcome the pension credit, I would like to highlight three caveats that I hope will be taken on board, if one can take caveats on board. First, as the minimum income guarantee is, quite correctly, going to be uprated in line with average incomes, the differential between the guarantee and the pension credit will need to be maintained so that the guarantee remains a worthwhile addition to a pensioner's income.

Secondly, the pension credit policy needs to be explained in a simple and effective manner to ensure its success. Thirdly, many pensioners keep their savings in banks and building societies that do not yield as much income as they might. Could National Savings be encouraged to offer income bonds at advantageous rates to pensioners, so that those on pension credit could maximise their income from all sources? I hope that Ministers will consider those points carefully. Putting the pension credit in context, along with the minimum income guarantee, one can see that the Government have acted seriously and decisively to combat pensioner poverty, and to address the concerns of what I referred to earlier as the middle third group of pensioners.

When we consider that, in addition to those highly significant measures, the Government have raised the winter fuel payment, reduced VAT on heating bills, introduced free television licences for the over-75s, restored free eye tests and given one of the biggest-ever rises in the basic state pension, we can honestly say that we are making a real difference to pensioners. Anyone who talks to pensioners knows that. Several pensioners came up to me during the election campaign and told me that, for the first time ever, they had been able to start saving. It was wonderful to hear them making such a statement. I look forward to this Labour Government building on the excellent work that they have done for pensioners, and I hope that, in addition, they will consider three fairly simple measures that I would like to see introduced.

First, could we reduce the age at which pensioners qualify for free television licences? I would like that age to be brought down so that more pensioners could benefit from that extremely popular measure. Let us see whether it could come down to the age of, say, 70 at the next Budget.

Secondly, could we consider speaking to the public utility companies about abolishing the standing charges that pensioners have to pay? Many utility companies are offering a reduction in, or an abolition of, standing charges at the moment, in an attempt to win people over to their product. Let us get in touch with those very profitable public utility companies and see what their commitment to the public is.

Thirdly, we need actively to consider ways in which hip operations, knee operations and, particularly, cataract operations, the essential operations that our pensioners really need, can be speeded up. I know that the Government will listen, and I feel confident that they will retain the support of our pensioners in the years ahead. We have tried to ensure that our pensioners live not in poverty but in dignity, not on the margins of society but at its very centre and not resented as a burden on the state but treated as truly equal members of this society that we all enjoy. If we can commit ourselves to that ideal, we will do right by all our citizens.

1.20 pm

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) on making an interesting and informative maiden speech. I had no idea that there was any connection between Billericay and the Pilgrim Fathers. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) on his maiden speech, which was witty and enjoyable. I am pleased that he is continuing to write for *The Daily Telegraph*. It is good that a Labour MP is writing for that paper, because that might encourage other members of his party to read that excellent publication. Perhaps some of the common sense shown in other parts of it will wash off on them.

With only 70 minutes left before the Adjournment debate and the summer recess, at this eleventh hour I want to use a few minutes of the House's time to highlight

[Mr. Peter Atkinson]

the anger in my constituency over Northumberland county council's plan to charge sixth formers £2 a day to use school transport. As Members can imagine, it has caused considerable anger, especially as it is accompanied by a discount scheme that reduces the amount to £300 a year if it is paid in a lump sum. There is also a discount for paying quarterly, which of course militates against poorer parents.

Northumberland is one of most sparsely populated counties and my constituency, the second largest in England, has one of the lowest populations. Therefore, school transport is vital for many families. To those unable to afford the charge, the county council suggests that the education maintenance allowance, which is being paid in trial areas such as Northumberland, be used instead. That would involve parents going through the means test, but many Northumberland families that are not well off will not go through it because it is an affront to their pride that they should have to do so to get extra funding for their children.

I want to comment on the letter protesting at the charge written by Mr. Webster, head teacher of Queen Elizabeth high school in Hexham, to the director of education at county hall. It sums up the argument very well:

"The proposal to charge sixth farmers for school transport is an attack on equality of opportunity and will discriminate against students who live in rural areas. This will be compounded by the proposal to offer discounts to those who can afford to buy termly or yearly season tickets which will discriminate against poorer families . . .

To suggest using the EMA to pay for transport is a curious notion when the intention of the EMA is to widen participation."

That sums up my views and those of many parents.

I tabled a question to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills and received a reply from the Minister for School Standards, which, far from explaining the situation, has to my mind confused it even more. The Minister says:

"Funding for post-16 transport is distributed via local education authorities as part of the Education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA). LEAs will continue to receive recognition in SSAs for this after the responsibility for funding post-16 school provision passes to the Learning and Skills Council in 2002-03."

In other words, he is saying that Northumberland county council is getting the money to fund post-16 sixth form school transport. He continues:

"Education Maintenance Allowances, which are means tested payments to the student, are being piloted in 56 LEAs."

That includes Northumberland. Furthermore,

"this money is frequently used to cover transport costs. Five of the pilots are specifically designed to address transport costs."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 2001; Vol. 372, c. 251W.]

Is the Minister saying that Northumberland county council has been given the money, but is not spending it on transport and is using it for other purposes, or is he saying that Northumberland county council should not use the money for school transport, but should rely on the means-tested EMA available to pupils whose parents are on lower incomes?

The situation is completely confused and I have raised the matter briefly in the hope that the Minister might hear what I have to say and persuade Ministers at the Department for Education and Skills to sort it out. Most Members think that charging sixth formers to go to school is exactly the way to prevent them from staying on and going into higher education.

1.24 pm

Mr. Stephen Pound (Ealing, North): I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) that, as I rise slowly and creakily, looking around for a Zimmer frame, it is more a reflection on the fact that I have spent four hours sitting on these Benches than on any aspect of my advanced age. As one born in July 1948—an occasion sadly overshadowed by the launch of the national health service—I am delighted to learn today that I am Mr. Average in terms of parliamentary age. Equally reassuring is the fact that I am 17 years younger than the average Conservative member. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend and the hon. member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) for their maiden speeches.

I wish to associate myself for the first, and possibly the last, time with the comments made by the hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) about the absence of the second Opposition party. In a spirit of inclusion I was minded to make a typical Liberal Democrat speech to redress the balance, but found myself in two minds about it: there was much to be said for the proposition, but much to be said against it too. Ultimately, I decided that perhaps this was not the occasion for a Liberal Democrat speech.

What I would like to bring to this end-of-term car boot sale is the experience and problems of a constituent in facing up to an organisation—an institution—which, I have been advised, one should seldom attack. That institution is regarded as almost above criticism. It portrays itself as being so much a part of the warp and weft of the national tapestry that it can never be criticised. I speak not of Parliament or the Labour party, but of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

It may seem to hon. Members that someone who represents an Ealing seat should never criticise the BBC, because an enormous number of its staff live in Ealing. Indeed, if one threw a brick from the window of the average house in Ealing, it would inevitably hit someone from the BBC. Obviously, I do not recommend that course of action.

One constituent who used to work for the BBC now works for a national digital channel, a company called Oneword. He came to my surgery with a tale of such terrifying monopolistic brutality on the part of the megalithic, licence-bloated BBC that I felt I should bring the matter to the House's attention in the sure and certain knowledge that the Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office, who is considerably younger than me and certainly far more intelligent, will bear the matter in mind.

Oneword is a national digital radio channel that broadcasts on the Digital One multiplex. It has been on the air for 15 or 16 months and is the only national commercial digital radio station to be dedicated to the spoken word, to satisfy the needs of people who like to read. Many hon. Members will know that it delivers plays, books, comedy and discussions. It is a private company that, sadly, is associated with the Guardian media group. Listeners have available about 23 hours of programming a week. On Christmas day, there were 12 hours of children's stories. The channel is within reach of 79 per cent. of the population on digital receivers, Sky channel 877, or the internet, whatever that may be. It was proclaimed as radio station of the year 2001.

Now comes the sad bit. Last September, the BBC announced plans for five new national radio stations. One of them, snappily entitled Network Z, was bruited as offering a completely new digital service. It was to be a speech-based service, built on BBC radio's tradition of offering stimulating drama, comedy and readings for all the family, including children's programmes. We were told that it would mix original programming with classics from the BBC's archive.

A remarkable similarity emerges between the existing, entrepreneurial, national digital radio channel, Oneword, and the BBC's proposed new station. The synchronicity is presumably coincidental, but still remarkably noteworthy. Oneword's original application referred to a service based on plays, books and comedy: Network Z is to be centred on plays, readings and comedy—clearly completely different.

The former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is held in the highest affection and respect in the House and throughout the country. On 21 February 2000, he made it clear that

"the BBC should provide a strong and distinctive schedule of benchmark quality programmes on all its services".—[*Official Report*, 21 February 2000; Vol. 344, c. 1239.]

The BBC governors claim to assess each proposed service against the requirements of the charter and agreement, and against their criteria for new public services. Those criteria require that, to justify licence fee funding—the BBC should have to justify its funding—its public services must, inter alia, offer a distinctive mix of programming and content. That should be their aim, but I draw the line at the word "distinctive", given that they seem to be copying a format that has been created in the bracing chill winds of entrepreneurial effort by Oneword and by my constituent.

The BBC boasts that Network Z will include innovative scheduling. I contend that the scheduling of Network Z is a clone of Oneword's scheduling. It claims that Network Z—some people probably call it Network Zee—is distinctive, but that cannot be substantiated, because it is a deliberate copy of a pre-existing station. I suggest that this new service was designed with hostile intent.

Some people see the BBC as a Grandma Giles figure, resplendent in rusty bombazine, still the subject of many people's great residual affection and respect, part of our past, and part of the great sweep of Britain's history. I tend to see it as a malevolent, bloated dinosaur, stomping across the broad-band savanna and, with a vicious flick of its forked tail, assaulting this young entrepreneurial company, of which my constituent is a proud part.

This great Jurassic Park creature that stomps across the savanna creating such mayhem in its wake may have a place in our affections, and there may be something to be said for it. A good public broadcasting system is certainly an excellent idea, and one that this country has rightly pioneered and can be proud of in the future. Public service broadcasting and the inestimable bounty of a licence fee paid by all our citizens cannot be taken lightly. With that bounty comes responsibility. I suggest that one of the responsibilities of the British Broadcasting Corporation is not to stifle, ape and emulate young entrepreneurial companies springing up in the new broad-band Britain that we have been told to expect. It can certainly work with them, and they can be the benchmark, as my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State rightly said, but it cannot and must not be allowed to stifle them.

I desperately hope that the Government will recognise that, although there is much to cherish in the BBC, equally there is a great deal to cherish in young, innovative, bright, sparky companies such as Oneword. I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for having the courtesy to listen to me without yawning too obviously.

1.34 pm

Dr. Rudi Vis (Finchley and Golders Green): I have just received word that the BBC made a live broadcast of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Pound) in order to help him with future campaigns in his constituency.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) on their maiden speeches. I remember my maiden speech. I had worked on it and written it out. When I was called to speak, I put my hand in my pocket for my glasses—and they were not there. Maiden speeches are difficult in any case, but I shall always remember that moment.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office on his promotion to the Front Bench, as I have not yet had a chance to do so.

I have a few things to say about Cyprus, so I declare an interest as a member of Friends of Cyprus and other Cypriot organisations. I am also a member of the Council of Europe, where we recently held a three-hour debate about Turkey. Because of its human rights record, Turkey is currently under review by representatives of the Council of Europe. That debate was not supposed to deal with Cyprus, but comments were made about Cyprus—especially the fact that the Turkish Government and military had occupied 37 per cent. of the island.

The issues raised in respect of Turkey were mainly to do with human rights violations by the Government, the military and police in Turkey against the Kurdish people. It is ironic that I am talking about the Kurds, given that Lord Archer was ennobled by the then Prime Minister, John Major, for spearheading a charity mission for the Kurds—as was noted in the *Daily Express* today. Obviously, Lord Archer cannot be all bad.

Issues were raised about the lack of free speech in Turkey and the use of military courts for civilian cases. The question of the Ilisu dam came up again. The imprisonment and even the murder of members of the opposition and of the media were discussed—as was the closing down of the Virtue party, which occurred only two months ago, and so on. I also thought that we should discuss Turkey's membership of the Council of Europe, which is after all a human rights organisation, and a good one, as human rights do not seem to be upheld in Turkey itself.

In my constituency, there are thousands and thousands of Greek-Cypriot people, as well as some Turkish-Cypriots. They get on well. Indeed, they have a greater affinity one with the other than do the Turkish-Cypriots with the Anatolians who have recently arrived in Cyprus.

In the Council of Europe debate, we spoke about the illegal invasion in 1974—exactly 27 years ago. We spoke of the fact that there is still no news of the missing people, and that there are more than 30,000 Turkish troops in the occupied part of the island. Greek-Cypriot people have been unable to return to their homes and their land, as they desperately want to do.

[Dr. Rudi Vis]

More recently, the Loizidou case was heard at the European Court of Human Rights. Mrs. Loizidou has a home in the occupied territory which she has been unable to use for 27 years. Three years ago, she was awarded $900,000 in a judgment against the Turkish Government because she had not had the use of her home. The judgment was not against Mr. Denktash or against the putative rulers of the occupied territories, but against Turkey. Recently, there was the abduction of Mr. Tsiakourmas by the Turkish military from the British base of Dhekelia. He has now been freed, but that, too, was a human rights violation.

It is frightening that more Anatolians are now living in the occupied territory than Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriots have left the occupied territory in their tens of thousands because they cannot stand the Turkish Government occupying their lands. On 10 May 2001, 14 violations were identified by the European Court of Human Rights. Six were well familiar and have been discussed for a long time, but eight were new.

I have, however, become more optimistic of late about the prospect of a unified and free Cyprus. There have been positive developments between Mr. Kasoulides, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Colin Powell, the Secretary of State in the United States. Positive discussions have taken place. The United Nations resolutions condemning Turkey for the occupation remain. Positive European Union negotiations are going on with Cyprus, and the economy of free Cyprus is healthy and doing rather well and will fulfil the EU criteria.

I thank the Leader of the House for his role when he was Foreign Secretary, for the extraordinary help that he has given people in Cyprus to achieve a united Cyprus, and for discussing with other EU Foreign Secretaries how to take the issue of Cyprus forward. Does the Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office share my optimism about the likelihood of a free and united Cyprus in years to come—in perhaps two or three years? I ask him to ask the Leader of the House to pass on some good words to the new Foreign Secretary, so that the new Foreign Secretary can be as positive about Cyprus as the Leader of the House was when he held that job.

1.42 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton): I congratulate the two hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches during the debate: my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon). We enjoyed both speeches. It is a great tribute to the end-of-term debate that they chose to make their maiden speeches during it.

I mark the presence of the Leader of the House during part of our deliberations. We have always regarded this as a day for Back Benchers, and it is particularly important that the Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office and the Leader of the House recognise how important it is to Back Benchers to use this opportunity to raise matters that are wide ranging, but predominantly of concern to their constituents.

We began with a veteran of these debates, the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen). He raised a matter on which there is some cross-party agreement: the need for a proper debate on the Floor of the House about the London underground, for which we have called. I am sure that the Parliamentary Secretary will have noted that there is also a request now from the Labour Back Benches for such a debate. I hope that when the House returns that will be granted.

Another regular attendee of end-of-term debates is my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess), who I know has passed a note to both Front-Bench teams to say that, owing to a prior commitment, a constituency surgery, he has had to leave. He mentioned mobile phones and phone masts, a theme that was taken up by hon. Members on both sides of the House. He said that he hated mobile phones per se. I am not sure that I can agree with him totally on that. I tend to be rather fond of mine, and I hope that he has left his mobile phone number with the Whips so that he can be contacted during the summer recess.

My hon. Friend mentioned another matter that is of growing concern to people: the installation of cameras throughout the country. We all recognise that closed circuit television cameras have an important part to play in detecting and preventing crime and in controlling speed on roads. However, I had some sympathy with my hon. Friend when he was describing the prevalence of those cameras. Almost every motorway bridge now has an electronic eye, and we are told that those eyes will soon be able to track one's movements.

Some people argue that the number of cameras is increasing so greatly to enable the police to manage traffic and enforce the law on speed restrictions, and there is something in that argument, but there is clearly a balance to be struck. I think that we would all be rather concerned if we thought that the cameras were being used not only to control speed, but to monitor the free movement of people across the country. I think that the House will wish to address that issue in future.

We then heard the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington, and my heart warmed to him. I felt that he was so brave to tell the House how fascinated he was by Spaghetti Junction, interchanges and flyovers. My own experience of that particular section, where the M5 leads into the M6 junction, has not always been a happy one. If, as an hon. Member, he can do anything to improve that experience, I think that he would have great support on both sides of the House. I suggest that challenge to him as a goal to achieve in this Parliament.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to live in the great British countryside—or even to represent God's own county, Devon—think that we live in beautiful a place. Today, however, through the eyes of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington we have been able to see beauty in concrete, interchanges and flyovers. There was a touch of the Betjeman about him when he was speaking—*[Laughter.]*—and I do not mean a view of Slough in the rear-view mirror. I hope that in future speeches the hon. Gentleman will continue so eloquently and attractively to promote the city that he represents.

I know that, in following a lady who is my next-door neighbour, Mrs. Teresa Gorman, my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay is only too well aware that his predecessor was a doughty fighter in this place, not only for her constituents but for the causes that she felt were very important. He mentioned some of those causes, including small businesses. In her political career, those

causes were always at the forefront of her thoughts. I wonder whether my hon. Friend, too, will champion the case for hormone replacement therapy—a subject that he did not mention but is of great interest to some hon. Members. Can we look to him to pick up that particular baton and run with it? I would be interested to hear his representations if he does.

We wish both new hon. Members a happy and fruitful period in the House, and we hope that it lasts for a very long time.

I was very sorry that the Leader of the House was not in the Chamber to hear the representations of the hon. Member for Ilford, North (Linda Perham), who talked about the need for an all-weather racecourse. I had the feeling that, had the Leader of the House still been in the Chamber, she might have received a positive response almost immediately. However, perhaps he was watching her speech on a monitor and rushed to make a few telephone calls to ensure that her comments were noted by those who feel that that racecourse is so important.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) raised several issues regarding problems in the delivery of health services to his constituents. By raising those important issues, which affect all our constituents, he struck a chord with hon. Members on both sides the House. The case that he made for allowing the use of beta interferon was particularly strong. The delay in deciding that issue has gone on for a very long time and for far longer than can be justified by the need for NICE to investigate the issue. NICE has looked into it and then looked into it again. It keeps kicking the issue into the long grass.

As my right hon. and learned Friend said, absolutely rightly, if a consultant advises on the basis of his or her best clinical knowledge that beta interferon is the best drug for someone with multiple sclerosis, that is not something that we should try to second-guess. It is a matter for medical and clinical judgment. When we see it in writing from a consultant—as Members of Parliament often do—that this is the drug that somebody with multiple sclerosis needs, it seems criminal that the issue is not dealt with promptly, that clinical judgment is not respected, that it is a matter of pot luck determined by where one lives in the country, and that some people get the drug and others do not.

I commend my right hon. and learned Friend for raising this and other matters concerning the health service, particularly the long waiting lists for consultant neurologists which is a problem that we also experience in Devon. It is not just a one-off case and my right hon. and learned Friend has done the House a service by raising these important matters.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) is a veteran of and a regular attender at these long Adjournment debates and said that he was pleased that they have survived. I share his pleasure in that—long may they continue. In these days of modernising the House, it is still important for hon. Members to know that even if they are not successful in the ballot for Adjournment debates—and it is a ballot—there is always an opportunity to raise important matters as very few hon. Members are denied the opportunity to make a speech during these end-of-term debates. The hon. Gentleman raised important matters about the Prison Service and Wandsworth prison. Let me assure him that if ever these Adjournment debates are threatened, we will all champion the cause and raise the vigilantes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) spoke about the safety of the railways and how that impacts on commuters in his constituency. Like many other hon. Members, he drew attention to the fact that the Liberal Democrat Benches are empty. One or two hon. Members said, "Does that matter?" Indeed, the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Pound) even considered making a Liberal Democrat speech. I am delighted that he did not, as I do not think that it would have suited him. I have never regarded the hon. Gentleman as wishy-washy or sitting on the fence and I think that he would have struggled to put that across with any conviction. The so-called self-appointed Opposition are not here and we hope that they are enjoying whatever beach they are sitting on, making their sandcastles.

The hon. Member for West Ham (Mr. Banks) characteristically made an informed and passionate speech about matters that are important to him, particularly whaling. Had he not drawn to the House's attention what is clearly a most outrageous abuse on the part of the organisation that appears to have made allegations with no foundation against him and other hon. Members, many of us would not even have been aware of it. The hon. Gentleman did not simply put the record right on his behalf and that of others who were maligned in that way, but ensured that the matter was brought to wider public attention. All too often, Members of Parliament are accused of making allegations, but we also deserve the opportunity to be treated fairly and when we are not it is only right that it is brought to the attention of the House, and the hon. Gentleman has done that today. I hope that his words will not just have been noted, but will result in action being taken to put the matter right.

The hon. Gentleman also raised other matters that are close to his heart concerning sport, the Olympic games and Wembley. I know that it will not have been the last time that we will have heard from him on those subjects.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip–Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) raised matters involving his constituency, but they were not simply local matters as they involve the future of two very important hospitals, the Harefield hospital and Mount Vernon hospital, which serve people from all around the country. He spoke about the quality of life and he was absolutely right. We all welcome new hospitals and capital investment into our health service. I know that the Minister will have noted his concerns because those two hospitals are specialist hospitals, not just run-of-the-mill general hospitals. They are important to our national life and to health services in both transplantation and cancer care.

The hon. Member for Hornchurch (John Cryer), another regular at these occasions, spoke about mobile phone masts and about the tube. I hope that the Minister will have heard the request from his own side for the House to have an opportunity to consider matters relating to the tube in more detail.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) spoke about teacher shortages, to the point at which he believes that part-time education will become a reality in his constituency unless something is done urgently. He gave us notice that he would have to

[Mrs. Angela Browning]

disappear early, as—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is here."] Oh yes, so he is. I am delighted. Obviously, the problem with his four-year-old is sorted out.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East (Dr. Kumar) raised a complex constituency matter concerning a councillor involved in a planning application. I am sure that the Minister will have taken note of what is a specific case but could have a read-across to councillors throughout the country.

I am very pleased officially to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) back to the House. I have not had an opportunity to do so before. He spoke about Cyprus and about beta interferon—issues that have been a running theme in this debate. When he says that he raises matters within an hour of being re-elected, it shows that he has not lost his zest for prompt action on behalf of his constituents, something with which we were all familiar in the 1992-97 Parliament.

The hon. Member for North-East Derbyshire (Mr. Barnes) is another veteran of these occasions—I shall be speaking about ageism shortly. He spoke about extending the franchise. Personally, I could not agree with all his points, but he is absolutely right that, now that we have easier rules for proxy and postal voting, returning officers at the general election may not have taken as seriously as they should the issue of access for wheelchair users and people with disabilities.

I remember writing to my returning officer before the 1997 general election to check that access arrangements had been thought through and ramps were available, especially at our rural polling stations where access might not be all that easy. It is terribly undignified—and quite unnecessary, if some forethought is given—for wheelchair users to have to be carried in to vote. We should all remind our returning officers that they should do a proper audit of all their polling stations well before election day and ensure that satisfactory access arrangements are made for people with a range of disabilities. Sometimes, people with little or no sight need some help with ballot papers and so on.

I warmed to the speech of the hon. Member for Elmet (Colin Burgon). He made some serious points about pensions, and admitted that he was the wrong side of 53. I have to join him in that.

Mr. Pound: Really?

Mrs. Browning: Yes, unlike the young sprog from Ealing, North.

Mr. Pound: The hon. Lady has just worn better than me.

Mrs. Browning: I am trying to resist responding to these flattering comments.

The hon. Member for Elmet talked about grey power. I have not yet gone grey—with the help of my hairdresser. I must be honest with the House: I was grey by the time I was 25, for which I entirely blame my children. There is something to be said for grey power. The youth of today is a much discussed subject; we all want to be inclusive and take account of the different generations, and for them all to have an input. But I am a bit fed up with people dismissing those in the grey power group. We are in the prime of our lives. Britain cannot afford to be without us. We have a lot to contribute both in the House and among our constituents. The hon. Gentleman did the nation a great service today by speaking up for grey power. I notice that he is not yet grey himself. *[Interruption.]* I do not have my glasses on and one of the advantages of getting old is that I cannot see the grey around the edges.

On a more serious note, it is a good thing that people live longer and that whereas in previous generations people in their 60s and 70s were regarded as pensioners, today such people are active and, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, articulate. They have priorities and something to say and to contribute. We must ensure that we have policies which recognise that such people are not past their sell-by date.

That brings me to the Liberal Democrats, who are not here. Had they been here, they might have explained why the Liberal Democrat candidate who fought my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Mr. Steen) at the election is on the record as having described him as white haired and past his sell-by date. It did a lot for his majority because every grey and white-haired person in Totnes rushed out to vote for him, regardless of political party. The Liberal Democrats could have learned a few lessons about age discrimination had they attended today.

I am pleased to see that the hon. Member for Elmet recognised the contribution, which we all appreciate, of people in that age group, their needs in terms of pension and monetary provision, and the wider context in which those in that age group are making a great contribution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) made a short intervention, but an important one for his constituency, concerning Northumberland county council's decision to charge £2 for school transport for sixth formers, which will clearly have a big impact on the family budget. Children wishing to stay at school and take A-levels or to enter further education at 16 will suddenly find that they are faced with such a bill. I hope that the Minister will have noted my hon. Friend's concern and will draw it to the attention of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

I am delighted that the hon. Member for Ealing, North did not attempt to be a Liberal Democrat today. He raised an interesting case. I was not sure whether he was advocating that the BBC should be subject to market forces like everyone else. I do not think that that was quite what he was saying.

Mr. Pound: An excellent idea.

Mrs. Browning: I see a little cross-party support; a little glimmer here. We all recognise the problem with the BBC being funded by the licence payer and receiving financial support from the Treasury. The BBC has a responsibility and should clearly not be in a position where it can simply cherry-pick what other people have had to innovate and work up. I am sure that this will not be the last time that we hear from the hon. Gentleman on this subject.

The hon. Member for Finchley and Golders Green (Dr. Vis) referred to Cyprus, a subject that has been raised on several occasions during these end-of-term Adjournment debates. Today he focused on human rights in Cyprus. It is a difficult matter, in which the

Leader of the House will have an interest, and I am sure that the Minister will pass on the points that have been made to his right hon. Friend who is knowledgeable on the subject.

On behalf of the official Opposition, I thank all Members who have contributed today and wish everyone a happy and sunny recess.

2.4 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office (Mr. Stephen Twigg): We have had a wide-ranging and interesting debate in which 19 Back Benchers participated. We have heard about a broad range of matters, from the average age of hon. Members and of members of the Conservative party, to the relative merits of the cities of Leeds and Birmingham. I shall do my best to deal with all the remarks of hon. Members in the time available. If I am unable to respond for lack of time or information, I shall ensure that ministerial colleagues write to hon. Members.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) and my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East (Dr. Kumar) for not being in the Chamber when they spoke. However, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was present and ensured that I was briefed on what they said.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) that there is no threat to the continued existence of the summer Adjournment debate, which was described by my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Mr. Banks) as whingeing gits' day. The 19 Back-Bench contributions, and the 20th, from the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning), were far from whinges. We heard some important and eloquent contributions. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Pound) described it as a car boot sale of a debate, and the speeches certainly covered a wide range of products.

If press reports are to be believed, this may have been the last Front-Bench appearance of the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton. I am sure that I speak for hon. Members in all parts of the House in thanking her for her contributions from the Front Bench. No doubt she will be just as robust and active as an Opposition Back Bencher. She spoke about grey power. I confess that over the past few weeks I have noticed the odd grey hair on my head. I do not know whether I am on the right or the wrong side of 53—at my age, I suspect, the wrong side.

We are about to see a significant exercise of grey power when the Conservative party elects a new leader. As we heard during the debate, the average age of the membership of the Conservative party is 66, but in the light of the hon. Lady's commitment to empowering older members, I wonder whether she will switch her vote from the hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) to the slightly older right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke).

Mrs. Browning: No.

Mr. Twigg: We are relieved to hear the hon. Lady's assurance that she will do no such thing.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) for their excellent maiden speeches, to which I shall return shortly.

I pay tribute to hon. Members on both sides who raised Cyprus, especially the hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink), my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green (Dr. Vis), who is my neighbour in north London, and my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting, who has done immense work over many years in bringing Cyprus to the attention of the House. There are many good friends of Cyprus in all parts of the House.

I declare an interest, as I represent a constituency with a larger number of Cypriots, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, than any other parliamentary constituency. I am pleased to reaffirm the Government's commitment to a just and lasting settlement in Cyprus, based on United Nations resolutions. I reaffirm that the Government use whatever opportunities they can to press human rights matters with the Turkish Government—not only human rights matters in Cyprus, but some of the other issues mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green. The Government have a continuing commitment to the process of accession of Cyprus to the European Union. My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen) referred to the tube, as did a number of other hon. Members. Like him, I have four tube stations in my constituency, at the north end of the Piccadilly line. The concern that he expressed about the tube is shared by my constituents and many others in the Greater London area and there must be an opportunity for the House to debate and scrutinise the proposals.

I reaffirm the Government's commitment to the public-private partnership, which will bring in much needed extra investment to improve the track, signalling and stations across the tube network. That is desperately needed after decades of under-investment. This is a matter to which the House will return.

The hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) made a wide-ranging speech, in which he did not have many good things to say about the Government. However, he had the courtesy to inform me that he would not be here for the end of the debate. He was under the impression that it was a three-hour debate today, as used to be the case. Had he known it was a five-hour debate, he told me, he would have spoken for longer. Perhaps we could have a cross-party consensus that there are advantages to having a shorter debate.

The hon. Member for Southend, West was the first of several hon. Members to refer to mobile phones and the Stewart report. All of us will have had concerns raised by constituents, and my hon. Friends the Members for Hornchurch (John Cryer) and for Ilford, North (Linda Perham) mentioned the matter.

On 16 March, the then Minister for Housing, Planning and Construction, my right hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Mr. Raynsford), announced a series of important improvements to the planning arrangements for telecommunications development. We shall be introducing rules and publishing the revised planning policy guidance note 8 on telecommunications development at the earliest opportunity. I shall ensure that the strong feelings expressed in the debate are drawn to the attention of relevant colleagues so that progress can be made.

Another matter mentioned by the hon. Member for Southend, West was the vote in the Select Committee on International Development. I put it on record that I do not

[Mr. Twigg]

believe that there is any truth in the press reports that the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Mr. Leigh) was not successful in the election because of his religious beliefs. It would be unacceptable for that to be the basis for hon. Members to make such a decision. It is evident from the debates this week that hon. Members on both sides of the House want Select Committees to be able to choose their Chairmen independently. In this case, the Select Committee made the decision. We cannot be selective in our support for the principle of Select Committees making such decisions. A decision was made and an alternative Conservative chairman has been elected.

Two maiden speeches were made today. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington made a witty speech in which he talked about the people of Birmingham as the backbone of this country. He was at pains to say that his constituents were normal people but pointed out that he was not using Lord Tebbit's definition of the term. He gave a powerful message to the House about the importance of delivering the fundamentals so that we can make a real difference to the lives of our constituents.

The hon. Member for Billericay described his constituency as a shopping paradise and referred to the importance of reducing red tape and bureaucracy for small businesses, the importance of the green belt and concerns about incineration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington and the hon. Member for Billericay have replaced characters in the House, Teresa Gorman and Robin Corbett. I am sure that I speak for all hon. Members when I wish both of them well and say that they will be sorely missed, although Robin Corbett is to become a member of the other place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North discussed the poor turnout at the general election and mentioned the possibility of compulsory voting. I have never been much persuaded by the argument for compulsory voting. The onus is on us, as politicians, to persuade people to vote, rather than to make criminals of those who do not. However, I recognise that strong views are held on the matter, and, in the light of the recent poor turnout, I believe that it should be debated. She also raised a planning matter regarding a horse-racing course. I shall ensure that the relevant people are aware of her concerns. She should probably be thankful that I am responding to the debate, rather than my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House of Commons, who may have had to declare an interest on that point.

The right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) spoke about several serious matters that he has raised in previous debates and with other Ministers, including Health Ministers. Not least among them is beta interferon, about which I am sure that constituents have expressed concerns to all hon. Members. Anxiety has certainly been expressed to me, and others have contributed to that aspect of the debate. As has been pointed out, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence has not yet issued its guidance on beta interferon. I am told that it is now consulting on the economic model and that appraisal of the drugs is under way. NICE anticipates that the appraisal committee will reconsider the evidence later this month. That evidence will consist of the new model and any other material that is made available. Unless there are further appeals, NICE expects to issue its guidance by November. That is the current position. I am well aware of the strength of opinion on both sides of the House and I shall ensure that the concerns that have been expressed are passed on to Ministers in the Department of Health.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman also spoke about neurology waiting times in Lincolnshire and the difference between the experience there and the national statistics that Health Ministers have provided to him. That inconsistency is clearly a matter of concern. In particular, I support his point about the need for professionals to be open and accountable in the same way as other public officials and servants. Nobody should be excepted from that requirement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Angela Eagle): Including lawyers.

Mr. Twigg: To be fair, the right hon. and learned Gentleman made that precise point.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman's third point related to dentistry in Lincolnshire. I understand that Lincolnshire health authority and the Prime Minister's consultant facilitator for dental access met in May this year to consider plans for NHS dentistry. Various proposals are moving forward, but it is clear that the right hon. Gentleman raised a matter of wider concern, on which further progress needs to be made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting not only spoke briefly about Cyprus, but raised issues concerning Wandsworth prison and broader questions relating to education and asylum seekers in prisons. He will know that the Government had a clear manifesto commitment to improve the quality and quantity of prison education. We are committed to improving the provision of education and training for prisoners as part of our strategy to help ex-offenders to get jobs and avoid reoffending. As my hon. Friend's remarks showed, the achievement of that manifesto objective is a big challenge, but the Government are firmly committed to it.

The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) was the first to decry the absence of the Liberal Democrats from the debate. When I checked the details, I found that he has rather a small majority over them in his constituency, so I am sure that bashing them in the House makes for a good press release back there. However, he also made important points about railway services for commuters into London. As I represent a commuter constituency on the other side of the city, I am well aware of the overcrowding problems to which he referred. He mentioned the ambitious figures for investment in our railways that are contained in our transport plan. Clearly, it will be vital to ensure that that money is properly allocated in the coming months and years.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Ham asked about whaling and sought clarification of the Government's position. I am pleased to make it clear on the Government's behalf that the United Kingdom's policy on whaling is unchanged. We oppose it and we strongly support the International Whaling Commission moratorium on commercial whaling. There is no justification for the activity, apart from some subsistence whaling by indigenous people. We should like all other forms to be stopped.

We will make our position clear in the current talks in Hammersmith. In the long term, we want the moratorium to be extended. As my hon. Friend said, it is not currently comprehensive because Norway and Japan undertake whaling operations, which are legal under the existing rules. We want them to be strengthened to prevent that.

My hon. Friend also mentioned a London bid for the 2012 Olympic games and suggested that there should be a permanent site for the games in Athens. I assume that he intends that site to be established in 2016 so that the London Olympics can take place and the games can move to Athens four years later. He mentioned several possible locations for the Olympics. He knows that Patrick Carter is due to present his report to the Government in late August, and we await his conclusions. The Government do not yet support or oppose any bid because it is a matter for the British Olympic Association. However, the Mayor of London supports a London bid, which appears to be a serious possibility for 2012.

Like other hon. Members, the hon. Member for Ruislip–Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) made important points about the provision of health care. He knows that the matter to which he referred is up for consultation and that the relevant community health councils have taken the case to Ministers, who are considering the details. I am therefore not in a position to comment, but I shall ensure that his contribution is drawn to the attention of Health Ministers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch talked about mobile phone masts, to which I have already referred. He also considered capital investment in schools. Substantial progress has occurred, but decades of underfunding primary and secondary schools mean that we have a long way to go. Hon. Members throughout the country know of schools in their constituencies that require attention.

I understand my hon. Friend's point of view on private contractors and private finance. However, the first private finance initiative-funded school opened in my constituency this academic year. Highlands school has so far been a successful local comprehensive that educates 11 to 18-year-olds.

The hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell focused on teacher shortages, and the impact of housing costs on the problem. As a fellow Member from the south-east, I am well aware of the problem, especially in London and the south-east, but also in other parts of the country. It would be foolish to deny it, and greater priority should be given to the matter as we move forward with our education policy.

I apologise for missing the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East. From the account that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House gave me, my hon. Friend described an appalling case, and I am happy to give him an undertaking that I shall refer it to the Law Officers, who can consider what action, if any, to take.

The hon. Member for Castle Point has returned to his former seat. He spoke about beta interferon and several important local planning matters. I shall ensure that he receives replies to parliamentary questions that he has already tabled and some of the broader points that he made in today's debate.

Many contributions referred to the low turnout at the recent general election. None of us can deny that there is a serious problem when more than 40 per cent. of those entitled to vote do not bother to do so. There are many theories and different points of view about what happened. However, it is a serious matter that the House needs to address systematically.

My hon. Friend the Member for North–East Derbyshire (Mr. Barnes) has worked tirelessly over many years in the House and outside to promote the modernisation of our electoral procedures and changes in the electoral rules. Again, today, he set out several positive and helpful suggestions that contribute to the debate about how we can enhance turnout. No one in the House believes that the poor turnout was simply a product of the difficulties in gaining access to voting, but if barriers exist, as he suggested, we must do our very best to remove them. Although the rolling register, for which he campaigned for many years, represents a major advance in enabling more people to be on the electoral register in the area in which they live, more can be done and needs to be done.

I thank my hon. Friend for his positive suggestions, which will be open for debate, on questions such as reducing the voting age to 16, overseas registration, voting rights for prisoners and encouraging more civic education in our schools, which is something on which the Government are seeking to make progress. From his account of previous years, it sounds as though he has been rather lucky in the private Members' Bill ballot, in securing two private Members' Bill slots in three years. I hope that we can assist him in making progress in the areas to which he referred.

My hon. Friend referred to the new report from Scope, "Polls Apart", and the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton gave further examples on that subject. Clearly, there is a fundamental principle, to which my hon. Friend referred, that there should be proper equality of access to polling stations. If people cannot get that access on an equal basis, we are undermine democracy.

Harry Cohen: In his response to my hon. Friend the Member for North–East Derbyshire (Mr. Barnes), my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the question of whether prisoners should have voting rights. I agree with that, but is there not a strong case that criminals should not be members of the House of Lords?

Mr. Twigg: I have no idea what my hon. Friend could possibly be referring to. Perhaps that is an issue to which he will have an opportunity to return after the summer recess.

I have just two minutes in which to draw my remarks to a close. My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Colin Burgon) raised some important questions about tackling pensioner poverty and the importance of the pension credit legislation that was announced in the Queen's Speech in benefiting what he called the middle third group of pensioners. He set out three caveats, then made a further three points, and I will ensure that his questions are passed to my colleagues in the Treasury and the Department for Work and Pensions.

The hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) raised a matter of real concern in his constituency about sixth-formers being charged for school transport and about the advice being given to use education maintenance allowances to fund that. I will draw that to the attention of my colleagues. Of course, education maintenance allowances are a positive innovation of this

[Mr. Twigg]

Government in recognition of the fact that if we are truly to widen access to continuing education, we need to address the number of young people—particularly poorer young people—who drop out of the education system at the age of 16.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North, whose maiden speech is still etched on my memory from four years ago, described himself today as "Mr. Average".

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): Hear, hear.

Mr. Twigg: That is attracting support from the other side, but we on the Labour Benches know that he is anything but Mr. Average. He is much better than that. I will draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. My hon. Friend is perhaps an unlikely advocate of privatisation of the BBC, but I will ensure that the Prime Minister is made aware that Labour Back Benchers today advocated further privatisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green raised the issues concerning Cyprus to which I have already referred.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to put on record the thanks of all Members of the House to you, to Mr. Speaker and the other Deputy Speakers, and to the staff and officials of the House for their hard work, and to wish you, all the staff, and Members from all parts of the House—including our absent friends—a restful summer.

Jim Fitzpatrick (Poplar and Canning Town): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Business of the House

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question—[28 June].

Question again proposed,

That Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 26th October, 2nd, 23rd and 30th November 2001, 11th, 18th and 25th January, 15th March, 12th and 19th April, 10th May, 21st June and 19th July 2002.—*[Jim Fitzpatrick.]*

2.29 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): This motion is obviously of considerable importance. The Government insist on bringing it forward, but they will not allow it proper time for debate, which is regrettable. I hope that, at some stage, the House will have an opportunity fully to explore the implications of the motion in its present form and, indeed, the amendment in my name. There are implications—of that there can be no doubt—and I hope that we shall have an opportunity fully to return to them.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Monday next.—*[Jim Fitzpatrick.]*

Overseas Visitor Appeals

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Jim Fitzpatrick.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): I welcome the opportunity to raise once again the matter of overseas visitor appeals. Hon. Members will remember that there was much unhappiness in the House when the then Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), introduced the regulations. As a result of that unhappiness, he set up a review body, whose interim report recommended reducing the appeal fees for overseas family visitors. Fees for oral appeals, in which the case is presented in person, and for written appeals were reduced from £500 to £125 and from £150 to £50 respectively.

A few months have passed since the reduction was made, so we can judge the effect of the fees on the number of appeals. We also have available the recently published and very pertinent National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux report on the issue. In November, the then Home Secretary said that the review body would report to the House once the system had operated for 12 months, so the debate is timely. This is an opportune moment at which to make observations and consider the NACAB report.

I appreciate that my good friend the Minister, talented though she is, might be unable to respond immediately, because the subject crosses three Departments. She can hardly be expected to reply on the responsibilities of colleagues in other Departments, although I ask her to consider referring the debate and the NACAB report to the review body.

I want to make four points, the first of which concerns the principle of fees. In both Houses, many parliamentarians more distinguished than me have opposed the introduction of fees, especially in view of the adverse and discriminatory impact on citizens of less well-off countries. Figures supplied by the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) in the November debate show that one in 202 applications from Americans and one in 703 from Australians were refused, but that one in five from Pakistanis, from Bangladeshis and from Ghanaians were refused. That shows that such a fee can have a discriminatory effect on the poorest parts of the country.

In the same debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) pointed out the average income of those countries in US dollars. The UK figure is $21,800, but the figures for Pakistan and Bangladesh are $1,800 and $1,470. He also pointed out that the average income of Pakistani and Bangladeshi households in this country is 24 per cent. lower than the national average. The figure for black households is 39 per cent. lower.

The deterrent effect of fees is also specifically raised in the NACAB report, which points out the Government's basis for introducing fees. It thought that about 39,000 refusals would be made and that figure seems to be correct. The NACAB report suggests a figure of 36,000 and climbing, so the number of refusals is holding steady.

After the debate, a Minister told me that he approached the subject on the basis that fees would act as a deterrent. He said that he feared—the Government claimed this at the time—that there would be 19,000 appeals. As people seek to visit this country for events with a fixed date, such as a wedding or a funeral, it was important to hold hearings quickly. The Government did not want another asylum situation, with a pile-up of appeals, so they introduced fees.

It is interesting that the Government thought that there would be 19,000 appeals. They reduced that estimate to 10,000, but NACAB suggests that, on present figures, there are about 6,000. Thus, half the number originally expected to appeal are doing so.

Four months have passed since the fees were dropped. The relevant figures suggest that only 10 per cent. of refused entrants are appealing, rather than the expected 50 per cent. There have been 11,700 refusals and 1,007 appeals. If the Government want to stick by their estimates, they must come up with sensible answers about the disparity between the figures. I accept that other factors may play a part, but I hope that there will be an objective attempt to judge the effect of fees on the number of appeals. The NACAB report makes some pragmatic suggestions, but I join NACAB in its plea for the deterrent effect of fees to be properly considered.

My second point concerns the extraordinary success rate of oral appeals. The NACAB report shows that 69 per cent. of appeals by people who took that route succeeded. It sensibly suggests that, as cheaper written appeals have a success rate of only 38 per cent., it is vital that some investigation take place to determine why oral appeals are not chosen. Apart from speed, the difference in cost seems to be a strong factor. I accept that, but would go further and suggest that the Government analyse the cases that have won on appeal. Those familiar with the work understand the categories into which most applicants fit. It would be sensible to examine successful appeals to see whether a pattern exists.

I accept that the small number of oral appeals may be insufficient to allow that to happen with clarity, but analysis may show that certain officers are less objective than others. Perhaps the policy line is simply not being found acceptable in the quiet calm of the appeal room, as opposed to the activity of the postal system. A comparison of written appeal results might raise questions of approach and ethos. I suggest that an efficient system would want to feed the results of the analysis back to the overseas post and entry clearance officers concerned so that lessons could be learned.

All Ministers involved should be concerned that, where an applicant challenges a refusal decision—hon. Members should remember that some 39,000 decisions are refused—at an oral hearing, seven out of 10 win their appeal. In that context, I press Ministers to consider the word "humane": we should seek not only an efficient system but a humane one. It is easy to quote statistics, but each case represents a person who is anxious to visit a family in this country, perhaps to attend a wedding or, regrettably, a funeral. The sadness and loneliness engendered by refusal should not be viewed lightly. Many people travel hundreds of miles in fierce temperatures in, for example, Bangladesh, Pakistan or India to wait patiently but uncomfortably in queues, only to be told that they cannot be heard and should return the following day and the day after that. We wonder why, of those who are then refused entry, 90 per cent. do not make an additional

[Mr. George Mudie]

trip to hand over £125—a fortune for individuals in those countries—for an appeal. The institutionalised cruelty of the system staggers me.

The third issue that I invite the review body to address, if the Minister agrees, is an analysis of the cases turned down, given that 39,000 people were refused entry. I cite the case of Karamat Bi. Her situation is nothing out of the ordinary: it is just a case that I picked up after I had secured this debate. I had written a letter of support, as had the local law centre, which had filled in, cleared and checked with me the sponsor's documents—bank account, payslips and description of the accommodation.

Karamat Bi wanted to come to this country for her niece's wedding, but she was refused entry. She is a widow whose only child and brother live in the United Kingdom, but she lives in Pakistan where she looks after her elderly father. She had arranged for someone to come from the UK to cover for her while she attended the wedding in this country.

The entry clearance officer did not believe that she had a father. He gave her no chance to provide him with evidence of her father's existence. He noted that she was of modest, economic circumstances, which is hardly unusual for someone from a Kashmiri village, so he turned her down. The law centre and I checked and confirmed the payslips and bank statements, so the sponsor satisfied all the criteria. He was able to bring the aunt across, feed her, house her, look after her and send her back, but that was not enough. It was unimportant, so why did we have to go to the trouble of presenting those documents, when the authorities turned her down because she was a widow of modest circumstances?

I do not believe for a moment that Karamat Bi was turned down for the reasons stated. Hon. Members who regularly deal with immigration cases know the difficulty that two groups of people—the elderly and the footloose and young—have in entering Britain. The unspoken attitude towards the elderly is that, because they are old, they want to come here to take advantage of health provision, and once here will not return to their own country. The authorities fear having to deport an old person in the glare of the television lights by carting them off and putting them on a plane, so they find it easier to stop them on some pretext before they come into the country. In case after case, Afro-Caribbean youngsters arrive having paid their fare, but although they do not need a visa they are sent back on the next plane for no apparent reason.

The feeling of many hon. Members that there is such an unspoken agreement may be wide of the mark, but an examination of refusals would decide the matter. More importantly and more positively, it would force Departments to face up to a problem that is being solved at great human cost. As in America, there was a time when temporary entry was allowed, people's passports were retained, the immigration authorities knew where they were going and when they would be returning, and if they did not get the visa slip back they went looking for them. If there is a problem with those two groups, rather than make people pay a human cost, we should devise a policy, be honest about it and introduce special arrangements.

Lastly, I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the method by which the Foreign Office has determined that appeal fees should be paid. The money must be paid at the post where the application is made, in the exact amount at the local rate of exchange on that day. Many applicants understandably have the sum paid for them by a money order from their sponsor in Britain, but the order must be in the exact amount on the day in question. To guess a currency rate on a particular day in the future is a hazardous if not impossible task. I have recently had a bankers' order returned to me to pass on to a constituent because it was more than the sum required. Rather than give change, the Foreign Office has devised this tortuous, bizarre arrangement that makes appealing an art form. It requires people to be experts on future currency movements. That is bizarre. It is unacceptable and needs sorting out.

I have raised four matters: the need for an objective look at fees and their deterrent effect; an analysis of successful appeals so that feedback can be given to the posts; an analysis of refusals to check for patterns so that we can devise policies to deal with them; and, finally, that stupid, harmful, nonsensical method of paying fees.

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Angela Eagle): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) on choosing to debate this important issue.

The UK receives many applications each year from people who wish to visit our country, and the vast majority are approved. Last year, for example, nearly 1.3 million applications were made for short-term entry clearance; 93 per cent. were successful. However, the right of appeal for those who are disappointed was taken away by the then Conservative Government in 1993. As my hon. Friend pointed out, that was of particular concern to people wanting to visit relatives, and it caused a great deal of resentment among many of his constituents whose relatives were unable to attend events such as funerals, births and weddings and had no redress against the decision of the entry clearance officer. In our White Paper "Fairer, Faster and Firmer—A Modern Approach to Immigration and Asylum", published in July 1998, the Government made it very clear that we would implement a change in order to restore appeal rights.

I hear what my hon. Friend says about fees. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, then the Home Secretary, substantially reduced fees after robust representations—not least from my hon. Friend. However, the principle of charging a fee was approved by Parliament in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. As part of the changes to the appeal system announced on 11 January, the Government also decided to establish an official team—as my hon. Friend pointed out—to review other aspects of the scheme. I thank my hon. Friend for raising the four issues that he has set out in the debate.

The team's terms of reference cover other aspects of the system raised by hon. Members and by non-governmental organisations, especially on the new appeal rights. The team is currently analysing information about the use of the scheme and assessing the impact of the appeal fee.

The team found that there was little empirical evidence on which to base any views about the impact of the fee on the appeal rate. The team has thus asked the Home

Office research, development and statistics directorate, which is independent, to undertake research to assess, among other things, the reasons why unsuccessful applicants decide to appeal or not to appeal. An outside consultant has been seconded to undertake that work.

The team is also reviewing the procedures for lodging and handling appeals and, in particular, for paying the fee, to ensure that those procedures are as accessible and responsive as practicable to the needs of the appellant. My hon. Friend vividly pointed out some of the practical difficulties. The requirement to pay the fee in local currency was recognised as a potential difficulty at an early stage. My hon. Friend is aware of instances, and has shared them with the House, where that has been a real problem. For technical and accounting reasons, it is not possible for overseas posts to accept the fees in sterling. However, the team has suggested, and we have agreed in principle, that a system should be introduced to enable sponsors in the UK to pay the fee in sterling in this country. I can assure my hon. Friend that once the mechanics have been sorted out the regulations will be amended.

There is also a need to investigate the feasibility of relaxing the test for allowing a group of family visitors to rely on the outcome of one appeal. Currently, as hon. Members may know, a family unit for that purpose is the spouse and dependent children. That means that visitors travelling in a group face the prospect of a large loss of fee if they are refused. Clearly, lower fees have helped, but we are still looking into the issue.

My hon. Friend has rightly raised the outcome of appeals as well as the Government's initial estimates of the numbers who would exercise their appeal rights. Our first estimates were that most—at least 80 per cent.—of applicants would choose the cheaper, paper appeal. We recognised that the lower fee would result in more using the oral appeal route. About 50 per cent. have done so since January. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, there is a marked difference in the success rate for those opting for an oral appeal: about two thirds, as opposed to one third for paper appeals. The research project will look at the reasons why that is happening—not least the implications of a 69 per cent. success rate at oral hearings.

The team is continuing its work. It has met the non-governmental organisations that expressed an interest in appeals for family visitors refused visas. Those organisations have included the Commission for Racial Equality, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux—clearly, we are well aware of its report on the issue—the Immigration Advisory Service and the Transport and General Workers Union.

The NGOs supported the decision to undertake research and offered some helpful suggestions about what should be included in it. My hon. Friend has also offered some helpful suggestions. The next step is to produce a discussion paper for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and other ministerial members of the review team to look at and approve. The input of the NGOs will be of great help in producing that paper. It will be set out in chapters that deal with the main issues raised during the debates and by the NGOs, and will meet the terms of reference of the review. We hope that it will be published in September and widely distributed. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Throughout the process, hon. Members have raised concerns in letters and by way of parliamentary questions—and, of course, in Adjournment debates—about our decision to charge fees for appeals in these cases, the level of the fee and the various arrangements for the operation of the scheme. The first two issues are not within the terms of reference of the review; but the research findings, in particular the findings on the impact of the fee on the appeal rate, will inform the Government's thinking.

It is still early days and I would not want to second-guess the outcome of the consultation. From a low starting point, there has been a steady increase in the number of appeals received. The figures on appeal numbers are being made available to the NGOs for the duration of the review and they will be published in the discussion document. They have risen from 117 in January 2001, the beginning of the scheme, to 513 last month. That is substantially fewer than we estimated last year, but the trend is firmly upwards. The target times are being met by the immigration appeals authorities, which is good news.

I know that in some individual cases things have not gone as smoothly as we would all have hoped. Indeed, my hon. Friend has given me much pause for thought with the example that he has raised. The review team is seeing what can be done to make the scheme work better. It is too soon to draw any firm conclusions, but it was timely of my hon. Friend to have the debate today, allowing me to give an interim report before we get to the consultation.

I hope that we shall return to the debate—in fact I am almost certain that we will return to it—when we publish the final report and when there are facts and figures showing trends which can be relied upon, which are available to us all and on which to base our conclusions. I thank my hon. Friend and hope that he has been reassured by my comments.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 14 September 2001

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock, notice having been given by MR. SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 13 (Earlier meeting of House in certain circumstances).*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath: Tam Dalyell, for Linlithgow and Paul Andrew Daisley, for Brent, East.

International Terrorism and Attacks in the USA

9.37 am

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Prime Minister I should like to inform the House that at 11 am I shall invite colleagues to rise and observe three minutes silence in memory of those who lost their lives in the tragic events in the United States this week.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Tony Blair): I am grateful, Mr. Speaker, that you agreed to the recall of Parliament to debate the hideous and foul events in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania that took place on Tuesday 11 September.

I thought it particularly important in view of the fact that these attacks were not just attacks upon people and buildings; nor even merely upon the United States of America; these were attacks on the basic democratic values in which we all believe so passionately and on the civilised world. It is therefore right that Parliament, the fount of our own democracy, makes its democratic voice heard.

There will, of course, be different shades of opinion heard today. That again is as it should be, but let us unite in agreeing this: what happened in the United States on Tuesday was an act of wickedness for which there can be no justification. Whatever the cause, whatever the perversion of religious feeling, whatever the political belief, to inflict such terror on the world; to take the lives of so many innocent and defenceless men, women, and children, can never ever be justified.

Let us unite too, with the vast majority of decent people throughout the world in sending our condolences to the Government and people of America. They are our friends and allies, and we the British are a people who stand by their friends in times of need, tragedy and trial, and we do so without hesitation now.

The events themselves are sickeningly familiar to us. Starting at 08.45 US time, two hijacked planes were flown straight into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York. Shortly afterwards at 09.43, another hijacked plane was flown into the Pentagon in Washington. At 10.05 the first tower collapsed; at 10.28 the second; later another building at the World Trade Centre. The heart of New York's financial district was devastated; carnage, death and injury everywhere. Around 10.30 we heard reports that a fourth hijacked aircraft had crashed south of Pittsburgh.

I should like, on behalf of the British people and, I hope, on behalf of the House, to express our admiration for the selfless bravery of the New York and American emergency services, many of whom have lost their lives. As we speak, the total death toll is still unclear, but it amounts, we know, to several thousands.

Because the World Trade Centre was the home of many big financial firms, and because many of their employees are British, whoever committed these acts of terrorism will have murdered at least a hundred British citizens, maybe many more. Murder of British people in New York is no different in nature from their murder here in the heart of Britain itself. In the most direct sense, therefore, we have not merely an interest, but an obligation to bring those responsible to account.

To underline the scale of the loss, we can think back to some of the appalling tragedies that the House has spoken of in the recent past. We can recall the grief aroused by the

[The Prime Minister]

tragedy at Lockerbie, in which 270 people were killed, 44 of them British. In Omagh, the last terrorist incident to lead to a recall of Parliament, 29 people lost their lives—each life lost a tragedy; each one of these events a nightmare for our country.

But the death toll that we are confronting here is of a different order. In the Falklands war, 255 British service men perished, and during the Gulf war we lost 47, so in this case, we are talking about a tragedy of epoch making proportions. As the scale of the calamity becomes clearer, I fear that there will be many a community in our country where heartbroken families are grieving the loss of a loved one. I have asked the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that everything that they need by way of practical support is being done.

Here in Britain, we have instituted certain precautionary measures of security. We have tightened security measures at all British airports, and ensured that no planes can take off unless their security is assured. We have temporarily redirected air traffic so that planes do not fly over central London. City airport is reopening this morning.

We have also been conscious of the possibility of economic disruption. Some sectors, such as the airlines and the insurance industry, will be badly affected. But financial markets have quickly stabilised. The oil producers have helped keep the oil price steady. Business is proceeding, as far as possible, as normal.

There are three things that we must now take forward urgently. First, we must bring to justice those responsible. Rightly, President Bush and the US Government have proceeded with care. They did not lash out. They did not strike first and think afterwards. Their very deliberation is a measure of the seriousness of their intent. They, together with allies, will want to identify, with care, those responsible. That is a judgment that must and will be based on hard evidence. Once that judgment is made, the appropriate action can be taken. It will be determined, it will take time, it will continue over time until this menace is properly dealt with and its machinery of terror destroyed.

But one thing should be very clear. By their acts, these terrorists and those behind them have made themselves the enemies of the entire civilised world. Their objective we know. Our objective will be to bring to account those who have organised, aided, abetted and incited this act of infamy; and those who harbour or help them have a choice: either to cease their protection of our enemies or be treated as an enemy themselves.

Secondly, this is a moment when every difference between nations, every divergence of interest, every irritant in our relations, should be put to one side in one common endeavour. The world should stand together against this outrage.

NATO has already, for the first time since it was founded in 1949, invoked article 5 and determined that this attack in America will be considered as an attack against the alliance as a whole. The UN Security Council on Wednesday passed a resolution which set out its readiness to take all necessary steps to combat terrorism. From Russia, China, the EU, from Arab states, Asia and the Americas, from every continent of the world, has come united condemnation. This solidarity must be maintained and translated into support for action.

We do not yet know the exact origin of this evil. But if, as appears likely, it is so-called Islamic fundamentalists, we know that they do not speak or act for the vast majority of decent law-abiding Muslims throughout the world. I say to our Arab and Muslim friends: "Neither you nor Islam is responsible for this; on the contrary, we know you share our shock at this terrorism, and we ask you as friends to make common cause with us in defeating this barbarism that is totally foreign to the true spirit and teachings of Islam."

I would add that, now more than ever, we have reason not to let the middle east peace process slip still further, but if at all possible to reinvigorate it and move it forward.

Thirdly, whatever the nature of the immediate response to these terrible events in America, we need to rethink dramatically the scale and nature of the action that the world takes to combat terrorism.

We know a good deal about many of these terror groups. But as a world we have not been effective at dealing with them. Of course it is difficult. We are democratic. They are not. We have respect for human life. They do not. We hold essentially liberal values. They do not. As we look into these issues it is important that we never lose sight of our basic values. But we have to understand the nature of this enemy and act accordingly.

Civil liberties are a vital part of our country and of our democratic world. But the most basic liberty of all is the right of the ordinary citizen to go about their business free from fear or terror. That liberty has been denied, in the cruellest way imaginable, to the passengers aboard the hijacked planes, to those who perished in the trade towers and the Pentagon, to the hundreds of rescue workers killed as they tried to help.

We need to look once more, nationally and internationally, at extradition laws and the mechanisms for international justice, at how these terrorist groups are financed and their money laundered and the links between terror and crime, and we need to frame a response that will work and hold internationally. For this form of terror knows no mercy, no pity and no boundaries.

Let us make this reflection too. A week ago, anyone suggesting that terrorists would kill thousands of innocent people in downtown New York would have been dismissed as alarmist, yet it happened. We know that these groups are fanatics, capable of killing without discrimination. The limits on the numbers that they kill and their methods of killing are not governed by any sense of morality. The limits are only practical and technical. We know, that they would, if they could, go further and use chemical, biological, or even nuclear weapons of mass destruction. We know, also, that there are groups of people, occasionally states, who will trade the technology and capability of such weapons.

It is time that this trade was exposed, disrupted, and stamped out. We have been warned by the events of 11 September, and we should act on the warning.

There is a great deal to do and many details to be filled in, and much careful work to be undertaken over the coming days, weeks and months. We need to mourn the dead and then act to protect the living.

Terrorism has taken on a new and frightening aspect. The people perpetrating it wear the ultimate badge of the fanatic: they are prepared to commit suicide in pursuit of their beliefs. Our beliefs are the very opposite of theirs. We believe in reason, democracy and tolerance. These beliefs are the foundation of our civilised world. They are enduring, they have served us well, and as history has shown, we have been prepared to fight, when necessary, to

defend them. The fanatics should know that we hold our beliefs every bit as strongly as they hold theirs, and now is the time to show it.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving us the opportunity to speak on this matter. On behalf of the official Opposition, I thank the Prime Minister for his statement. He is to be congratulated on responding to this crisis quickly and resolutely, and on giving a lead to other nations that value freedom and democracy.

We are party politicians in a stable democracy, and we are used to the cut and thrust of political debate, here and outside, yet we are also, as the Prime Minister said, the guardians of a set of values that are underpinned by that democracy and the rule of law. It is those values that were attacked with such callous and brutal ferocity, and contempt for human life, in New York and Washington on Tuesday. That is why we are united in the House in our determination not only to extend our genuine and heartfelt sympathy to the United States but to defend civilised values against those who seek to bring them down by violence.

The people of the United Kingdom, who have themselves stood firmly against terrorism for so many years, will expect nothing less of us than to rise above party politics. I have absolutely no hesitation in giving the Prime Minister my party's full support for his immediate pledge to stand shoulder to shoulder with our strongest friends and allies in the United States. Together, we must ensure that the perpetrators are hunted down and brought to justice, as he said.

Over the coming days and weeks, there may be some who counsel caution over the full measure of support that the Prime Minister has already declared. By contrast, I assure him that he will have our total backing throughout in maintaining his position of unflinching support for the United States in its search for the perpetrators and its subsequent actions.

The NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, rightly said that an attack on one is an attack on all. I want to put on record how strongly I congratulate him on invoking article 5 of the North Atlantic treaty. We now have an opportunity to support the United States in the defence of freedom and democracy, as it has supported us in the past.

I join the Prime Minister in sending our heartfelt condolences to the American people, and specifically those whose loved ones have been killed or injured in this terrible and sickening series of atrocities. The thoughts and prayers of the entire House and, I believe, the entire nation, are with all those who are suffering.

The sheer horror of what took place on Tuesday is virtually impossible to comprehend, as is the evil of people who would commit such acts against fellow human beings—indeed, against humanity itself. For me, that was brought starkly home when I learned that not only those in the planes and buildings had perished but hundreds of emergency workers, as they selflessly sought to save the lives of others.

One of the most moving and poignant images in today's press is of a fireman running up the stairs as others were running in the opposite direction, fleeing for their lives. Sadly, it seems that he may well have lost his life, but nothing better illustrates the courage and unfailing sense of duty that he and so many others showed on that day.

It is likely to be some time before the final toll of casualties is known, but we know that it will run into thousands and include people of many nationalities. We know, too, as the Prime Minister said, that it appears that as many as one in 10 of those who died may well have been British, making this the worst terrorist atrocity ever against our own country.

Let me also say how much we admire the response of the American people, who have shown a steely determination to carry on with their everyday lives. As the Prime Minister said, by their example they will have demonstrated to the world once again why such cowardly acts of evil will never succeed.

What has been highlighted in the most graphic and awful way possible is the changing nature of the threat to freedom and democracy that we face. I agree with the Prime Minister that we need urgently to assess how we respond, individually and collectively, and I welcome his commitment to review the laws against terrorism, taking account also of the worrying links with organised crime.

Furthermore, have not Tuesday's attacks also shattered the dangerous notion that, after the end of the cold war, the United Kingdom and others would no longer face any direct threats? Tuesday's events showed that, whether rogue states or terrorists, there is no limit to what those who are prepared to carry out such threats will do. There are no weapons they will not use and no life they will not sacrifice. For them, terror has become an end in itself.

For the rest of us, as one leading British Muslim said, the loss of one innocent life is the equivalent of the loss of humanity. I want to take this opportunity to associate myself with the Prime Minister's assertion that Islam is not responsible for this barbarism.

Some have said that Tuesday changed the world for ever, but what should not have changed is our way of life, based on our cherished freedom and democracy and the strength of our resolve to defeat those who seek to destroy it.

Tuesday's terrorist outrages have shaken the entire world. It is now the responsibility of civilised countries everywhere to do whatever is necessary to prevent such attacks from ever happening again. On many occasions in the past, Britain and the United States have stood resolutely together in the defence of freedom and democracy. That is testimony to the shared values and friendship between our two countries. We stand by the people of the United States not because of article 5 but because they are our allies and our friends.

President Bush described Tuesday's outrage as an act of war. He was right. The message needs to go out loud and clear: those Governments who harbour terrorists will have to learn to live with the consequences of their actions. Today, sombre yet determined, we affirm once again our solidarity and our unity of purpose. Terrorism, wherever it rears its evil head, will never succeed, and democracy must always prevail.

The Prime Minister: I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on the position that he has attained in his party, and welcome him to the Dispatch Box. I think that, like me, he would have preferred that this had not been the first occasion on which we faced each other here, but I sincerely congratulate him. I thank him unequivocally for the support that he has given us today. It is both important and immensely welcome.

We are fully in agreement on the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised. What is important now is to see the issue in two parts, the first of which is the immediate response to the act of terrorism that has been carried out

[Mr. Iain Duncan Smith]

and how we bring those who are responsible to account. Then, there is the further work to be done over time to draw up for the international community an agenda of action that can be taken in our individual countries and collectively at international level to defeat terrorism around the world.

It is important that we as a country—not only the Government but people of all political persuasions—work together on that agenda so that we can provide the necessary details on matters such as extradition, financing, money laundering and so on. We are well aware that there is a network of complicity in the work of terrorism around the world. Quite apart from the immediate response, it is necessary now to use the outrage to devise the right agenda to tackle terrorism, wherever it is in the world. The hon. Gentleman's support today is much appreciated in that respect.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Skye and Inverness, West): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I wholly associate the Liberal Democrats with the proper sentiments that have been expressed so well by the Prime Minister and by the new leader of the Conservative party—whom I congratulate despite the sad circumstances that coincide with his election—about the breathtaking nature of the savagery that we have witnessed in the United States. Many of our constituents and communities throughout our land, never mind the United States and the wider international community, will have been affected.

We all have a heavy heart today. As I listened to the Prime Minister, I thought back into history. Speaking in the House of Commons in very different circumstances, John Bright spoke of the sense that the angel of death was floating above the Chamber. There is no doubt that the angel of death is very much with us today.

I spent one of the happiest years of my life as a student in the mid-west of the United States, in Indiana, and I have been a fairly regular visitor back and forth to New York in the 20 years since then. Until I became a student in the United States, I did not understand how mid-west America feels divorced from east coast and west coast America. Speaking to friends—including one who once worked in one of the buildings that were attacked but who, just before the summer, was transferred further down Wall street and was therefore not afflicted by this terrible tragedy—I was struck by the remarkable extent to which middle America, east coast America and west coast America have become united as never before. We, a country on the other side of the Atlantic, must not underestimate that. We have to understand the scale of the shock and the unity that it has brought about in that great country and on that great continent.

Yesterday afternoon, in common with the Conservative party leader, the Prime Minister, the former Conservative party leader and other Members of Parliament, I went to sign the condolence book in Grosvenor square. It was remarkable to read the sentiments expressed there. There was a bouquet of flowers from a Polish ex-service man in the second world war, now domiciled in London. A family from Dagenham who had no connections with the United States wanted to say how sorry they were. American tourists here in London are bereft because they do not know what has happened to people they know, family or loved ones: they are without information.

The scale of the tragedy is, in itself, a great opportunity. The Prime Minister is absolutely correct: this is the moment for the international community to get its act together in a better way—certainly in a different way. I agree that this is not the occasion for party political debate, but I want to ask the Prime Minister how he envisages the international bodies to which we are such a significant subscriber beginning to organise their decision making and their capacity to govern the intelligence services and act against the people who would perpetrate such dreadful deeds in a way that will be more efficient and effective. Does he envisage that happening through, for example, the G8 with its intelligence capacity, or through the United Nations? What role might the European Union have to play in such a welcome development?

I strongly underscore the comments of the Prime Minister and the leader of the Conservative party about the importance of all of us sending the correct and legitimate signal to the Muslim community in Britain. There is no argument to be had here, and woe betide anyone in a position to influence public opinion who tries to suggest that there is. Over the past couple of days, I have become concerned about the emergence of a strand of comment and sentiment that mixes those horrific acts with legitimate differences between the parties and so on about asylum seekers, immigration and the position of various ethnic communities within our countries. It is not about that. The House of Commons must send that signal defiantly.

It seems almost inevitable that there will be some sort of military response at some point—although at the moment we do not know where, when, or against whom. Will the Prime Minister confirm that he does not rule out a further recall of Parliament, especially if, as I imagine they will be, British service people are to be involved in such action?

An American writer once observed that the terrorist attempts to wash an impure world clean with the blood of innocent victims. The impurity here is the dreadful deed of the terrorist. On that, this House stands shoulder to shoulder in full support of our American cousins.

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his support. I think that to people here, in America and around the world, the message sent by the sight of the main political parties standing together on this issue will be welcome and immensely reassuring.

As for the methods that we will attempt to devise at international level to deal with terrorism, the agenda will be taken forward in every international forum. Discussion is under way on a new convention on terrorism on which we have been working with other countries for some time. The G8 will of course have a role to play, as will other bodies of which we are a member.

It is most important not to forget the sheer horror of the events. Let that inspire us to take the action that is now necessary. We must realise that other methods and other forms of terrorism could become increasingly open to terrorist groups. Now is the time to put in place the measures that will give us the best chance of stopping them.

Obviously, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about the Muslim community, and I certainly do not rule out the further recall of Parliament in circumstances in which that becomes necessary.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the House have the assurance that in no way will we ourselves inflict terror on innocent people? If we do so, we simply recruit more terrorists.

The Prime Minister: Of course, we as a country will always act in accordance with the beliefs that we hold dear.

Those beliefs are to try to defeat terrorism and to ensure that, as far as possible, we stand up for the rights of democratic and civilised people everywhere to go about their business free from terror. However, it is also the case that this act of terrorism demands a response to bring those responsible to account. That is something that we must pursue, and not simply in the interests of America.

From the outset of this terrible event, which should be brought home to us because of the large numbers of our own citizens who have been killed, I have tried to make one thing clear. We can only imagine what would happen if 100 or many more of our own people were killed by an act of terrorism in this country; yet it makes no difference whether such an act happens in New York, Britain or anywhere else. Our interests are directly engaged. I believe that in order to protect the world from further terror it is necessary to take action. We will, as we always do, take action in a considered, calm and careful way, but action will have to be taken.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): On behalf of my colleagues in the Ulster Unionist party and, I think, of the people of Northern Ireland in general, may I first associate myself with the Prime Minister's comments expressing our condolences to the American people and to all those who have been bereaved and injured in the events of the past few days? May I also underline and agree with the Leader of the Opposition's comments, in which he pointed out that we have seen the worst act of terrorism inflicted on the British people since the last war? It is quite right, therefore, that, along with our allies, we should seriously contemplate what the appropriate action is.

One other comment comes very much to mind. I recall reading in the media after the event a number of commentators quoting the rather macabre words issued by an Irish Republican spokesman after the IRA had attempted to wipe out the Cabinet, when he said, "You have to be lucky all the time; we only have to be lucky once." I found it unfortunate that some people were quoting that as if it were an accurate comment, which of course it is not. It was a deliberately crafted statement intended to amplify the terror and to give people the sense that they were helpless and that terrorism would inevitably succeed. That is quite wrong and it is important, in all we say and do, that we underline the fact that it is wrong.

Terrorism will not succeed. It can be beaten, although not easily. It requires careful intelligence. The Father of the House was right to point out that, as far as possible, we want to avoid inflicting injury on any innocent people, and that is why intelligence is crucial. However, we need the correct application of that intelligence, which has to be taken over time. We will, of course, entirely support the Government when we come to take what the Prime Minister calls appropriate action. He is right to underline the fact that that action has to be determined, and that it will take time and be continued over time. There will be no quick fix, but it is important that the menace be dealt with properly and, as he says, that the machinery of terrorism be destroyed.

I want to underline one other specific aspect of the statement—the need for us to look again at how we deal with terrorism and, in particular, at how terrorist groups are financed and their money laundered. We need to consider the links between terror and crime and between terrorist organisations. We will have to examine that closely and carefully. If we can somehow take out the sinews of this terrorist conflict, we will make the task of defeating terror that much easier.

The Prime Minister: I agree wholeheartedly with everything that the right hon. Gentleman says and I thank him for his support. We shall ensure that terrorism will not succeed.

Mr. Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Prime Minister accept my unreserved condemnation of the atrocities carried out in the United States? Will he also accept that that terrible act of terrorism claimed the lives of many people of many faiths, including Muslims? In addition, will he assure the House that it would be quite wrong for British Muslims to be tarred with the same brush following that dreadful act of terrorism?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his words. He speaks on behalf of many Muslims in this country when he says that they share the shock and horror at this outrage. The fact that the Muslim Council of Britain issued a statement of such strength and so quickly indicates what we know to be true: that those who truly follow the religion of Islam are decent, peaceful and law-abiding people. Like us, they have often been victims of terrorism and, like us, they want it stamped out.

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): Referring to what the Prime Minister said about future co-operation, does he agree that it is almost inconceivable that intelligence or security agencies somewhere in the world did not have wind of an event in which so many people were involved and which took so long to plan? Are we not, here in Britain, with our historical ties with the middle east, the far east and the Indian subcontinent, perhaps uniquely placed to lead a crusade for better co-operation among all the security and intelligence organisations in the free world? They must realise that every country is as much at risk as we have been and the Americans are now.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has a great deal of experience in these matters. I cannot comment on the speculation in his first question, but his point is absolutely right. One thing that has been brought home to people as a result of this atrocity is the need for far better co-operation between countries. There is also, I think, a recognition of the fact that the threat to the world today has changed since some of the sharp ideological divisions of the cold war declined. The threat comes from new forms of terrorism and fundamentalism. On one level, such terrorists might appear to be utterly irrational in what they do, but on another, the methods that they pursue appear coldly rational. There needs to be far better co-operation between nations, and not just in terms of intelligence and security. It has been interesting to see the reaction to this from every corner the world and every nation with an interest in order and stability, rather than disorder and chaos. We need to build on that now.

Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside): Does the Prime Minister accept that, when the initial horror of the atrocities subsides, sophisticated attempts will be made to limit the action that can be taken by trying to link what some regard as just causes with the atrocities? Does he agree that such approaches will ignore both the fanaticism of those who have carried out these grotesque acts and their unlimited objectives?

The Prime Minister: I agree strongly with that. There is something against which we must guard from the outset.

[The Prime Minister]

We are speaking a few days after the event, when the memory of it is fresh in our minds and its consequences are seen daily in our newspapers and on our television screens, but we must not let the passage of time dull our determination, in any shape or form, to carry out the agenda that we have set out today—to bring those responsible to account and to ensure that we take the action necessary to deal with this new phenomenon in our world. My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

One value for which we fight is the democratic right to disagree. People are perfectly entitled to have their causes and feelings about any regime, Government, system or way of life, but it is up to us to ensure that they are not allowed to pursue those causes in anything other than a peaceful and democratic way. When we are under threat—and we are under threat from these events—it is important that we react and do not allow the passage of time to make us weak in the face of that threat.

Sir Brian Mawhinney (North-West Cambridgeshire): Does the Prime Minister accept that he is to be congratulated on the instinctive and robust way in which, on behalf of his Government, the House and the nation, he has stood with the Americans, and that he has the full encouragement of the House to continue to do that? He mentioned the number of British people who will have been killed, maimed and hurt as a consequence of this terrible atrocity. Will he make arrangements for his Government to be as generous as possible, because families may have to go to the United States to identify bodies, estates may have to be wound up and possessions brought back, and people will need medical care and assistance? I suspect, in the circumstances, that that will be his instinctive reaction, and it would be helpful if he could confirm that.

The Prime Minister: That is a good point and we are indeed making arrangements to do what the right hon. Gentleman has suggested.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): I join the House in expressing the deepest gratitude to the Prime Minister for bringing us together to speak, as we rarely do, with one clear voice about the terrible atrocities in the United States, and in expressing our deepest sympathies with the families of victims in the United States. We must utterly condemn those who carried out those atrocities and must work with the United States to bring them to justice.

I reiterate the Prime Minister's important point that although it appears likely that those acts were carried out by so-called Islamic fundamentalists, we know that those people do not speak for the vast majority of decent, law-abiding Muslims throughout the world.

As one who comes from a region that has experienced terrorism, I say that we must come together with the United States Government and others across the world to put a stop to its development. Statistics from my small part of the world show that one in 500 people have lost their lives—the equivalent of 100,000 on this side of the Irish sea. One in 50 people have been maimed or injured, which is the equivalent of 1 million people on this side.

That is how serious the developments of recent years have been. As we move into a new century and millennium, in which we had all hoped to leave behind the conflicts and wars of the past, every possible positive action should be taken by all democratic Governments to put an end to the carry-on called terrorism.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman's point is correct. I hope that one consequence of what has happened will be that Governments around the world will work more closely together to deal with what is clearly perceived—as has not always been the case—as a common threat.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The House is united in condemning the atrocity in the United States, as was the Scots Parliament on Wednesday. I associate the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru with the remarks that the Prime Minister has made, particularly about those who have been so devastatingly bereaved this week.

Does the Prime Minister accept that no level of security in a democratic society can offer total protection against suicidal fanatics intent on mass murder? That being so, an international effort to dismantle such organisations is justifiable, necessary and welcome.

Does the Prime Minister also agree, however, that there must be an attempt to dismantle the hatred which breeds terrorism? He mentioned a renewed effort for peace in the middle east. Can he give the House any comments on the time scale, structure, hope and expectation for that international effort; and when it will take place?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his words of support. It is always important to try to do everything that we can to minimise the causes of such hatred throughout the world. We must, however, never get into the position—I know that the hon. Gentleman never has—of believing that one can ever justify acts of terrorism such as those that we have seen.

I do not at present have a specific set of ideas to offer on the way forward in the middle east peace process, although we remain willing, as always, to work with the parties there and with others to ensure that whatever possibilities exist for peace are properly developed. As one part of our response to what has happened, it is important to redouble our efforts in the middle east.

When we contemplate what happened earlier this week, one point that has come across graphically to us all is the absolute importance of understanding that we are more interdependent and interlinked in today's world than ever before. However, if we are increasingly interdependent in terms of the threats that we face, there is also more that we can do together to try to push forward the process of peace and understanding needed in difficult parts of the world. That is true of the middle east, and of elsewhere.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Prime Minister agree that there is a world of difference between standing shoulder to shoulder with the American people in their fight for justice and hanging on to the coat tails of an American President whose first act when firefighters stood 10 ft tall in the rubble of the World Trade Centre was to scurry off to his bunker?

Hon. Members: Shame!

The Prime Minister: I disagree strongly with my hon. Friend. In my conversations with President Bush, I found him absolutely focused, calm and determined, and mindful

of the devastation caused to his people. It is important to stand together with America at this time of need and trial, and that is what we shall do.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Mid–Bedfordshire): Terrorism is a hydra-headed monster. While the exercise of military might is right, does the Prime Minister accept that that alone will not be enough? There must be some understanding of why there is such hatred for so many institutions in the United States. Unless we deal with some of the deep-seated causes, more terrorists will come to the fore.

The Prime Minister: It is important to analyse some of the hatred of which the hon. Gentleman has spoken and to see what we can to do minimise it. We must never, however, find ourselves in a position of moral ambiguity. Nothing can ever justify what has taken place. Some comments from around the world have worried me on that score. People are perfectly entitled to dislike the American way of life. That is their democratic right. We do not share that feeling, but people are entitled to feel it if they wish. However, they must pursue whatever changes they want in a proper and democratic way.

We must also make common cause with decent, law-abiding peoples in the Islamic world in combating the threat of terrorism, of which they, too, are the victims. In so far as we can, we must move forward the process of peace in the middle east. A balanced and sensible view must be taken, but we can never take any position other than to say that what happened in the United States of America can have no conceivable shred of justification. It was a barbaric act, and action must be taken. We have to consider how to push forward the process of peace and understanding in the world, but that should not draw us back in any way from pursuing those responsible for the atrocity.

Mr. Paul Marsden (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I share the sense of shock and outrage felt by every Member of Parliament about the despicable acts of terrorism that have occurred. I praise my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for his determination.

That said, may I strike a note of caution? American sources are indicating that NATO bombings may occur in Sudan, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Afghanistan. The whole middle east could become a tinder box if we are not careful. I urge my right hon. Friend to talk to President Bush and to find the right targets and culprits. Ultimately, we must act not out of revenge, but out of a sense of justice.

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely that we act out of a sense of justice. I simply say to my hon. Friend and others that they should not pay too much attention to some of the wilder pieces of speculation that inevitably are made at a time like this. It is important to recognise that the way in which the United States of America has proceeded so far is exactly right: in a calm and considered way, and in close consultation with allies such as ourselves. We have been in the closest consultation and co-operation with the United States, which is acting in exactly the right way. It is important that we recognise that the United States, like us, wishes to make sure that we base our identification of those responsible on proper evidence, but then that we are relentless in our pursuit of those responsible and in bringing them to justice.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising this day, do adjourn till Monday 15th October. [*Mr. Caplin.*]

International Terrorism

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Caplin.*]

Mr. Speaker: I must inform the House that there is an eight-minute limit on Back Benchers' speeches.

10.30 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Jack Straw): Like my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who offered congratulations to the new Leader of the Opposition in these appalling circumstances, I offer my congratulations to the new shadow Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), and express my appreciation of the co-operation that I received from his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude).

The whole House, as we have heard in the past 55 minutes, has been united in shock and grief at the events in the United States on Tuesday morning. Today, as so many times before in our shared history, we find ourselves in complete solidarity with our friends and allies in the United States. Our peoples are inextricably bound together by close ties of family, friendship, language, culture and, above all, values. We all remember that this country's freedom, and Europe's freedom, which so often we take for granted, would not exist today without the direct support that the United States gave us twice in the space of 25 years. The close interconnection between our two societies has been tragically underscored by the large number of British casualties.

Many right hon. and hon. Members present will know of homes in their constituencies where families wait, with fading hope, for news of loved ones. Tributes have already been paid to the work of the emergency services in New York and Washington who, even now, are trying to save lives, having lost many of their own.

I regret to say that we have no certainty at this stage about the exact identity or total number of British casualties, but it is likely to run to hundreds. With a catastrophe on this scale, it is crucial not to diminish individual tragedies behind the awful aggregate figures. Like everybody else in this House, I have tried to imagine the intense agony of the thousands of people who still wait to hear the fate of their loved ones. We, too, are frustrated that, as yet, there is so little information to give, but we all understand why that is so. I can assure the House that the Government are doing everything possible to get information to families as soon as we can.

Our crisis unit in London—run from New Scotland Yard, and staffed 24 hours a day—has dealt with thousands of calls reporting people missing or safe. Response units in our diplomatic posts in the United States have been working day and night. A crisis centre set up at our consulate-general in New York is taking calls and contacting companies with offices in or around the World Trade Centre, and is passing on all information on British nationals to our staff in London.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister answered an intervention from the right hon. Member for North-West Cambridgeshire (Sir B. Mawhinney) about the assistance that we have already offered those who have been bereaved and that we stand ready to offer. Some UK citizens in the United States will have no medical insurance to pay for the treatment of their injuries. Given the exceptional nature of the circumstances, the Secretary of State for Health and I have agreed that the Government will bear their hospital costs. We are already working on arrangements for the repatriation of bodies and for flights for relatives to go to the United States.

These attacks have shocked the world; they have also changed the world. This massive tragedy is an event of huge and almost unparalleled historical significance. Comparisons have been made with the attack on Pearl harbour, but, unlike Pearl harbour, Tuesday's attacks were directed against thousands of unarmed, innocent civilians, and at the very heart of the continent of the United States. They were launched by an enemy who, as yet, remains unseen.

It is plainly too soon to reach firm conclusions about the consequences of these acts for the global order, but history has presented us with such decisive moments before. Over the past two centuries, each time a conflict has ended people have come together to try to ensure that the last war really would be the last war.

After the first world war, US President Woodrow Wilson worked for a new world order to try to establish a lasting peace, yet within a generation the world was again at war. The structures established after 1945 have in every respect been more successful in preventing global conflict for half a century, but those structures—political, military and legal—were laid down to deal with the last threat: of war between states. Our challenge now is to make sure that they are equal to this and to the next threat.

In considering the approach we now take, we would do well this week to draw lessons from the experience of the 1930s. Our predecessors then were so desperate to avoid further military action that they made a huge, if understandable, mistake. They thought that they were dealing with adversaries who shared the same values, basic rules and assumptions about how humans, even in times of conflict and war, should behave towards one another.

It was not until it was too late that our predecessors realised that the aggressors were in the grip of a sort of collective political psychosis and that they did not accept the norms and decencies that the rest of us took for granted. We all know the consequences of what followed.

We have to acknowledge that the people who plotted, organised and carried out Tuesday's attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania do not accept any of the rules or values that we in the rest of the world would recognise. They have no respect, however minimal, for human life—not even for their own lives.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear, there must be a response. As he said, the United States, rightly, is proceeding with deliberation and care. Equally, to turn the other cheek would not appease the terrorists, but would lead to a still greater danger. We need to acknowledge that overwhelming, if dismal, truth if we are to prepare ourselves and our societies in the months and years ahead for the possibility—unpalatable as it may be—of further attacks.

This is not a conflict in which nation state is pitted against nation state. Instead, this is a deliberate act of war by calculating groups formally outside states against the rest of the civilised world. Indeed, the rise of the warlord and the terrorist funded by conflict, drugs and other criminal activity is one of the growing threats that we have faced, particularly since, paradoxically, the fall of the Berlin wall.

NATO has recognised the unprecedented nature of the threat. As we have heard, for the first time in the history of the alliance, it has invoked article 5 of the Washington treaty, which states that an armed attack against one or more of the allies in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all. There is no clearer signal that we could send to the perpetrators of these attacks than that they face a determined and united response by the international community.

In many ways, however, the unanimous decision taken on Wednesday by the United Nations Security Council was more important still. The Security Council resolved that not only those directly responsible for what happened at the World Trade Centre but those indirectly responsible for

"aiding, supporting or harbouring the perpetrators, organisers or sponsors of these acts"

will be held accountable. It expressed its readiness to take "all necessary steps" to respond to the terrorist acts and to combat all forms of terrorism. In making such a resolution and a similar one in the General Assembly, the whole international community showed itself to be united in its determination to respond.

We must develop our defences against a repeat or copycat attack—it would be deeply irresponsible not to do so—but we must also focus our attention on where the next threat to our collective security will come from. It should now be obvious to everyone that people who have the fanaticism and the capability to fly an airliner laden with passengers and fuel into a skyscraper will not be deterred by human decency from deploying chemical or biological weapons, missiles or nuclear weapons or other forms of mass destruction if they are available to them. We must therefore redouble our efforts to stop the proliferation and the availability of such weapons.

At the same time, we must intensify our traditional methods of diplomacy to bring some good out of this evil. We must not be deflected from our attempts to resolve conflicts, to defuse tensions and to work for peace in the troubled regions of the world, whether those be the Balkans, the middle east or elsewhere, for it is the terrorists, above all, who want all such efforts to fail.

It is no longer tolerable that any states should harbour or give succour to terrorists. The international community must unite as never before to take determined collective action against the threat that failing and failed states pose to global security. We can no longer allow the borders between democratic nations and the gaps between our domestic jurisdictions to be exploited so ruthlessly in courts of law by those who reject the rule of law.

With my European Union colleagues, I have this week agreed the first steps towards a common policy on terrorism. We need to consider what further action we can take collectively on issues outlined by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, such as extradition, proscribing terrorist organisations, as we have done in the United Kingdom, and thwarting the planning and funding of terrorist organisations.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (North-West Norfolk): With reference to the funding of terrorism, is the Foreign Secretary aware that in London there are still a number of extremist middle east organisations that are raising funds and peddling evil—for example, Sheikh Abu Hamza, who is based at Finsbury Park mosque? Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that bin Laden's sister is living in this country?

Mr. Straw: Of course I am aware of the presence of the individual whom the hon. Gentleman mentions; one could hardly fail to be aware of him. However, as so many hon. Members have made clear in their interventions, and as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, that individual does not speak for the Islamic faith or the Islamic community.

With regard to the action that needs to be taken, only last year the House enacted the Terrorism Act 2000, which greatly strengthens the tools available to the police and the courts to deal with people who are raising funds or support for terrorist organisations. We should remember that when that Bill and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Bill were introduced in the House, some claimed that they went too far and were not proportionate to the threat of terrorism. We have been reminded this week of the strength and potential threat that terrorism poses to us, and we must ensure that we respond to those mounting threats in a way that properly balances liberties and the freedom to live.

Terrorists operate without regard for borders. The fight against terrorism therefore needs to be a global one. Only a true coalition of the civilised world offers a real chance of cutting out that cancer. As we construct that coalition, we will include the Islamic world. No one should be in any doubt: those acts of mass murder have nothing to do with the Islamic faith. The Muslim Council of Britain said in its strong condemnation of the atrocities:

"These are senseless and evil acts that appal all people of conscience".

We admire the calm determination and dignity with which America's leaders and the American people have reacted to the calamity. We have offered them our full backing for their efforts to hunt down and hold to account the terrorists and those who harbour them. There must be no refuge. The attacks were not just on the United States; they were on humanity, on civilisation and on us all.

The terrorists who struck on Tuesday exploited what they see as the great weakness of democratic societies—freedom—but, in truth, freedom is and will remain our greatest strength. Terrorism is ultimately self-defeating. We must channel the rage and revulsion that we feel today to make intelligent decisions in order to ensure the triumph of the civilised values on which this House is founded. From the catastrophe, I believe that the United States and the free world will emerge stronger.

10.46 am

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): I begin by thanking the Foreign Secretary for his speech and his kind remarks. I only wish that we could have met first across the Dispatch Box under happier circumstances. I pay tribute to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude), for the way in which he conducted his administration of this shadow portfolio. I hope to be able to emulate his wisdom and judgment in the weeks and months ahead.

We meet today in sombre times—sombre not just in the devastation wrought by the vile and barbarous acts of terrorism that we witnessed in New York and Washington this week, but sombre in the threat implicit in what we witnessed for the rest of the civilised world. What we saw on Tuesday with such disbelief was an attack not just on innocent people, not just on the centres of power, but on the values of humanity that form the very basis of civilisation across the world.

[Mr. Michael Ancram]

It was an attack not just on America but on the whole free world—the whole civilised world. It is right therefore that Parliament has been recalled, and I congratulate the Prime Minister on that. Today we have set partisan politics aside. In the face of great evil, we are one Parliament and one House.

The enormity of what was done on Tuesday was such that in some ways it is only now beginning to sink in, in all its horror. To begin with, it was a terrible and almost unbelievable series of images and pictures. Only now are we beginning to understand the extent of the violent ending of life, of the families brutally shattered and of the unbearable anguish left behind, the sheer number of people killed, the manner of their killing and the evilness of it all. Now, as the bodies are recovered and the tragic stories emerge, the real human horror hits us all, and if we feel growing anger and emotion we should not be ashamed.

The catastrophe has, with reason, been described as an act of war. It is that, but it is much more: it is a crime against humanity. We would be less than human if we were not profoundly moved. Our deep sorrow at what has been done to our friends in America is added to by the fact that there are so many British victims. We must all be shocked by how many British casualties there are. It is the worst terrorist outrage that we have faced. I welcome the help that the Government announced this morning for the relatives and the bereaved. We should not forget the many other nationals who lost their lives, not least the many Pakistanis who were in the two towers when they collapsed.

Our hearts today go out to all who have died, all who have lost loved ones and all whose lives will be permanently scarred either physically or mentally by this vicious crime. Many of those will be the brave heroes and heroines of the emergency and medical services, especially the firefighters, who literally risked life and limb in that hell on earth. We pay tribute to their dedication and their courage. For me, they have given new meaning to the phrase, "the indomitable spirit of man."

We have all been touched by this dreadful event. The bond between this country and America is strong—strong because of the values and interests that we share and because of the personal bonds of friendship and the family ties between our two countries, but strong, most of all, for the times that we have stood shoulder to shoulder against evil. I welcome and support the Government's swift announcement that, at this time of America's need, we shall do so again. I also praise the way in which the Prime Minister indicated that, in the difficult and dangerous times ahead, we will support our friends. I urge him and his Government not to be shaken from that resolve. When we have needed America, it has helped us. When America needs our help, we will help it.

I pay tribute to Lord Robertson, the Secretary-General of NATO, and his council for the resolute way in which they have invoked article 5 for the first time in the organisation's history and to the European Union, which has in no uncertain terms declared its determination to combat international terrorism. I hope that the Government will work to stiffen the spine of any of our European partners that may appear to wobble. I welcome also the Security Council's unanimous call for international co-operation to deal with terrorism.

Indeed, almost all of us must have been warmed by the near universal condemnation from the international community. President Putin and Russia have been forthright in their support. States that have traditionally been hostile to the United States condemned this vile act of terrorism. Yasser Arafat has condemned it. Libya has condemned it. The international community of nations has risen up against the perpetrators of Tuesday's atrocity.

That international response has been heartening, because if terrorism is to be driven from the face of our planet, we need, as US Secretary of State Colin Powell has said, to form a worldwide coalition against it. We have a vital role to play in helping to build that coalition and, more importantly, in sustaining it. I offer the full support of Her Majesty's Opposition to the Government in their chosen path as a leader in the international community and a staunch ally to our American friends in the fight against this terrorist evil. The going will undoubtedly get tougher in the weeks ahead, and I urge them not to waver.

There is, without doubt, a reason for the almost universal condemnation of Tuesday's atrocity—this act of terrorism struck new levels of evil. It was of a different order. In the past, planes have been hijacked for the purpose of taking hostages and buildings have been bombed. On Tuesday, those heinous activities, for the first time, were woven into one, with devastating effect. This was no opportunist attack. This was no spontaneous act of terrorism. It had been long in the planning. It required skilled recruitment, skilled training and the ability to retain motivation over what was clearly a lengthy period. It was the work of a sophisticated organisation or possibly even a state. It represents a new dimension of terrorism—terrorism without limits.

Here were terrorists for whom human life held no value, neither their own nor those of the hundreds on the planes and the thousands on the ground, which they were to destroy. The terrorists were not mindless, and I agree with the Foreign Secretary that we should be cautious about using that word. They were totally calculating and deliberate. Theirs was an attack on that set of values that believes in the sanctity of human life and in human liberty and human rights. Theirs is a war in which nothing matters except the achievement of their objectives. There is no morality and no conscience.

Those are the real dangers that the civilised world must now meet, because these are the rogue elements—the rogue terrorists who are backed more often than not by rogue states. The manner in which they deliver their terror is developing to a frightening pattern. Once it involved firearms, then car bombs. This week, it involved the equivalent of flying bombs packed with people into buildings packed with people, designed to create the maximum loss of life. As the Foreign Secretary said, next time it could involve missiles. If ever there was good reason to consider the dangers of asymmetric warfare and the need for layered defences against it, it was this vile escalation of the wicked trade of the terrorist.

I have listened to those who told us that Tuesday was a day when the world changed. I urge caution about that. Terrorism seeks to change the world, sometimes without having any idea of what it wants to change the world to. Terrorists must not be allowed to take comfort from their action and these terrorists must not be allowed to take comfort from Tuesday—not even the merest glimmer of satisfaction that they have achieved any of their aims.

Mayor Giuliani of New York said to Manhattan soon after this terrible tragedy, "Go about your normal day . . . do the things you normally do, show confidence in yourself and the city". Terrorists may temporarily have caused life styles to be altered so as to recognise the need for greater security, but they have not, they will not and they must not change our freedoms and our rights and the way that we, as free people, live our lives.

What has been changed by Tuesday is the way in which the free world now reacts to terrorism. There must be no more talk of discussions with and concessions to terrorists—those who hold no human values. The simple priority now must be the pursuit and total eradication of this terrorist threat.

My time in Northern Ireland taught me that terrorism depends on three elements to succeed: it needs the oxygen of publicity, it needs to show that it works and it needs safe havens in which it can hide. As this week showed, the first cannot be prevented if the act is horrific enough. The second can be avoided by determining that terrorism must never be appeased and must never be allowed to dictate the way in which lives are led. The third can be achieved only when those in whose territories the bolt holes exist are prepared to block those bolt holes and ensure that the terrorist can find no comfort or shelter or harbour from the relentless search-and-destroy pursuit that the international community will launch against them.

The successful terrorist, like the guerrilla in Mao Tse-Tung's famous dictum,

"swims like a fish in the sea of people".

The challenge to the international community is to dry up that sea to leave the terrorists exposed on the sand so that we can deal with them. The significant coalition that has already been brought together since Tuesday must challenge the countries of the world one by one to block the bolt holes and ensure that the terrorist is isolated and dealt with. Those countries that demur or refuse will condemn themselves as the harbourers of terrorists, and it must be shown that the international community will not tolerate them.

This is a war, which the United States has declared, on terrorism. The form it will take cannot yet be known. I hope that the Foreign Secretary can assure us that, before it is decided, we will be consulted. I hope that he can also confirm that our Government have told the United States that it will have our military support and assistance should that prove necessary.

It is fruitless to speculate on the scale of military action that the Americans may be planning to undertake, but I am sure that the whole House agrees that it must be proportionate, clearly and legitimately targeted and effective. I am confident that it will be.

President Bush and his national security team around him, even in the face of the provocation of the barbarity of this week, have shown the controlled and measured way in which they are considering their response. Whatever action is taken, and action there must be, they must clearly identify their objective and then pursue it. At the same time, it must be made abundantly clear that that is not directed against Islam, nor indeed against the Arab world, most of which has condemned this atrocity.

The whole House will welcome, as have I, the clear and unequivocal statements from Islamic spokesmen that what was perpetrated on Tuesday by the pilots of those planes is not martyrdom, but murder. The true voice of Islam has condemned what happened with as great a ferocity as many others, not least because this act was stripped of humanity and stripped of compassion.

Our thoughts and prayers today must be with the bereaved. Our resolve must be interwoven with that of our friend and ally, America. Our anger must be targeted on the perpetrators of this savage act of inhumanity and on their accomplices and protectors. Our will must be single-mindedly addressed to the need to bring these people to justice.

11 am

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to rise and observe a three-minute silence for the people of America.

11.3 am

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Ancram: Nothing can mitigate the sheer horror of the act that we have just commemorated by our silence, but if it has mobilised the world community finally to stand up to the terrorist and say, "Enough is enough", and if it has galvanised the family of nations into taking the action that can eradicate this evil from its midst, some good may yet come of it. I offer the Government our full support in the action that they are taking.

11.3 am

Mr. Menzies Campbell (North-East Fife): Not for the first time this week, I reflect on the fact that no matter how rich or diverse the English language it is inadequate to convey the sense of horror and frustration that so many of us feel about the events that have taken place across the Atlantic. Expressions such as "defining moment" have been thrown about—there are many of my generation for whom the defining moment appeared to be the assassination of John F. Kennedy—but I suspect that the life of the most powerful city in the most powerful country in the world will never be the same. I refer not just to the irritation of increased airline security, but to the realisation that no country, however powerful, can guarantee absolute safety for its citizens.

After the emotions of shock, sorrow and anger has come, as the Prime Minister rightly expressed, our admiration for the people of the United States. The United States is a great country with enormous economic resources, but this week we have seen that it has great resources of character as well. How else can one explain the extraordinary unified response to these events: immediate bipartisanship in the Congress, the quite extraordinary valour of the emergency services and, in towns and villages throughout the United States, public protests of determination that the people will not be intimidated?

In our occasionally patronising way, we on this side of the Atlantic sometimes raise our eyebrows at the United States' style of public affirmation of nationhood—the pledge of allegiance and the public support for the flag. The truth is that this week has demonstrated that, in time of crisis, that public expression of unity is priceless in promoting a common purpose and a determination to triumph over adversity. The collective response of the people of the United States has rightly earned the admiration of us all.

When the roll call of nations that have lost citizens is set down, it will tell us that the nations of the whole world were the indiscriminate targets of the zealots whose barbarity has brought sadness and grief to so many families. For me, and perhaps for others, the close proximity of the headquarters of the United Nations has

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

more than symbolic significance. We know that the heaviest burden will be borne by the people of the United States. Out of the collective sorrow that they suffer, and that we share, there must surely come a resolve that through collective action the perpetrators will be brought to justice and terrorism will be met in all circumstances by a robust defence of democratic values.

Let me try to put to rest the canard that somehow United States' policy in the middle east was the cause of these events. I have not always agreed with United States' policy in the middle east, and indeed I have said so in the House on many occasions, but the cause of these events was a deliberate and calculated decision to take the lives of as many as possible, allied to the willingness of desperate men to implement that decision at the cost of their own lives. The Prime Minister was correct to tell us that we must not suffer any ambiguity in our analysis of terrorism, but we should also remind ourselves that terrorism often flourishes where real or perceived injustice prevails. Communities which have an unresolved or unrecognised sense of grievance are driven sometimes to assume that terrorism is the only way of seeking resolution or recognition.

This is not an occasion to conduct a detailed analysis of policy or to try to offer long-term solutions, but let me offer two thoughts. There are Governments in the middle east today to whom these events will be a chilling reminder of the radical discontent in their own countries and who themselves have an overwhelming interest in co-operating with the efforts of the United States and others.

After the Gulf war, President Bush's father, then the President of the United States, used the quite extraordinary coalition that he had forged to achieve the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait to breathe new life into the middle east peace process. Out of that came the Madrid conference and the Oslo agreement. President Bush of today has forged a remarkable coalition of interest—a coalition of condemnation. Is it too much to hope that this unity of purpose may give an opportunity to repeat the effort to breathe life into the peace process in the middle east?

I cannot but conclude that we will more easily put down terrorism when we understand the causes of terrorism, although I am by no means so naive as to assume that if Israel and Palestine were to strike a bargain today and to begin to implement it tomorrow, that would be an end to the terrorist threat. There are some so opposed to that reconciliation that the mere fact of the reconciliation would be a further provocation towards terrorist acts.

The Prime Minister used the words "brought to justice"—I imagine that he used that formulation deliberately—but I have some sense of relief that the pressure for retaliation has abated. Retaliation is not self-defence by any legal measure with which I am familiar. The United States as our oldest ally—our strongest ally—is entitled to our support, and we have heard already of the unique invocation of article 5 of the North Atlantic treaty. But this is a sovereign House of Parliament, and this sovereign House of Parliament and this nation, even accepting the letter and the spirit of the article 5 requirement, cannot give a blank cheque for military action. NATO operates by consensus and if there is to be any NATO action and implementation of the article 5 obligation it will be only because it is supported by all the 19 members of that organisation.

I suggest that any response should be based on clear and unequivocal intelligence, that it must not be disproportionate and that it must be consistent with the principles of international law. I do not rule out for a moment the use of United Kingdom forces and materiel for the purpose of such a response if that be appropriate.

There is a risk—a risk of what is sometimes called rich man's justice—lest, by the overwhelming zeal with which we pursue the perpetrators of these terrorist acts, we give the impression that the lives of citizens of the richest countries are worth more than the lives of citizens of the poorest. In the past 10 years, we have seen in Rwanda hundreds of thousands, incalculable numbers, massacred—that is a form of terrorism—while the world looked on and the United Nations uniquely had to make a formal acknowledgement of failure. In Srebrenica, in the name of Christianity, 8,000 Muslim men and boys were massacred, while units of NATO—the most successful military alliance in history—looked on and the skies above were quiet, and empty of the aircraft that a short time before had bombed Iraq into a wasteland.

Perhaps the events in New York and in Washington are a watershed. Perhaps they reflect a new beginning. Perhaps they are a defining moment. They will be such if they achieve the apprehension, in accordance with justice, of those who were the perpetrators of the terrible acts of this week. But they will also constitute a defining moment if they make the Srebrenicas and the Rwandas much more difficult to achieve.

11.13 am

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Given the profound and unbearable nature of what has happened this week, it is not surprising that there is a great deal of debate—quite rightly—a great deal of speculation and some hesitation about what should follow next. The Government are right, therefore, to have acted so promptly and so instinctively in leading the action to internationalise and co-ordinate a calm response to the savagery that we have seen—in particular, in drawing in the Russians.

I know that there are some among my own colleagues who worry about the form that the American retaliation will take. To those who worry, I say that we will only influence America if we stand four-square behind America at this time. To the American people, I say with humility—given the grievous loss that they have experienced this week—"don't get mad, get even". The desire to meet this challenge with a forceful response is understood and it is shared. The need to do so in a way that defeats terrorism as well as punishes terrorists is paramount, so the test of the response that will be made is not so much whether it is proportionate as whether it is effective.

Britain has unique experience and qualifications to be listened to, because we have fought terrorism over many decades in Northern Ireland. The main point is that terrorism is not conventional war, demanding a conventional response. The terrorism that we are seeing now is of a most advanced, fanatical and carefully planned kind.

Mr. Mark Francois (Rayleigh): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mandelson: No, I shall continue, if I may.

That terrorism will not be countered by simple physical force. It will be defeated only by a combination of intelligence, political activity and dialogue, and

international collaboration of a quality and on a scale that we have not seen before. High-quality intelligence, painstakingly collected and applied over time, is at the heart of this effort to defeat a hidden enemy. That involves high-tech surveillance and supreme acts of human bravery. It cannot be done on the cheap. It cannot be done without a political framework in which the work of the intelligence services depends on explicit political and ministerial authorisation. It cannot be done without recruiting agents from the same communities from which the terrorist organisations draw their own membership. To fight the menace of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism, recruitment has to be directed at Muslim and Arab-speaking communities. The James Bonds of the future will not be found in the Travellers club and the Athenaeum but on the streets of Bradford and Marseilles.

As a high priority, we should be looking at how we extend intelligence co-operation. There is close UK-USA co-operation and I would not wish to see that undermined in any way. However, European partners should not fall short of their responsibilities; they cannot opt out—including the Russians. Informal co-operation already exists: the question is how we make that more effective. A new EU or multinational anti-terrorism agency would need to work within a clear structure of political accountability. It would need a political head, appointed and accountable to participating Governments. Having put that framework in place, it should have independence and the autonomy to act without constant reference back.

We have to re-examine the balance between civil liberties and the fight against terrorism. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary spoke with great sense and judgment on the radio this morning. In terrorist cases, we need to accept new extra-territorial powers for the police to make arrests outside their own country. We need a new international court, like the court established at The Hague to fight war crimes, and we need acceptance in that court of evidence gained by covert means.

Other steps that we need to take include seizing the assets of terrorists and their associates unhindered by bureaucracy. We need an international organisation to supervise that. Mr. bin Laden is a very wealthy man indeed, and he does not keep his money in an Afghan bank account.

We need, too, to enhance our own security. It is time for us to look again at the case for identity cards. We have to ensure that, with EU enlargement, we have an effective common border, with not only border checkpoints, but effective high-tech surveillance to monitor and control movements across that common border.

As well as strengthening security, we need to address the legitimate grievances of the communities from which terrorists draw their recruits, as we have done in Northern Ireland. We must renew our efforts to tackle the causes of the conflict in the middle east. The United States must re-engage in the middle east peace process as a high priority. The aspirations of both Israel and Palestinians must be recognised in the way that the Good Friday agreement serves both nationalist and Unionist traditions in Northern Ireland.

Intelligence, political dialogue and activity and international co-operation underpinned by the appropriate and timely use of force—there are no magic solutions to the terrorist challenge that we face—is the only course that we must take. However, we face a very long haul in doing so.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I inform the House that, with effect from 11.30 am, I have authorised the placing in the Library of a book of condolence in memory of those who died in the tragic events in the United States this week. The book will be available for Members and the staff of the House to sign.

11.21 am

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): All of us are still numbed by the unspeakable events that occurred in the United States. We must all agree that it is essential that we pursue the culprits and ensure that they are brought to justice. I have voted consistently against capital punishment for all the time that I have been in the House, but my convictions in that regard are now being sorely tested.

The misguided fanatics who carried out this event and who lost their own lives in the process are not the real culprits. The real culprits are the bigoted, warped, evil people who led them to believe that they were pursuing the cause of some religious objective in carrying out what they did. It is those people whom we need to seek out: they are the guilty people. They must be brought to justice and any regime that supports them must eventually be removed from power by the international community. We need to plan that process extremely carefully.

As many speakers have said, these events are not the fault of Islam. I am afraid that all major religions have suffered from the same fanatical bigotry and fundamentalism. The history of Christianity itself contains many examples of appalling behaviour in the name of Christianity. Indeed, we need only to look at Northern Ireland today to see what religious bigots can do to one another in the name of their religion. The same point applies to the Jewish faith. There are fundamentalists and bigots in Israel today, and they have delayed irreparably the cause of peace between the Jews and the Palestinians.

This action in the name of Islam threatens not just the western world but all the moderate Islamic states, and many of them are under threat from the same group of people. Egypt, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the former Soviet Islamic states are all under threat from this process and we must make common cause with those people to ensure that these fanatics do not succeed not simply in causing further mayhem in the west but in overthrowing moderate Islamic Governments wherever they exist. The interests of those Governments coincide precisely with ours.

We must therefore ensure that the problem is not seen as one between Islam and the west, but as one that should lead to a common cause between all Islam and all the western world. That must be the thrust of any action that is taken by the international community.

We must also ensure that our banking systems do not permit the financing of such activities in the future. As the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) pointed out, bin Laden has bank accounts and they are not located in Afghanistan—they are located elsewhere in the world. The international banking system has a duty to take action to prevent the transmission of funds for such evil purposes.

[Mr. John Butterfill]

We also need to consider the ways in which our present attitude towards immigration and asylum seekers may impact on this problem. We should not do anything that prevents genuine asylum seekers from coming to this country. However, we must remember that the way in which our courts and those in Australia interpret the legislation means that it is virtually impossible to exclude anybody from our borders.

Some 5,000 Afghans have come to this country in the past six months. I believe that the majority of them are fleeing, and are in genuine fear of persecution, from the evil regime that exists in Afghanistan, but we cannot rule out the real possibility that among them are terrorists who are here for a very different purpose. We need to regain control over the immigration process if we are to protect ourselves from international terrorism. It is therefore the duty of Governments here and in the European Union to review the way in which the legislation on human rights is framed, so as to make it absolutely clear that it cannot be used to allow terrorists to penetrate our shores. If we cannot reform it in that way, we should abrogate the treaty.

11.27 am

Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): This is a solemn occasion. This is a time for grieving and for showing our horror at the number of individuals whose lives were shattered when they were going peacefully and innocently about their work. It is also a time to show solidarity with the people of the United States in all the reasonable actions that they may take in response. So far, indeed, their response has been commendable. The American Government have avoided the twin temptations of a reckless swipe at an unknown enemy to placate the demands of public opinion and of yielding to what is perhaps a desire for a new isolationism.

Now is not the time to debate national missile defence, but surely that debate will be conducted in a new context. We may realise that national missile defence may be a sort of Maginot line in the sky when the real danger comes from terrorists with suitcases and not from the rogue states that are now in the sights of the United States.

I wish to make several brief reflections. First, how can we combat the terrorist threat on the operational level? My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have mentioned the links with organised crime and narco-terrorism, but I wish to point to a number of other issues while clearly wishing to retain at all times our democratic values.

The issues to examine include aviation security. I will not go into details, but it is clear that the threat was foreseeable and was foreseen. I refer the House to chapter 8 of the excellent work "Terrorism versus democracy", which was written by Professor Paul Wilkinson of St. Andrews university and published last year. One sees a precedent, for example, in the Algerian GIA—the Armed Islamic Group—and the airbus in France. We claim that our security is much better with Transec and other measures, but the danger is known; the Gore commission in the United States demonstrated that the real problem now is implementation and enforcement. There was no enforcement because of commercial considerations.

Under that heading, we must also look at the education of foreign nationals from sensitive areas in sensitive subjects. In 1993, the World Trade building bomber was educated in my city. In the recent attacks, we know that two of the bombers were educated in Hamburg; others were taught flying in Florida. Surely, we need to look at and follow the recommendation of the United States national commission, chaired by ambassador Bremner, which made relevant recommendations that, again, have been ignored. I support what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about extradition.

We need to tackle more energetically the world crisis areas that breed terrorists. Of course, it is in the middle east, broadly defined, where terrorism overflows regional boundaries. Many points of leverage can be used on both the Israelis and the Palestinians but, obviously, we need to start a new process on firm foundations. There is no magic panacea to end terrorism, but renewed strenuous efforts to increase stability in volatile areas of the world will reduce the waters where terrorists breed and swim.

Reflecting on the tidal wave of revulsion following the outrage, the United States needs to build a new coalition against terrorism. We have begun with article 5 of the NATO treaty and, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, the important decision made at the UN Security Council on Wednesday. However, the coalition will break down if the American response is deemed to be disproportionate and badly targeted and if there is a failure to consult adequately on general policy. The chances of a solution would be weakened if one stepped outside a reasonably international solution.

In a related and final reflection, there will, of course, be some form of military response which, I trust, will not be an invasion of Pakistan; we know its topography and the history of this country's involvement in the 19th century—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, I mean, of course, Afghanistan. We know about the history of the United Kingdom's 19th century involvement and the bleeding wound of the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Certainly, military firepower has a role, but it is not a long-term solution. Bin Laden and his like will not be crushed by missiles or invasion. To reduce the risk, we need a subtle combination of policies, not an unbalanced military response which, in my judgment, would lead only to more violence and more deaths; it would be a gross mistake, a betrayal of our values and wholly counter-productive.

11.33 am

Rev. Ian Paisley (North Antrim): As a leader of a parliamentary party, I regret that I did not have the opportunity to express my condolences when the other party leaders expressed their condolences about those who were done to death in these terrible atrocities. I wish to put it on the record that I have had an apology from the Speaker, which I accept, but I want to associate myself with those earlier remarks.

Great grief is never good at talking; the language of grief is not vocal. It is a tear, an anguish in which the depths of one human soul calls to the depths of another in agony. In light of what has happened, words are too weak to express how all nations feel about this moment. Coming from Northern Ireland, where ugly scars are still before us and where running wounds are still open, I find it interesting to note that republican terrorism was taking place there at the same time as the atrocities were being carried out in the United States; attempts were made to slaughter three

police officers in the city of Londonderry. It was only providential intervention that has kept us from mourning those three police officers in the House today.

The whole world has been sent a fiercely highlighted message by this terrible atrocity, which brought the New York skyline to sea level and made its rubble the cruel sepulchre of thousands of unsuspecting victims. The rulers of western democracies must learn the lesson that criminal terrorism cannot be talked away; it cannot be engaged in dialogue because it is a lie incarnate. Its priests and acolytes are unchangeable liars. A demonstration of that is that a killer in one plane knifed young children to death. I welcome the Prime Minister's words today that this form of terror knows no mercy, no pity and no boundaries. I also welcome what was said by the shadow Foreign Secretary, which was in keeping with those words.

Terrorism has become a monstrous beast, which now rages forward to torment the whole world. A new and terrible dimension has been added to the terrors of our unknown tomorrows. We met in the House after the awful atrocity in Omagh, and heard strong words and strong language. However, those who mourn their loved ones in Omagh never got action in the courts and have had to bring a private prosecution against the suspects, for which they are raising money at the moment. For the Omagh people, therefore, we did not come up to the standard, and many people will wonder whether, after all that will have been said in the House today, we will really take on the enemy and be determined to have the courage to work to take away the oxygen from it.

Numbers of victims were quoted by the leader of the SDLP in the House; he is right. The atrocity in the United States, in comparison with those suffered by the population of Northern Ireland, is very minor. One knows that from the figures. We have endured such things, on the same level and higher, day in, day out. Yesterday, in the Stormont Assembly, we were not even allowed to table an amendment to the motion before the Assembly because of the desire to get some sort of consensus. I resent that; I believe that when anything is dealt with there, there should be opportunity to consider it thoroughly from every point of view. I am glad that the House has been given the opportunity, through the recall of Parliament, to state our views. We must have a grim determination that, come what may, we will act against the terrorists so that people throughout the world do not fear what will happen on the morrow. That is a tall order and will not happen overnight, but it must be the objective. Anyone who suggests that this is a war that cannot be won takes from the very heart of determination and hope among the people of the planet. This war must be won. This war must be pursued with all the activity of energy, determination and resolution.

I resent the remarks made against President Bush. I do not believe that he ran away, and I think it disgraceful that that should be suggested.

Those of us who are under police protection, as I have been for 30 years, do not like it. We are told that there are places where we cannot go, and we have to obey that. It is not that I would not want to go to such places: I have a great argument with my protection officers, who say "As long as we are protecting you, we will tell you where you should go and where you should not go." They have to watch themselves as well.

I think that the House should salute the President of the United States, wish him well, and join others in prayers that these sores and wounds will be eased and that some day soon we shall see the shining of a better sun on this world, and the sight of a beautiful rainbow over the awful valley of tears where we are at the moment.

11.41 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I have a quiet word with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, my friend of 35 years? He spoke of turning the other cheek, but it is not quite like that. We must make up our minds about whether we are concerned with "vengeance and eradication", or with preventing such ghastly happenings from ever occurring again. I am directed towards the latter.

We must ask ourselves this: where do evil organisations recruit people who are prepared to take planes into skyscrapers? I think I know part of the answer. In 1998, with the former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, I went to Baghdad. We were invited one evening to the house of Tariq Aziz, who said rather movingly, "You may think that Saddam and I are extremists. We are as nothing to what will follow if these sanctions and this bombing continue."

The truth is that there is a generation in Iraq and, indeed, elsewhere in the middle east which—whether we like it or not; unpalatable though it may be—is growing up absolutely to loathe the United States and Britain. It is a "pool of talent" from which people can be recruited to do desperate and evil things. We must ask ourselves, as a candid friend of the United States—candid friends can, of course, be a great nuisance—to what extent the hatred of America is due to very aggressive American foreign policy.

Reference was made to Libya and Lockerbie. The Prime Minister has a letter from the Rev. John Mosey of the Lockerbie relatives, a very balanced, decent man, who says that it was American aggressive foreign policy that killed his daughter. That is a matter of record, and his opinion.

I think we must be very careful about assuming that a great many people in this country want vengeance. They want this to be prevented from ever happening again.

I have one concrete suggestion, which may be very unpalatable: I ask the Foreign Secretary to look again at the whole Iraq policy. I happen not to think—I may be wrong—that the Government of Iraq had anything to do with it. What one suspects is that there are people from all over the middle east—a very tightly knit group—who, because of what they have seen happening in Palestine and elsewhere, are prepared to go to desperate lengths. Unless we address that problem, this will happen again. I simply ask the Foreign Secretary this: for God's sake, look at 10 years of bombing of Iraq and sanctions.

11.45 am

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): The House always listens with great interest and respect to what is said by the Father of House, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and we all hold him in high and affectionate regard. We can understand why he spoke as he did, but I think—as I have said, with great respect to him—that he underestimates the anger that is felt throughout the world at this despicable series of atrocities.

I have rarely found the House more united in grief and in anger, or in resolve. This debate recalls in some respects the debate we had on a Saturday morning in April 1982, just after the Falkland Islands had been invaded. The Opposition of the day gave virtually unqualified support to the Government, and on the back of that a successful expedition to the Falklands was launched.

[Sir Patrick Cormack]

Of course it is crucial, as we give support to the Government—which we do unreservedly—for the Government to use their influence in the councils of the world to ensure that any response is measured, accurate and properly directed. We do not want to compound this appalling series of dreadful deeds by the making of more innocent orphans. The House will, I think, be united on that as well.

In the brief time that I have—and it is right for all our speeches to be restricted—I want to direct the attention of the Foreign Secretary, and that of the Secretary of State for Defence, who will respond to the debate, to one suggestion. Of all the talk of international co-operation, we can say, "So far so good"; but out of that must emerge something definite and specific.

What we need is an international convention akin to the Geneva convention. What we need is a convention to which all members of the United Nations are obliged to subscribe: a convention that says that the harbouring of terrorists and the nurturing of terrorism will never be accepted, and that nations refusing to subscribe should forgo any rights to United Nations assistance—and, indeed, to votes in the United Nations General Assembly. They should know that they would be regarded by the other nations of the world as legitimate targets should they indeed harbour terrorists.

These people, evil and motivated as they are, cannot succeed without some state in which to base themselves. I do not know whether the speculation that bin Laden is responsible is right; I do not know whether the speculation that Saddam Hussein is very involved is right. I regard both as entirely plausible theories, and it is perfectly possible that both are right. If they are, it is entirely right for those countries to feel the wrath of the international community—but it must of course be done in a measured way, and we must be as careful as possible that the innocent are not slaughtered in the process.

We must root out this cancer of terrorism from the world. It will be a long, long job. There is, as someone has said, no absolute and ultimate defence against the suicide bomber who is hell bent on mayhem and destruction; but we must make his task as difficult as possible, and our intelligence services must be as sophisticated and alert as possible. One way of ensuring that—it is only one suggestion, but it is a specific and particular thought—would be to create an international convention, as I have said, to which every member of the United Nations would be required to subscribe. It must be detailed and specific. The Geneva convention is rarely broken when it comes to the way in which almost all nations treat prisoners of war, and so on. There should be such a convention binding the nations of the world as a partial step towards overcoming and eventually eradicating this monstrous evil.

11.50 am

Mr. Mohammad Sarwar (Glasgow, Govan): It is hard to comprehend or to come to terms with the tragic and staggering death toll that has been inflicted upon the American people and those of other nations. Our hearts and our thoughts are with all those who have lost friends and family. People of all nationalities and faiths have perished in this meaningless atrocity.

I speak on behalf of my constituents, and undoubtedly on behalf of the Muslim community in this country and beyond, when I say that this barbaric and inhumane terrorist atrocity must be condemned unreservedly. We would solidly support all legitimate efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice. Whoever the culprits turn out to be, it is critical that we send a clear message that they cannot possibly claim to represent the true interests of any religious or ethnic group.

In the recent past we have seen how hysteria can be whipped up at times of tragedy and the corrosive effect that that has on society. It is for that reason that I support the Prime Minister in his clear message about the danger of stereotyping communities, particularly the Muslim community. With those words, my right hon. Friend has given comfort to people in this country and across the world. It is critical that, in giving support to any action, we do so observing the principles of justice and within the framework of international law. We must naturally give our support to our American allies, but we must counsel against unilateral action. We must avoid action that could result in the deaths of thousands of other innocent civilians, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence.

We cannot afford to isolate any of our allies in finding solutions, and in particular, if there is evidence that Osama bin Laden is responsible, our allies who recognise the Taliban Government—namely, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates—will be crucial to influencing the situation.

It is a difficult time, but I believe that it is the right time to examine more deeply our role and responsibilities in the world. We must attempt to understand why some extremists feel driven to the abhorrent madness that we have witnessed in New York and Washington. There can be no justification for this vulgar terrorist atrocity, but we cannot be blind to the plight of oppressed people who look to Europe and the USA for support.

As a former colonial power we have a special responsibility. We should use our influence with the Americans and other allies to redouble our efforts in search of a just solution to the outstanding issues in the middle east and other parts of the world. This brutal terrorist attack is profoundly contrary to the doctrine of Islam and has been strongly condemned by Muslim states, Muslim clerics and individual Muslims throughout the world. I can only reiterate that condemnation and, on behalf of all my constituents, express my hope that the international community can achieve justice for the innocent victims and their grieving families.

11.55 am

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): The Government, in their response, have followed in the courageous tradition of Clement Attlee when he put our war-weary and almost economically destitute country firmly behind America at the onset of the Korean crisis. When speaking to my many American friends I have expressed admiration as well as grief, admiration particularly for the heroes of the New York emergency services and for those, among others, who fought on the fourth plane to prevent a fourth major tragedy from taking place.

There will be two critical pillars involved in building a successful coalition to see this business through. The first will be among moderate Arab and Islamic opinion. I remember that when I was working in Bahrain a single smartly dressed guard with his bayonet fixed stood at the door of every service of mass at the church that I attended. He was the Emir's personal guarantor of religious freedom. We must carry with us the moderate Islamic and Arab world and I can think of nobody better placed to build and

solidify that coalition than Colin Powell. Central to that challenge will be convincing the Arab leaders that we in the west are as concerned about the plight of the Palestinian people as we are about the right of the Israeli state to exist in peace.

The second crucial pillar will be the relationship with Moscow. We barely said "thank you" for the generous support that the Russians gave us at the end of the Kosovo crisis in defusing what could have otherwise become a bloodthirsty war. Russia's history in Afghanistan before the fall of communism is an extremely unhappy one, and my 20-year support for an Afghan charity goes back to those evil days. That was long ago, however, and we must acknowledge President Putin's generous and immediate response to this, and thank him for it. Russia must be seen as a crucial part of the process.

I shall turn now to the military aspects. I urge the Government in the strongest and most non-partisan way to go back to our very assumptions on defence policy. I make no secret of the fact that those assumptions grew out of the views of almost the whole of the younger defence establishment; assumptions that the whole of our defence capability should be vested in an expeditionary capability, itself vital, but that we could marginalise, except on a small scale, considerations of home and civil defence.

As we look across at the United States, we see not just the courage of the New York emergency services, but their co-ordination, regular rehearsal and planning, elements so lacking here under Governments of all descriptions in recent years. In my county, as in so many others, the software and frequencies of our various emergency services are not even compatible. Our control centres cannot even talk directly to one another, let alone to the military.

There are some 2,000 national guard units and sub-units in America, representing nearly 400,000 men and women, many of which have been mobilised, while others are waiting to be mobilised. For all its problems, the American military can not only mount a huge expeditionary force and reinforce it, but it can also defend its home base with vast numbers of part-time local personnel in a range of functions, from infantrymen through to nuclear, biological and chemical specialists and engineers.

There must be an all-party reconsideration of the matter in which the excellent Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, my close friend the right hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), will no doubt play a critical role. Three years ago, he made a remarkable speech, which there is no time to quote from now, predicting this sort of problem.

We are in for a long, ugly haul. The matter will not be resolved by the pressing of a few missile buttons or the sending in of bombers. This will be a long, difficult, agonising process. The Government, my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench, and almost all hon. Members who have spoken today have started our nation on the best, most resolute and most sensible course of action.

12 noon

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I thank the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) for his kind comments. I hope that he does not think that I am patronising him in any way by congratulating him on his courage in speaking today.

We were all willing voyeurs of a catastrophe, rushing to our television sets and pinning our eyes on something quite surreal. I thought that the pictures of planes flying into the towers were computer generated. We are so used to seeing simulated death on television that I could not believe that they were real. I half expected King Kong to appear on top of one of the towers. We had to remind ourselves that a catastrophe was unfolding before our very eyes.

When the towers imploded, for every second of the few seconds that it took them to disappear downwards we knew that thousands of people had died. We were spared too-real television. Perhaps in future television cameras will be inside an aircraft about to penetrate concrete so that we can see the grief and terror in people's eyes as they face inevitable death. What we saw will be with us for ever. We all have images, positive and negative, that we will recall for ever, but with the globalisation of television the world saw, in grief or ecstasy, what was unfolding before its collective eye.

There can be few reasonable people, whatever their backgrounds, who were not filled with horror, anger and disbelief at the fallibility, stupidity and malice of fellow human beings who not only derive political happiness from participating in such an outrage but foolishly believe that their god will reward such barbarity with instant entry to some higher form of afterlife.

There must be a reaction. I am amazed that the Americans, who are a volatile people, have not demanded instant gratification for their anger. When I heard on television that very evening that bombs had apparently been heard in Kabul, I trembled at the prospect of the catastrophe becoming an even worse catastrophe. I was relieved and, in a way, surprised at the response of the United States President, a man of limited experience in international relations. He did not take to his bunker out of cowardice. He was away from the action for a while. What further catastrophe would it have been had the White House and the President been taken out simultaneously? I deprecate some of the remarks that have been made.

It is right that our Prime Minister has had almost unanimous support. The Chamber is configured to encourage an adversarial approach. It is thought not just helpful but compulsory to be adversarial, and our political culture encourages us even further, but every now and again we rise above that.

I do not attack homogeneity and consensus. I thrive on them. We rose above the heat of battle in 1939, 1940 and 1982, and in the Gulf war, the bombing of Bosnia and the Kosovo crisis. Of course there were dissenters. I support their right to dissent from the consensus.

Not everyone is grieving. Those who watched David Dimbleby's programme last night will have seen clearly the depth of anti-Americanism that exists among a minority in this country and elsewhere. I represent Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and people of many other religions. I hope that, without indulging in gesture politics, we can publicly empathise with and support the Muslims in our constituencies who are not a party to this. I shall certainly visit a mosque and explain to Muslims, who may disagree with my views, that I do not consider them a part of this crime. No cause should precipitate actions such as those that we have seen and condemned.

There will be action by the United States and others. In 1998, the Defence Committee said that an article 5 NATO action might well be activated by terrorism. We were prophetic. If NATO is informally involved, it could provide a brake on the United States. We will have a voice, if not a veto. I am satisfied that George Bush will want to do what his old man did and build up a consensual approach to resolve an enormous crisis. If the action is seen

[Mr. Bruce George]

as unilateral, it will be condemned and people will regard it as one obscenity being matched by another. The response must be proportionate and identify the perpetrators.

There is a wonderful book by a journalist about the earlier bombing of the twin towers. The investigation took a long time and ranged from Swansea to Baluchistan, but the villains were apprehended. We should not expect instant fixes. We watch too much television and think that a crime that begins in minute one can be solved by the time we get up to make the tea or the takeaway arrives. Life is not like that. The US should be cautious. When it has proved a case to its own people and to a sceptical world, it can act.

What are the lessons to be learned? Intelligence manuals will have to be rewritten. Those who are complacent about their aviation security will have to think again. I have been to the Federal Aviation Authority in Washington and seen reports of appalling security at some airports. Those who brought about the dilution of the commission headed by Al Gore will now be feeling sick, and perhaps their companies' share values will be plummeting, because they put commercial pressures before the security of their passengers.

To have one's security penetrated once in a decade is a disaster. To have two major airlines' security penetrated four times simultaneously borders on criminal negligence. However sophisticated the technology, a system is only as good as the security guard on the ground. We cannot—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst): Order. The right hon. Gentleman has had his time.

12.8 pm

Dr. Julian Lewis (New Forest, East): On Wednesday afternoon, my constituency chairman, Maureen Holding, learned that two of her cousins had almost certainly been killed in New York. They were a brother and sister. Christine Egan was 55 and had devoted her professional life to helping and caring for deprived communities in the United States and Canada. She was visiting her brother Michael Egan, who was 51.

Michael Egan phoned his wife after the impact of the plane in the tower of the World Trade Centre where he was working. He was a highly respected vice-president of an insurance company based there. He said that he hoped to be home soon. He had taken out two parties of his employees. He was just about to go back and fetch the last batch of employees, after which he hoped to return home. She never heard from him again: the building imploded shortly afterwards.

It is perhaps self-defeating and certainly pointless to talk publicly about what retaliation measures should be considered before they have been decided upon, let alone carried out. However, there has been too much concentration, especially in America, on purely technical methods of punishing aggressive groups, societies or even countries. It is not possible to wage counteraction or even counter-warfare without putting one's own armed forces and human lives at risk. That is why which measures to take will have to be the subject of careful consideration.

Matters that can be discussed publicly in advance are the measures that may be necessary to protect free and open societies against the sort of onslaught that we have seen in America and that may well be visited on the rest of us quite soon. It might not have occurred to anyone else, but I experienced a twinge of unease listening to the radio this morning, when it was stated how St. Paul's cathedral would be open to all for the memorial service at 11 o'clock; anyone could come along and join in and only a certain section would be reserved for dignitaries. I wondered what would happen if a terrorist suicide bomber chose to avail himself of such an opportunity. Such thoughts would have been dismissed as paranoid a week ago, but they cannot be dismissed as such now.

During the last great conflict in which this country was involved, various severe restrictions had to be imposed on what are known today as civil rights or human rights. I believe that serious attention will now have to be given to several measures, one of which must be the introduction, by compulsion, of national identity cards. Consideration must be given to establishing a comprehensive DNA database—not merely something to be employed when people stray into areas of illegality, but a resource that will enable the tracking of suspected terrorists from site to site, from den to den, and from safe house to the point at which they are ready to act. The Government must recognise that if an onslaught of the sort seen in America begins in this country, they might need emergency powers analogous to the internment powers used in previous conflicts.

When discussing the hijacking of aircraft, we should remember that the aircraft of one country—Israel—are never hijacked. That is in part because of greater security, but primarily because when hijacking was first attempted on Israel's aircraft the armed guards on the aircraft eliminated the hijackers on the spot. Israel's airliners are now probably the safest in which to travel. We have to have the powers to which I was delighted to hear the Foreign Secretary refer in his excellent speech today—powers to ensure that if action has to be taken against someone who is in the process of hijacking an airliner, the Government will not be sued for infringing the human rights of the would-be murderer, shot to prevent him from committing his crime.

If all that sounds draconian, it is precisely because those are the measures that open societies have to take when they are under attack.

Bob Spink (Castle Point): My hon. Friend is aware that every day several thousand of my constituents travel to work in Canary wharf and the City. Does he accept that Scotland Yard and the various security forces now have the task of ensuring that such people's environment is safe?

Dr. Lewis: They do indeed have a job to do to ensure that, but they cannot do it if their hands are tied behind their backs by legal inhibitions that would render effective counteraction impossible.

When talking about an open society, I have regard to that great work of the late Sir Karl Popper, "The Open Society and its Enemies", in which he refers to something entitled "the paradox of tolerance". It states that in a free society we must tolerate all but the intolerant, because if we tolerate the intolerant the conditions for toleration disappear and the tolerant go with them.

An act of war has been perpetrated. We must consider carefully whether the measures in response should be judged by peacetime standards or the standards that pertain when a country is fighting to preserve its life. I was fascinated to hear the Taliban in Afghanistan say categorically that bin Laden could not have been responsible. If that is not a tacit admission that it knows of the things for which he is responsible, I do not know what is.

Has anyone else noted that 24 hours before the attack in America, General Masoud, the leading freedom fighter in Afghanistan—first against the Soviets, then against the Taliban—was the victim of a suicide bomb attempt that was meticulously and skilfully planned? I do not believe that that was a coincidence. I am sure that there is a connection between that event and what followed a day later in New York.

I conclude by saying that if action is taken, it must be taken wholeheartedly and to the bitter end. We do not want another Gulf war that leaves the people responsible in power to continue to provide funds, to function and to commit evil through the medium of others.

12.17 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Kelvin): I send my condolences to the great people of the United States of America, in particular to that great city, which I know and love, New York—so great they named it twice. I also send my condolences to New York's magnificent emergency services and its much maligned mayor, Rudi Giuliani, who has proved an admirable and excellent leader of that city's response. I am sure that New York will be back, as big and magnificent as ever.

I despise Osama bin Laden, the mediaeval obscurantist savage; the difference is that I have always despised him. I despised him when weapons, money, and political and diplomatic support were being stuffed down his throat faster than he could eat it. I said in this building on the eve of the victory of those whom the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis) used to hail as holy warriors and freedom fighters that, although I might be the last man in this place prepared to say it, we were responsible for opening the gates to the barbarians and a long dark night would descend on Afghanistan. Never did I speak truer words.

I caution against use of the word "civilisation". There are many civilisations in our world. Viewed from some countries, western civilisation does not always look as benign as we see it. It would be much easier if this were truly a conflict between the forces of good and a helpfully turbaned and bearded Dr. Evil, and, if only we could ker-pow that mephistopholean genius in Action Man comic style, everything would be fine again—but it is not so. What we face is a hydra-headed phenomenon precisely because it arises from real conditions and has a real base of support.

Do not mistake the condemnation from Arab and Muslim Governments. It has arisen either from a dependent relationship with us and our friends or from the fear that if they do not say what is expected of them they will be attacked. Do not mistake that for the feeling of tens, if not hundreds, of millions of people in Arab and Muslim countries that we are responsible for monumental double standards and that we consider the lives of our own people and of our friends to have a fundamentally different order of value from the lives of those people.

The House may not wish to hear this, but I must say that I have walked in the ashes of cities under aerial attack. Buildings under aerial attack, people being crushed in falling masonry and steel or incinerated by fire from aerial attack look, sound and smell exactly the same whether they are in Beirut, the west bank, Baghdad or Manhattan.

Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Galloway: There is no time.

Arabs and Muslims believe, and they are right to believe, that we do not consider their blood as valuable as our own. Our policy over decades of our history makes that abundantly clear.

The question is: what is to be done? We are the friends of the Americans. It is no service to a friend to write a blank cheque, singing, in the manner of "White Christmas", that "we'll follow the old man wherever he wants to go, wherever he wants to go." That would not do a service to the world or to the United States of America.

In Korea, the Attlee Government played a decisive role in restraining the United States of America from using nuclear weapons against Korea and the People's Republic of China. We played a decisive role in removing from the theatre of operations General MacArthur, precisely because he was likely to move out of control.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) that the only test that matters is whether action will make matters better or worse. If a devastating attack is launched on a Muslim country, killing thousands, it will make 10,000 bin Ladens rise up in the stead of the one whose head has been cut off. I do not know what could be bombed in Afghanistan, the stone age country that we helped to create. There is nothing there. Hardly a building stands. The only thing to hit in Afghanistan is people, and every slain Afghan will be a new banner for new bin Ladens.

Millions of Afghans—5 million of them are starving today—will spill over the borders to become refugees and asylum seekers on ships that western countries will turn away at the point of guns, as the Australian navy did just a week or so ago.

I do not have time to develop all the points that I want to make, nor is this the time to raise certain subjects, although I associate myself with others who have spoken on them, at least in this regard: if 5,000 people have died in Manhattan, and even if 10,000 have died in Manhattan and Washington and Pittsburgh, that represents less than the two-monthly total of the number of children who have died in Iraq in every month of every one of 11 years. Those figures come from the United Nations, not from me or from my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The UN itself has told us that. The Muslims do not believe that we care about that. They do not believe that we care about the children being slaughtered by General Sharon, the butcher of Beirut, today as we are speaking. They do not believe that we care about them. In some respects, they are right and until this House and this country show that we care—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has used his time allocation.

12.25 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On behalf of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party, I would like to associate myself sincerely with all the speeches of condolence that we have heard today. It is right that we should be thinking of our friends in the United States in their darkest hour. It is also right, as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) said, that we should offer our support to the Prime Minister as he supports the United States in any action that might be necessary, with some caveats.

It has been said that war has been declared. Strictly speaking, that cannot be right. It was certainly an act of war—something similar—but, in legal terms, clearly it was not war. The Pearl Harbour analogy is not one that stands the test of scrutiny.

[Mr. Elfyn Llwyd]

A commentator said yesterday that we in the UK are a third party in all this. That also cannot be right. People from Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland were in those towers. We also have lost loved ones and people dear to us. This morning, the Welsh Assembly broke off for three minutes' silence as a mark of respect.

The attack was a dastardly act of huge barbarity. It is difficult to imagine anyone settling down for 18 months to plan such an action, but it has happened. The attack did not recognise national boundaries or ethnic origins. It was just a matter of killing human beings for a perverted end. That is another reason why Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party will support the Government.

We know of the invocation of article 5 by NATO. That is a further reason to give our support. Also, we have had the unanimous support of the UN Security Council; that has not always been the case, but the Council was immediately and urgently unanimous in this case. That is another reason to consider supporting action by NATO.

When the news broke, the first reaction was anger and extreme sadness. President Bush is taking his time and that must be a good thing. Kofi Annan, on the day of the disaster, called for terrorism to be fought wherever it appears and said that cool and reasoned judgment was more essential now than ever. He added that we did not know yet who was behind these acts or what objectives they hoped to achieve. He called for restraint and careful consideration of all the available evidence.

I am reassured that, today, the Prime Minister said that, together with the allies, we will have to identify the perpetrators with care and that this judgment must be based on hard evidence. I welcome that and am reassured by it.

We have heard that terrorists work across boundaries and collaborate with each other. We all know that. There is now an even greater need for collaboration via the security and intelligence services of all the democracies involved in this urgent and extremely dangerous issue.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) that we need to facilitate greater openness between the services and ensure that there is a proper exchange of information. Three or four years ago, I spent some time in Ukraine, looking at nuclear installations. I was scared when I went there. It is clear that, sooner or later, someone will buy the goods necessary to produce a nuclear weapon. That might already have happened; I know not. The situation is extremely worrying. If those weapons were to get into the hands of the madmen who perpetrated the atrocity on Monday, God knows what would happen. By coincidence, there is a programme about the matter on Saturday evening on the fourth channel in Wales.

I was pleased to hear it said that those who harbour terrorists will be subject to the same wrath as those who perpetrate the crimes. Without those who harbour them, the terrorists would be unable to carry out their dastardly deeds. The response will have to be measured and careful. We do not want to go down the old "eye for an eye", lex talionis route. That would mean several thousand innocent people being killed for no reason. I believe that it was Mahatma Gandhi who said that the problem with an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is that we would soon end up with a blind, toothless world.

I therefore hope and pray that we will review extradition laws and establish an international criminal court. I have long been a great supporter of such a court, which is highly necessary. People must know that, whatever acts they commit, they will be caught and brought to the bar of international justice. However, I acknowledge that that would not have stopped the suicide bombers, and I endorse the call by the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) for an international convention under the UN, to which countries would be obliged to sign up. That would an excellent step forward and is an excellent idea worthy of further consideration.

I urge the Prime Minister, in his discussions with President Bush and our NATO allies, to keep foremost in his mind the need to avoid what is euphemistically known as collateral damage. We dare not emulate what happened in New York, even with the best intentions. I hope that, whatever strike is considered necessary, it will be a strategic, tactical strike on those who perpetrated such awful deeds, and that it will be limited to such damage.

12.32 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I first heard of the events in New York moments after they began to happen, as a result of a call on a mobile phone from a person in Leeds who had a contact in one of the towers, who described the events as a horror movie unfolding in real life. If that was not shocking enough, the events struck home for me because my daughter was travelling in America and was due to visit New York. I did not know where she was, but mercifully, she was miles away.

I mention that because I feel that as a result of the events of the past week, our globe is smaller, more interconnected and more vulnerable than we realised. On this day of reflection, we should reflect on that fact. Yes, the atrocity is not just against America. It is a crime against humanity. All of us and our families are touched by it and are threatened by acts of terror. As the tragic evidence emerges, many of our friends, neighbours and constituents will be suffering with American families that will also be scarred for generations to come by the loss of innocent ones.

As others have said, we should not underestimate the resources, the organisation, the professionalism and the personal commitment of those who undertake acts of terror. I agree that we need more international action at the highest levels—international co-operation in intelligence and extradition to fight the common enemy, terrorism. Nevertheless, our policies should be derived from a desire for fear and anger to be replaced by reason and argument, based on a passionate commitment to justice and peace for everyone throughout the world.

Others have spoken about the fact that the House last met in such circumstances in connection with the Omagh bombing. As one with family connections going back 25 years in Northern Ireland, I know of the fear and terror there, as do many others in the House, and of the need for security and vigilance. In the light of the remarks of other Members, I must say that the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and of others in the House and elsewhere to establish and take forward the peace process in Northern Ireland have been a tremendous success.

It is a great achievement to have dragged the situation back from violence to word-based politics and it must not be underestimated, despite the difficulties and the long-term need for further action there. There is a long way to go, but clinging on to dialogue has resulted in families in Northern Ireland suffering fewer deaths and maimings in recent years. We should reflect on that in these circumstances.

We must work internationally to outlaw and drive out terrorism, but we must not neglect or underplay the need for everyone to promote dialogue to tackle the conflicts in our world. Combating international terrorism in the light of this week's atrocities should also lead to the redoubling of efforts to reduce tensions, tackle conflicts and make serious efforts at talks where Christians and Muslims rage against each other, whether in the middle east, the Balkans, Chechnya, Kashmir, Iran, Iraq or Indonesia.

We must try constantly and consistently to promote dialogue and reconciliation—that is more imperative now, not less—and we must not leave tackling terrorism and conflict resolution on the back burner. Unless those go together, there is a risk that existing conflicts will be intensified and that more dragon's teeth of violence will be sown rather than terrorists being isolated from their current and potential supporters. There is a genuine danger that unresolved conflicts will be driven under the surface for generations to come and that we will alienate even some within our own society, thereby increasing tension, fear and conflict.

I mention that because this week, like others, I met representatives from the Muslim community in my neighbourhood. They were keen to stress that it too feels anger and sorrow about what happened. It is encouraging that others have spoken out to say that Islam, the Muslim religion, is not to blame, but it is also important that we go further to deepen our understanding of the traditions and religions of others in our own society and internationally.

Interestingly, some younger Muslims said to me, "If as a politician you are committed to word-based politics, encourage all politicians and commentators to be most careful in the words that they choose and use to describe the realities we face now." Why? Because some of our language can be not only careless, but costly, thereby causing damage and isolation and deepening existing conflicts.

I make two practical proposals for the longer term of politics nationally and internationally. First, the last Act of the last Parliament passed into law our affirmation of support for the International Criminal Court. That court could be a means to ensure that there is no hiding place for the perpetrators of crimes against humanity and genocide. Our Government campaigned for it; we need to champion it as a new instrument of international means to outlaw acts of terrorism.

Secondly, on this day of international reflection and of inter-faith prayer in St. Paul's, can we do more to encourage dialogue between the world religions and ethical traditions so as to undermine some causes of conflict in our globe? I am reminded of a remark by the French moral philosopher Simone Weil, who died in the French resistance to fascism:

> "Where there is no room for thought, there is no room either for justice or prudence."

I recommend that others go to the Library and read her essay, "The 'Iliad', Poem of Might", which suggests:

> "The diversity of the limitations to which men are subject creates the illusion that there are different species among them which cannot communicate with one another. Only he who knows the empire of might and knows how not to respect it is capable of love and justice."

12.40 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip–Northwood): We have a duty to express on behalf of our constituents our very personal sense of sorrow, shock and outrage at the aerial terrorism that has hit the United States of America. As the representative of an outer London constituency, I feel that my constituents, who daily get on the train to go to inner London to work in the financial centres of the City, or go to Heathrow airport to work as flight crew or security personnel or to fly about their business around the world, have in a sense been replicated by the very many victims of the atrocities which we are commemorating and debating.

I do not believe that my constituents will feel in any sense let down by our proceedings. On the contrary, the Foreign Secretary's speech was to the point, constructive and wise, and the speech of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition was a formidable expression of his clarity of mind and determination in a difficult baptism of fire.

Like so many in this country, my constituents who work at Heathrow airport depend for their livelihood on air transport. We have seen how vulnerable air transport has become—in my opinion, somewhat unnecessarily so. A range of practical measures can and no doubt will be taken, and I trust that they will be taken quickly. First, there is no need for hand luggage to be taken into cabins. Secondly, as my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis) pointed out, flight attendants should be trained not only to be courteous but to be capable of dealing with in-flight emergencies and crises using appropriate methods, although I am not sure that firearms would be appropriate in aircraft. That could be done relatively easily. There must be a much more active process of scrutiny and security clearance of all those who work as baggage handlers, ground crew, engineers and security personnel.

This scrutiny process must also be considered in a national context. Our constituents rightly demand that we control our borders effectively. They do not believe it to be the case at present. With our European partners, we should at the very least ensure that the Dublin convention on the influx of refugees is made to work properly so that would-be refugees or people posing as refugees have their applications processed properly at the first EU country at which they arrive.

We need a second line of defence, do we not? We need effective border controls of our own. We still do not have those, and the scenes on our television screens of events in the channel tunnel for many weeks past are evidence of that fact. Thirdly, we need to know that those who are in our country are people with whom we can feel at ease and who pose no security threat to us. My hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) gave us wise advice: the need for identity cards is manifest, and the measure should be implemented as a matter of national urgency. Furthermore, those who are proved to be illegal immigrants should be returned to their country of origin. There is no sense in having people in this country who have not gone through our processes of scrutiny and immigration control, which are instituted for the protection of our citizens.

Those are basic matters, but if the worst comes to the worst—as the representative of a London constituency, I can, like all of us, imagine a variety of hideous targets, such as Canary wharf and elsewhere—we need, as my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) so sensibly pointed out, the reintroduction of proper civil defence. In my borough of Hillingdon, the civic centre has been turned into a reception centre for stranded passengers from Heathrow airport. Camp beds have been put in the corridors and elsewhere to accommodate people who

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

wanted to go home. Those resources are part of our civil defence preparations, but they are not effectively co-ordinated nationwide, or even throughout London.

We also need to know that our armed forces have the powers to act in support of the civil power. My hon. Friend cited the example of the national guard which has been on the streets of New York and, I imagine, in Washington, too, helping with the emergency work in the aftermath of those hideous terrorist atrocities. Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether the Territorial Army, the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force could immediately be called up to fulfil just such operations?

In conclusion, in looking at the international dimensions of the response, let us always act together with our friends overseas. When I was in south America, I read—with shock, but not surprise—that three members of Sinn Fein had been apprehended at Bogota airport on their return from a part of Colombia that is under the control of revolutionary forces—an armed band of guerrillas who have caused great loss of life in that country. The courts have yet to decide whether their activities were illegal, but we all know that the drugs trade finances the activities of the FARC in Colombia and of the terrorists who plague Pakistan and elsewhere in the middle east—originating in that case from Afghanistan. In the west, we need to impose the strictest measures on drug abuse, to try to eliminate the trade in western Europe and in the United States. It is no good merely eliminating the crops in countries where there are few alternative sources of livelihood for the peasantry, we have to eliminate the problem here. In our response, we have to be precise; we have to be intelligent and we have to be imaginative. The terrorists always want to be one step ahead. In our response, the very last thing we wish is to provoke a jihad against the west.

12.48 pm

Jean Corston (Bristol, East): First, I thank Mr. Speaker for allowing Parliament to reconvene within three days of the indiscriminate genocide in the United States, to enable us to give public voice to the disgust, revulsion and bewilderment that we all feel. Indeed, the sense of the vulnerability of human life has spread far, far beyond the bounds of Manhattan, Pittsburgh and Washington. I know of small children in south London who have been frightened to go outside during the past few days and who have been terrified at the sight of an aeroplane. That reinforces some of the things that have been said by hon. Members today about the way in which our globe has shrunk. Of course, thousands of personal tragedies are represented—evidenced by mobile phone messages left for loved ones and in personal stories of survival, heroism and death.

We are, however, on a journey without maps now. We, of all countries, have had experience of terrorism, but this is terrorism on a scale that we have never had to contemplate. It represents an attack on the international community.

Much has been made of the fact that the terrorist attack in New York is likely to have caused more British casualties than has any terrorist attack in the United Kingdom. The attack did not take place on British soil, and as it was an attack on the international community, the response must be international. Therefore I was gratified to hear the Prime Minister refer to the need to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. The emphasis on justice and on the need for evidence and better intelligence is crucial if we are to ensure that we do not just recruit more people to a cause that we do not understand and which disgusts us.

It is also important to have an international response because we know that there is no point in indulging in behaviour or sanctioning action that reinforces the notion that might is right. We know that that does not work.

I echo the words of Robert McNamara, the former president of the World Bank and United States Defence Secretary under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Earlier in the week, Mr. McNamara said that we must act internationally, support the United States and ensure that we do not push it further into isolationism.

I also wish to question the language that we have all used to describe the people responsible for these terrible crimes. To preface descriptions of them with the word "Islamic" is very mistaken. The debate is on "International Terrorism", and that is what we are talking about. To preface the words terrorist or fundamentalist with the word "Islamic" is as mistaken as describing the holocaust as "Christian" genocide or what happens in other parts of the world as "Jewish" fundamentalism. Terrorism is criminal, international and conspiratorial by nature. We have to deal with it in those terms.

Using the word "Islamic" in the way that I have described stigmatises people who follow a religion whose basic tenets are those of peace. They recognise that an attack on an innocent person is a crime in itself and they feel the revulsion that we all feel. We must be careful about the language that we use because of the offence that it might cause.

I represent a multicultural constituency with a large Muslim population, and the people in the Muslim community in Bristol, East have been just as appalled as anyone else. They feel their Britishness just as strongly as many of us and they have been horrified at what has happened. I urge everyone to think carefully about how we describe these people whose deeds were unimaginably terrible.

We send our condolences and sympathy to the people of the United States who understandably thought that, living as they do in a vast country surrounded by ocean, such a thing would never happen to them. We sympathise with their grief, bewilderment and the sense of loss that they must feel. The British people are no stranger to civilian casualties and offer their deepest sympathy to the people of the United States.

12.53 pm

Mr. Crispin Blunt (Reigate): When there is a consensus across the House, it behoves us to listen very carefully to the voices of dissent. Therefore I listened carefully to the Father of the House and to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway), and it is necessary for those of us who represent the consensus to have answers to the points that they raise and to the questions that they ask.

The Father of the House and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin may have given a cogent explanation of why these events happened so that we are able to understand the motivation of those who flew the aircraft on the suicide missions. However, the causes do not and cannot ever excuse the atrocity that has taken place. The fact is, the United States and, by extension, its allies in the liberal democracies, now find themselves in a state of war

against these people, who have been in a state of war against us for a considerable period. Now, however, on our part, our conflict with them is overt.

Mr. Robert Marshall-Andrews (Medway): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the use of the term "the vernacular of warfare", which we have heard increasingly, endows those organisations with the status that they seek?

Mr. Blunt: The hon. Gentleman must understand that the organisation that is almost certainly responsible for the atrocities on Tuesday is already extremely widespread and, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin made clear, well supported throughout the Muslim world. There is an enemy for us to fight. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin and the Father of the House made a case for magnanimity in victory, but first we need victory.

I commend to Members the 1 August 2001 edition of *Jane's Intelligence Review* for an understanding of the enemy. The United States has already named Osama bin Laden as the man chiefly believed to be responsible, and *Jane's Intelligence Review* gives a good summary of his organisation. There should be sympathy and understanding for the view of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin that the cause and roots of the matter lie in the western assistance given to intelligence agencies in Pakistan and organisations run by Osama bin Laden in the 1980s, when we supported the Mujaheddin fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. Bin Laden continued his operations in Afghanistan in support of the Taliban in the 1990s. His organisation clearly had the means, the opportunity and, of course, the motive to carry out the atrocity in Tuesday. In my judgment, it is clear that he and his organisation are almost certainly responsible for those acts. For the Taliban Government to suggest that Osama bin Laden could not have been responsible because he could not have taught the people concerned to fly is a demonstration of their complicity in his actions.

In the time remaining I want to focus on one country with which Britain has close links and which is central to any action taken against that organisation. Afghanistan's neighbour, Pakistan, the decision that its Government now take and the assistance that they will, or will not, give the United States, our allies and us in taking on that organisation will be central to the success of our operation. Pakistan is in the most appalling state; it is a military dictatorship at the moment under General Musharraf because of the failure of its own democratic politics; it is a byword for corruption in the world, it and Nigeria being, in the estimation of the Foreign Office, the two most corrupt countries in the world. When I visited Pakistan with a previous Foreign Secretary, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Benazir Bhutto had just appointed her husband Minister for Investment, which was regarded as a sick joke by Pakistanis. One in 240 people in Pakistan pays tax; the previous Prime Minister, Nawar Sharif, is reported to owe $25 million in unpaid taxes. Such people are the country's leaders; endemic corruption and the virtual failure of civil society led to the military coup.

That is the desperate situation in which Pakistan finds itself. In the west, those of us with military experience tend to look to the military to rescue the situation, but we must understand that the military in Pakistan is not the Sandhurst-educated Indian army that was inherited in 1947; it is a very different institution. The Pakistan army, which currently runs the country, is split. There are those who support the Taliban; the inter-services intelligence agency has been responsible for supporting terrorism in Kashmir, and has organised support for the Taliban in Afghanistan. There is a clear overlap between those agencies and the recruiting of young Pakistanis to the religious schools. They then go to the military training camps in Afghanistan, which have provided many of the most zealous and determined fighters for the Taliban inside Afghanistan. There is a clear overlap with the activities that Osama bin Laden's organisation has been carrying out both in Afghanistan and around the world.

Pakistan now faces an immensely difficult decision. That is true of its leader in particular. I say to the Government that if we can secure the wholehearted co-operation of Pakistan and its intelligence agencies in this endeavour, we shall find a route by which to convey our human intelligence—referred to by the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson)—to the organisations that are our enemies in this fight. Only when we have destroyed the effectiveness of the organisation that carried out the atrocity of 11 September can we exercise magnanimity in ensuring that we remove, in future, the causes that have led people to behave in such an appalling way.

1.1 pm

Mr. Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr): On Tuesday evening, I sat with my family in my home in Birmingham, watching television with increasing horror and revulsion as the pictures from New York and Washington were repeatedly shown. We watched the images of an airliner filled with passengers smashing into the World Trade Centre; we watched the buildings explode and collapse. We watched terrified New Yorkers staring at the sky with horror and disbelief, matched only by their sense of helplessness. We sat there, as a family, sharing the grief that most people in the United States and most people in Britain were feeling.

Like many members of our extended family and members of our community who were watching television that evening, we were all saddened and grief-stricken by what had taken place. We were no different from any other family in Britain: we were all the same, grieving over a great loss of life—the lives of innocent women and children on those aeroplanes, and of innocent workers who had gone to those offices to work and who had been put in a situation of which they had no knowledge. There was no rhyme or reason to their taking part in any of the so-called wars that these people purported to be fighting.

Those workers were not players in this horrific act of terrorism; they were doing their day-to-day jobs. They were doing the things that they did normally, in their normal lives. They were communicating according to the normal process. Thousands of innocent lives were lost. Families were ripped apart. The feelings that I have described remain, but they are matched by determination to find the monsters who were responsible for this outrageous act and to punish them.

People look at me and ask what my religion is. It is not the religion of the people who carried out that act. My religion is the religion that believes in peace and harmony. Above all, I am British—and, in fact, a Brummie, having been brought up in Birmingham and having lived there. Birmingham faced similar problems in 1974, when a building there was bombed by the IRA. Councillor John

[Mr. Khalid Mahmood]

O'Keefe, a prominent member of the Sparkbrook community, was focused on by the rest of the community because he was Irish. It was not because he had any links with the IRA or anybody else. He had settled in Birmingham and wanted to play a part in society there, but he was picked on because of his Irish heritage.

I grew up, went to school and did my engineering in Birmingham. It is also where I joined the Labour party. I could go to school and to my place of worship without feeling different from the rest of the community. I believed that our nation's integration and cultural diversity was what we wanted. It is what this country is. Those are our strengths and I do not want to see them broken down by those who purport to be Muslims. Such people cannot claim that any doctrine they follow is a religion of God. They are acting for their own ends, not for those of any community that they seek to represent.

We must look at the issues that have been raised by the actions of such people and how to address them. Hon. Members have talked about the national co-operation that will be necessary to root out those people. People like me have to look at our communities and at how to provide a sound base for all who live in our constituencies. We can achieve that and move forward only if we have respect for each other and are not taken in by the doctrines of evil offered by any side.

It was not long ago that people in the north of the country were trying to divide the community on the basis of skin colour and religion. Those very people will now have another opportunity to carry out such activities. It has already started in Birmingham. I was at a radio station yesterday morning when I learned that such people were ringing up mosques and other institutions leaving abusive messages and putting excrement through doors. I spoke to a member of the Sikh council. He is not a Muslim but ignorant people do not recognise the difference. They lump everybody together. The sad thing is that everybody will be lumped together in a senseless approach to this situation.

We must be aware of the media's role. I would not normally say this, but I must congratulate *The Sun* on its approach today and on its editorial. I hope that the rest of the media will follow suit and not further ignite the tensions that have been created in our community. We can do without that. We are here to live together. We should grieve together at the great loss that has affected all our communities.

1.9 pm

Mr. David Heath (Somerton and Frome): I was one of a group of hon. Members who were in Washington DC on Tuesday morning. In fact, we were in the Capitol building when the events took place. It was a perfect morning in Washington and we all remarked on the cloudless blue sky, but that blue sky was perhaps one of the triggers for the day's events.

We were in the old Senate building, the cradle of American democracy, when police officers ran in screaming and shouting, "Get out, get out." We realised that something serious was happening. We sprinted out of the building and looked behind us to see smoke rising from the Pentagon, across the Potomac river.

We were extremely well looked after by members of the American State Department and others. We were close to an event of enormous significance, but that does not make us heroes; the heroes were the firefighters and police officers in New York and the people on board the plane that crashed in Somerset county, Pennsylvania, who appear to have stopped the plane reaching its intended target, which was us in Washington DC.

Like every other person in Washington that morning, we were stunned and scared by the death that seemed to be arriving from the sky. We also shared the great astonishment that a crime of such proportions could take place in mainland America. We could only agree with many American commentators that day who echoed the words of President Roosevelt after Pearl Harbour—that this was a day that will live in infamy. It was a shocking experience.

Although Americans in Washington and, apparently, New York went about their business with a calmness that was extraordinary under the circumstances, we shared their deep shock. I hope that we also shared in the unity that they expressed immediately afterwards. The American people have a great ability to come together at times of trauma, and we saw that demonstrated in the debate in Congress when representatives from every part of the United States—from California to Maine, from Washington state to Florida and from American Samoa and Hawaii—all said the same thing: "We are Americans. We believe in the principles that made our country and we shall not be deflected from those principles by these events."

The shock turned to outrage and anger that such a crime could have been committed. Such anger is understandable. We need to understand the anger felt by many people in the United States and the loss of innocence. America is not the safe place that they had always imagined it to be.

We watched the television and read the newspapers—I read the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times*—and looked at the long list of people who had lost their lives and the circumstances in which they had started their day. They were the ordinary, mundane stories of people who had caught planes or gone to work in New York or the Pentagon and were then no longer there. They included people from all walks of life and professions and of all ages, including a child who until that morning had never been on an aeroplane and now will never do so again. It was only then that the enormity of the crime began to hit home. As we watched the television, a litany of names was scrolling across the bottom of the screen. Many of those people will have been our constituents and many British people will be deeply affected by the tragedy.

It may be a cliché but it is desperately important to say that one of the casualties of those events should not be freedom and openness in our society. Of course we need to consider our security procedures and to put the apparatus in place to guard as well as we may against such events happening again, but in that process let us not lose the freedoms that make the liberal democracies what they are.

I do not believe that there should be a knee-jerk change in foreign policy, even though there are foreign policy areas on which I profoundly disagree with the American Government, and indeed our own. Any change that we make should be a response to the inequities of the world situation, and not to the action taken by some lunatics on Tuesday.

Many people have referred to this as an act of war, and indeed it has the characteristics of an act of war—that is how it felt when we were in Washington—but it was not: it was a massive crime that killed innumerable people. We cannot imagine how many died, but I suspect that it may be as if every man, woman and child in my town of Frome

had been killed overnight—as if they had simply been obliterated. That brings home to me the scale of the outrage.

I was, frankly, surprised by the maturity of the approach taken by Senators and Congressmen immediately after the incidents. I had expected their anger to give rise to calls for immediate retribution, which would have been understandable, but we heard mature reflection from the people we talked to: they realised that it is difficult to identify the culprits and frame an appropriate response. We talk about a proportionate response, but what on earth could be proportionate to what was perpetrated? It is most important to concern ourselves with justice, which is the prerogative of the free nations.

We no longer have fortress America or fortress Europe. We must deal with this as an international community. We must bring in the Russians, with whom, ironically, we now have common cause in facing a common foe. We must share intelligence and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord): Order. The hon. Gentleman's time is up.

1.17 pm

Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Many of us who listened to the firm resolve of the Prime Minister will also have reflected on the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway). Many of us hope that their sentiments are compatible. We should reflect soberly on the views that my hon. Friend gave with great candour.

Following our brief period of pause and prayer earlier today, I was reminded of the fact that, about 60 years ago, Wendell Willkie brought a letter from President Roosevelt to Winston Churchill containing the words of Longfellow, which also seem appropriate today:

" . . . sail on, O Ship of State!

Sail on, O Union, strong and great!

Humanity with all its fears,

With all the hopes of future years,

Is hanging breathless on thy fate!"

We are at a sensitive stage, when miscalculations or over-reactions could cause us all immense peril. We need strong reflection before any action is taken. I welcome the invoking of article 5 of the NATO treaty, in which it is implicit that there is some form of co-decision making, not only politically but militarily too. I hope that the Defence Secretary or the Prime Minister will give us some assurance that our American friends recognise that there is a need for such co-decision making. That will help greatly to instil confidence in hon. Members and beef up the resolve that we already have.

I hope that the Defence Secretary will assure us that overflying of central London will not be resumed. Many hon. Members have long considered it crazy that successive Governments have allowed overflying of London, almost uniquely among the capitals of western Europe. There was always the danger of major technical failure in or collision between aircraft having catastrophic consequences. I hope that the Government here will not bend to the same airline industry that prevailed on the United States Government not to do the right thing in terms of domestic air travel safety.

In addition, we should put on ice a decision on terminal 5, because questions of airspace and limited airspace capacity are implicit in that issue. Hon. Members might not like my saying that, but it does not matter how many seats at fundraising dinners the airline industry buys—those are the facts. The Secretary of State shakes his head—he has done that to me in the past and then had to retract his comments—but the decision on terminal 5 is inextricably bound up with issues of airspace, air capacity and safety.

I want the Government to consider the inquiry being conducted by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions into the policing of our ports. Most sensible countries have a dedicated ports police force, but only a few ports in this country's massive industry—including my local port of Tilbury, and Felixstowe, Tees and the port of Liverpool—have their own police force. A dedicated police force in all our ports would complement our immigration services, Customs and Excise and Home Office police forces. I hope that no decision will be made on that inquiry until this matter has been considered, especially in the light of the growing terrorist threat.

It strikes me that we and our American friends are torn between the need for firm resolve that was reflected in John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech, in which he said,

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty. This much we pledge—and more",

and the sentiments expressed by Abraham Lincoln in his second inaugural speech, in which he said

"let us . . . finish the work we are in: to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan; to do all which may achieve . . . a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

Those two sentiments—that resolve and the compassion that seeks to heal wounds and differences—must be our guiding lights. We must find that difficult pass between those two legitimate ambitions.

In the coming weeks, it will be the duty of the House of Commons to monitor, scrutinise, encourage and sometimes criticise the stewardship of affairs during this terrible crisis. We must carry out that duty with resolve, if necessary by returning sooner than we planned.

1.23 pm

Mr. George Osborne (Tatton): We have heard some powerful speeches today, but I should like to single out the speech by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Mahmood) as especially powerful. He reminded us all that the acts of terror committed in the name of Islam have absolutely nothing to do with Islam.

I should like to quote an e-mail that I received from a good friend who lives in New York and whose husband works for Morgan Stanley. It is believed that the bank has lost 500 employees, but last night I learned that my friend's husband was alive. She writes:

"The worst thing about New York today is the distorted Manhattan skyline. There is midtown, a jagged crest of tall buildings, and then, where downtown used to be, an enormous cloud of yellow smoke.

There are tens of emergency vehicles lining the street, and groups of green-clad surgeons standing about—waiting and waiting for survivors who don't come. The area is strangely quiet although the grief is so loud you can hardly hold up your head.

When you walk down the street you can hear the sound of radios and televisions all saying the same thing. But one TV station has given over its airtime to the relatives and friends who are desperately seeking news. Every one is different, and everyone sounds the same. I can't tell you how sad it is to be here."

[Mr. George Osborne]

It is sad, too, to be here today talking about the worst act of terrorism that the world and, in particular, the United States have ever seen. It is also the worst act of terrorism to be perpetrated against our country. It seems almost indecent to talk about the consequences of that act of terror and the lessons to be learned while thousands of bodies remain buried and people may be alive under the rubble, but we owe a duty to those people who have lost their lives to do that thinking and to learn the lessons.

I have some brief observations to make about the new phenomenon of mass terrorism that is perpetrated by fanatical suicide bombers whose capacity for killing and destruction is far beyond anything that we have seen even in this country. First, on airlines and airport security, my constituency takes in part of Manchester airport. I know from my constituents that one of the great unspoken but widely held fears of all people who live around airports is of a hijacking, an accident or an incident like the one that occurred this week.

I flew out of Boston's Logan airport the night before the two planes were hijacked. My wife and I actually remarked to each other as we went through security how lax it was. I was able to push a metal trolley through the metal detector and no one bothered to check me even though it went off. There are clearly lessons for the Americans to learn about security at their airports, but we must learn lessons too. We have much tighter security at, for example, Manchester airport, but security on board aeroplanes is also important. I was interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis) said. Gone perhaps for ever are the days when cockpits are open and little children are led up to the flight deck as I was as a child. That is sad and is another infringement of our freedom, but it is a price that we have to pay.

Secondly, we must consider how we support President George Bush. I welcome everything that the Prime Minister said about working with the new President. He and his Administration face a test that is perhaps as great as any faced by an American Government. I have had the privilege of meeting George Bush a couple of times, both in Texas when he was the governor and during his recent visit to London as President. I shall be blunt: he is not the fool, the redneck or the coward that some people imply. He is an intelligent and thoughtful politician and is surrounded by some of the wisest advisers ever to be assembled in an American Administration. It is difficult for us and even the Government to imagine the awesome responsibility and expectation that rest on his shoulders today. President Bush must feel very lonely in the Oval Office. We all owe a duty to support him. We must show him that he does not act alone and that he has the full support of Britain in his deeds and actions.

My third and final point relates to the regimes that harbour evil killers. I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway). It is often said that terrorists are cowards, but the regimes that support them are also cowards. They are run by Governments who never have the courage to face general elections, to be open with their people or to try to win their arguments with words instead of bullets. Like all cowards, they often back down when their bluff is called. I am not an expert in international terrorism, but Libya's bluff was called when Tripoli was bombed. It stopped its overt support of terrorism and even handed over the Lockerbie bombers. Syria's bluff was called when it tried to bomb the El Al jet. If the reports are correct, the Taliban Government's bluff may also have been called and they may have taken action against bin Laden.

We can act against terrorists as we act against all cowards. We too often excuse the behaviour of evil regimes as a product of a different culture. We are told that we should not judge Iraqi attitudes towards human rights by our own western standards. We are told that we should not judge Taliban fundamentalists by Judaeo-Christian ethics. I say that murder is murder in any culture. Torture is torture in any language. We have an opportunity to bring terrorists and the regimes that harbour them to account, and we should take that chance.

1.30 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): As the House has heard, the United Kingdom section of the British-American parliamentary group was on Capitol Hill in Washington when the Pentagon was attacked at 9.30 am United States time and 2.30 pm British time. I was a member of the delegation, as were the hon. Members for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison), for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath), for Cheadle (Patsy Calton) and for Upminster (Angela Watkinson), and my hon. Friends the Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Lyons) and for Midlothian (David Hamilton).

When we were told to run, we ran, along with thousands of others. We did not need simulation, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) suggested, to let us know that what was happening was real. We could see the Pentagon burning as we ran. I thank the Royal Air Force for allowing us to fly home on a transport plane yesterday evening. We flew over New York—the only plane allowed to do so yesterday, I believe—and could see the centre of that great city burning. We did not need a simulation to see the destruction. Anyone who has seen Manhattan burning will know that it is a symbol of terror and of a challenge to free and democratic society.

The delegation put out a statement on behalf of the all-party group, which would, I am sure, be endorsed by all Back-Bench Members, many of whom will not be called to speak. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to put a few points from it on the record.

We expressed our deepest sympathy for the American people at this time of tragedy and sent heartfelt condolences to the families, friends and communities who have lost loved ones. We unreservedly condemned those cowardly acts of terror against innocent people. The delegation stood united behind the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in offering solidarity and help in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

On a personal level, the delegation thanked the State Department officials who had shown such concern for our safety and welfare when we found ourselves in the Capitol during the attack on the Pentagon. We were impressed by the bravery and resolve of the American people and their representatives and Government. We are certain that they will prevail.

Two officials, Deborah Underhill and Paul Engelstad, have been involved in government for a long time, but even as they took telephone calls from friends and colleagues in the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre, their concern was for our safety. They went so far as to take us out of the city in the evening and cook us a meal.

We met elected representatives on Wednesday and were invited to Congress to hear the debate. We met Senator White, and Congressman Jim McDermott of Seattle. I was impressed by the balanced view that they took of what should happen now in the international policy of the United States. Jim McDermott is a noted liberal within the Democratic party and he was not far off in an analysis that impressed us all.

I was impressed, too, by a woman member of Congress from New York who had lost her own husband to a terrorist who attacked people in the New York subway three years ago. She spoke with great poise and determination.

We shared, as would anyone who had been there, the shock of the American people. We felt their bewilderment. The last time someone attacked a building in the capital city with such ferocity, it was the British during the war of independence, who burned down the White House. That was much on people's minds.

We heard and understood their anger. On that first day after the deed, there was a lot of anger against the perpetrators. We tried to reach out to people, to help in any way that we could with their pain and to console those whom we were with. They were clearly in confusion as they tried to find friends or to come to terms with what was happening while still looking after us.

The House must not underestimate the effect of the statements made by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, which were shown repeatedly on United States television. America sees us not just as an ally and a part of America's foreign policy baggage. Americans look to us as friends and brothers, sisters and cousins. In a sense, we are the people from whom they feel they came. I hope that we will continue to repeat the assurances that we will stand by them. We must show support and solidarity, but also offer wise counsel.

I echo the Congressman who bravely said in the debate in Congress that there must be fairness for all in the middle east. These terrible acts must not blind people to the need for justice for all sides. Justice must not be swept aside by the fear of accusations of appeasement. I hope that that will guide our policy and our advice from our Government and our representatives to our American friends, who must be aware—as was pointed out to me by a distinguished former Member of this House—of the fragility of Egypt, Algeria, Syria and Jordan as well as the problems in Iran, Libya and Iraq.

There is merit in the analysis of the right hon. and learned Member for North–East Fife (Mr. Campbell), and I hope that the Government will consider the comments made by the Father of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway). I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin, had he the time, would have taken longer to analyse, and empathise with, the suffering of the people of America and those who wish to see democracy and justice throughout the world. His comments were pertinent and relevant and should be considered.

I urge the implementation of a fair peace in Palestine and Israel—where I have been many times since the first intifada in 1988—based upon UN resolutions. It would be a symbol of democratic conflict resolution. That would be a negation of terrorism and a triumph of good international corporate governance. I urge our Government to pursue that option.

1.36 pm

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne), I thank the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Mahmood) for his conciliatory and wise words and, in particular, his description of these awful acts in the United States as evil. It is important for all Muslims to speak out and call these acts evil so that it is associated in the minds of others who may try to attack Islam that these acts can have nothing to do with one of the world's great religions.

I am wearing a black tie today—like my colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench and others—as a mark of respect and a gesture of support for the American people and their Government. Together with Government and Opposition Front Benchers, who have said wise words today, I will support the American Government in justified and reasonable retaliation.

I would like to make two points, one about Afghanistan and the other about the situation here. I am a trustee of the HALO trust, the largest mine-clearance agency in the world, which has 1,200 local employees in Afghanistan. We had two or three expatriates there until Wednesday or Thursday, when they got out. The local employees are decent, hard-working people whose work in mine clearance has made Kabul a safe city in which children can play. Such people have as much right to respect as the Americans, ourselves or anybody else.

I shall refer to the history of Afghanistan, although I shall not labour the point. The country was occupied for 20 years by the Russians. Kandahar, the second city of the country, was just about razed to the ground during the war, largely by Russian bombing. Following that, there have been 10 years of civil war—the war still continues—and the most frightful drought and famine. Afghanistan is in a very difficult situation and has a Government who are not regarded favourably in most capitals of the world.

The bizarre coincidence of the attack on Masoud the day before the bombings in America should be noted, because a suicide attack—as seen at the World Trade Centre and elsewhere—is not traditionally a method used by Afghans, but is more closely associated with other parts of the middle east. If, as seems likely, there is the possibility of some form of retaliation against Afghanistan or targets in Afghanistan, it must be measured and carefully directed.

It should be recognised that Russia, which is geographically and strategically extremely important in the present situation, may not be the best choice as an active ally, because Afghans still have vivid memories of the Russian devastation. Moreover, what happened recently in Grozny plays loud in the Muslim world. By all means let us have the Russians on side, but let us be careful about the active collaboration that we expect of them. Russian involvement could make the situation yet worse, if that were possible. The best thing that could happen would be for the Taliban to deliver bin Laden to the United Nations or the United States for questioning, but that is rather unlikely at present.

There has been much talk of war. By invoking article 5, NATO has determined that the current situation is a war, and President Bush has said that it is a war. That will have an impact on the values of freedom and democracy in this

[Mr. Andrew Robathan]

country, about which both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary spoke so eloquently. We are in danger of not being able to protect our values of freedom, tolerance and liberal democracy, because people who have come to this country wish to undermine those values.

We are liberal and tolerant, and we relish our freedom, but on "Question Time" on the BBC yesterday evening, I saw the former American ambassador, Clinton's appointee, Philip Lader, almost in tears as he said that he would not have believed that he would hear people saying, to general acclaim, that they despised America, as somebody did on the programme. I do not despise America. The people whom I know do not despise America. My constituents do not despise America. How could such an opinion receive applause, especially at such a time?

This morning on the "Today" programme, an asylum seeker who is being put up in a hotel near Heathrow said that he believed that the attacks were justified. I thought that he was fleeing an awful regime. By making such a comment, surely he has put himself beyond any claim to asylum in this country.

We must ensure that our tolerance, our freedom and our liberal democracy are not abused and used against us. We have heard today about Sheikh Abu Hamza, who called for a jihad. He and others raise money for bin Laden and his like. We must re-adjust the way in which we see such people and the law that governs them. We must not let our freedom and our democracy be destroyed by others' lack of tolerance.

1.43 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to be called to speak in the debate. I have been present since early morning, and an important feature of the debate is that the best speeches come from the heart. There is no doubt that we have heard many fine speeches today, all of them from the heart. My hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sarwar) and for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Mahmood) made excellent speeches in a difficult situation for them. They explained fully how the Muslim communities—those who believe in the Koran—in our country are settled, integrated and positively horrified by what they have seen on television.

There is a view that those events are a fundamentalist Islamic attack on Christianity. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Jean Corston) made a pertinent point when she suggested that we should remove the concept of Islam from fundamentalism. Christian fundamentalism, if that is the proper name, gave rise to the crusades a thousand years ago and to the Spanish inquisition. There is nothing at all redeeming about the concept of fundamentalism, whether it is based on Islam or on Christianity. I see in this attack an attack by fundamentalists on our Christian society.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was the first speaker in the debate to invoke God. As Second Church Estates Commissioner, I have been touched throughout by the reference to God, first by the President of the United States and then by those who were caught in this situation. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) and others talked about being on Capitol Hill and being told to run for their lives. The staff on Capitol Hill spent the first five minutes in prayer before beginning to run. A survivor of the World Trade Centre attack who was on the 82nd floor also survived the 1993 attack, so she has survived twice. She invoked her Christian religion.

The right hon. and learned Member for North–East Fife (Mr. Campbell) referred to the values of the United States—the Christian ethos, which we saw very clearly. We are in an age in which we are told that the Christian ethic is slipping, but it is strong in the United States.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) made a powerful speech, but he confused the explanation, as he sees it, for fundamentalism with the justification. We must be careful when explaining what he considers to be the reasons for the surge of restlessness, animosity and hatred in case we justify it. I am glad that he is still in the Chamber and I am sure that he does not think that there is a justification for such actions.

When considering Islamic fundamentalism, if I may give it that name, and relating it always to the situation in Israel and the middle east, we must not forget that it destroyed apartment blocks in Moscow or that, at this very moment in Algeria, busloads of children, villagers and farmers are being taken out to have their throats cut in the name of Islamic fundamentalism. That has nothing to do with the situation in the middle east and nothing to do with the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

The debate has gone on for quite a while, but no one has yet mentioned the Mitchell principles being proposed for some form of settlement of the middle eastern crisis or the meetings with Shimon Peres alongside Yasser Arafat. There are peace proposals going forward there, but we must be careful that we do not justify the reasons for that fundamentalism while seeking to define it. The Prime Minister was very strong on that point.

The point has also been made that this is a war of poor people against rich. The four-year-old child who took her first and last aeroplane journey would not have understood that concept nor would those who went to work early in the morning and lost their lives. We ought to move away from the proposition that there is conflict between what are called poor and rich people. The incident is much more fundamental than that. It is an attack on our democracy, an attack on our morality and an attack on our way of life.

The right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Inverness, West (Mr. Kennedy), the leader of the Liberal party, quoted the angel of death speech made in the House in 1855 by John Bright. It was, of course, a quote from the scriptures and we note a certain continuity. A Liberal Foreign Secretary looked over St. James' park in 1914 and said:

> "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

On 11 September, each one of us saw a light diminish and die, and it is up to each one of us in the House, in our country and in the United States to ensure that the values of democracy, the values of the Christian ethos and the values of all those of other religions who have today expressed their strong, sincerely held religious convictions rest as pillars of our society and receive our support. We give full support to the Government in their relations with the United States and in any actions they may take.

1.48 pm

Alistair Burt (North–East Bedfordshire): Listening to today's remarkable speeches has reminded me of how fortunate we all are to be here to express our views and, indeed, of how lucky we all are to be here at all. Apart

from our strong feelings of grief for our friends in America and our desire to stand close with them, our primary responsibility to our constituents, to the nation and to the wider world is that of safety. How can we best address ourselves to improving the safety of our people in the circumstances of the past few days?

The debate has emphasised the tension between the concepts of justice and vengeance. I take the view that there is a distinction between the two. It appears clear that, as my right hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary said, if the world has not changed, the rules of terrorism certainly have, and the terrorists themselves have changed the rules.

It is one thing for nations to react to the occasional terrorist outbreak, it is a different thing to bow before the scale of the terrorist attack that took place the other day. It changes us from being reactive to being proactive. We can no longer afford to play roulette now that the stakes have been raised. We cannot afford to wait and see the scale of the next attack, when the next group of terrorists descend still further into human depravity. The terrorists have proved that they have the will; all they lack is the means to commit the next atrocity. Ultimately, if none of us is safe, none of us is free.

There must be a response, and it is likely to be military and forceful, but it must be seen by the world to be just rather than vengeful. The distinction is this: justice is seen by the court of world opinion to be appropriate, properly directed and designed for good. Crucially—the House should accept the strictures of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) and the Father of the House, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—justice should not leave embers of hate to be stoked up again. In short, justice means that people say, "This action is right"; vengeance means that people fear what comes next.

Secondly, I agree with those who suggest that there has never been a better time to deal with the underlying causes of world terrorism—the hot spots that in their lack of a resolution have bred the refugee camps, fuelled with a sense of injustice and hatred. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) gave a small catalogue of those hot spots with which I fully concur. Every underlying cause of hate can be examined afresh with new will. It may be that the death of thousands moves just one party that has blocked progress in the talks in one part of the world. It is enough to try to unblock that progress so that some causes of tension can be removed.

My third point may not have been approached before. What on earth do we tell our children? How do we explain to young people what they have seen this week? Children cannot understand the sophisticated contradictions behind the concept of a just war. They cannot understand that sometimes force is needed to enforce something good and decent. How does a Christian voice of love make itself heard in these circumstances? For our children, we must deal with the matter by our absolute rejection of hate. Just as the terrorist is fuelled by vengeance and the bones of resentment that he can pick over, so he succeeds if he can sow hate. When in the west every dark face, every strange language and every different religion can be feared as sheltering an enemy, the terrorist has won. We must banish the causes of hate, for ultimately it was hate, and nothing but hate, that caused the crimes on Tuesday—murderous, anti-American hatred in the hearts of the perpetrators.

In this country, we should continue to promote anti-racism and continue our working dialogues between faiths. We should encourage our children not to see lines of demarcation but to see common humanity in each other and to see what they share. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in "The Gulag Archipelago", wrote:

> "Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, not between classes, not between political parties—but right through every human heart, and through all human hearts."

If we are to banish hate, it has to be replaced with something, and it should be replaced with love. Our children should be taught that it is love that ultimately conquers. What will be the lasting image of what has happened in America this week? I believe that it will not be a cowed and broken nation, pointing to the disfigurement of war. What will endure are the stories of love, which came from the air as people struggled desperately to say their last "I love you" to those they would never see again, and the messages left on telephone answering services. It will be the love that was seen between people as they worked with each other, sought to rescue each other, comforted each other, gave blood for each other and died for each other. If we can prove that to children—that love will ultimately rebuild, there is a chance of good coming from this.

If our children are to have hate driven out of their minds, they must have their minds turned to other things. I am reminded of the words to the Philippians. Although they come from our bible, they are universally applicable. St. Paul said:

> "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things."

Let us help children to drive out the concept of evil by thinking on such things.

Those who perished on Tuesday will have an epitaph and it will be for good. If we can couple our determination to take the action necessary to rebuild a safer world—costly though it may be—with the determination to root out the ultimate cause of our inhumanity to each other, not one of those victims will have died in vain.

1.56 pm

Mr. Gordon Marsden (Blackpool, South): We would indeed be stones in this Chamber today if the loss of more than 5,000 people had not evoked the response that has come from almost all sides of the House—even more so, given our ties of history, culture, language and blood with the United States and in the knowledge of our own citizens who perished there. So many Members have their own personal and family contacts with that country. I studied there. I have relations there. On that morning, one of my college friends took her daughter to school just by the World Trade Centre. Fortunately—or unfortunately—she saw the impact of that aeroplane, dragged her child away and got them both back to the safety of mid-Manhattan.

John Donne said that no man was an island. We have demonstrated that again in our debate today, but if anyone in this Chamber doubted the need for solidarity between ourselves and the United States, let them go now to St. Paul's cathedral where that service is going on and see the book of honour of American service men who gave their lives for this country and for freedom in the second world war.

We need to think of all sorts of practical responses, in terms of security and airlines, when this thing has begun slowly to remove itself from trauma. We need to look at

[Mr. Gordon Marsden]

airline security, access to cockpits and staff training. We must also not be complacent. Like many Members, I have been through America on internal flights. Yes, it is certainly true that security there is perhaps not what it should be, but let us not be deluded that we may not face similar problems of vigilance in this country as our internal flight schedules come more and more to resemble those of the United States, as more and more people travel. We need to take that on board.

The response we make must, of course, be proportionate. Everything that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition said this morning emphasised and underlined that. The commitment of NATO, the UN and the European Union to that cause is important.

Most important, as so many Members have stressed, is that Islam and the Muslim faith are not demonised. If not for other reasons—of reality, but also of realpolitik—let us remember the millions of Muslims in Kosovo, Macedonia and south-eastern Europe, where at this moment we are engaged on so delicate an act of diplomacy and on constructive dialogue and peace making. We must be careful not to demonise.

At the end of the day, we must make that measured, proportionate response with the same determination as if it were a war, though it is not. It is, as someone said, a monstrous crime. We must do that because we wish to defend democratic values—of whatever civilization we aspire to or talk about. Greece gave us the first ideas of democratic values. It was Pericles, in his famous oration over the dead of the Peloponnesian war, who said that the whole world was the tomb of famous men. In some respects, the whole world is now entombed with the dead of many nationalities in the World Trade Centre. However, we need to ensure that that is not the entombment of our values, of our civilisation and of our democracy. We need to make sure that, by our action, we transmute that terrible human tragedy and that tomb into a memorial for all time and into a testament of which we can be proud. To quote John Donne again:

"To choose is to do and not to choose and do is to do nothing."

2 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (North Essex): Nothing could better demonstrate the purpose of recalling Parliament than some of the speeches that we have heard in the Chamber today. I single out the speeches made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Mahmood) and by my hon. Friend the Member for North-East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt): a Muslim and a Christian; a socialist and a Conservative; but joined together determined that reconciliation and rebuilding, and not retaliation, anger and vengeance, should be our response to this dreadful tragedy.

It is with regret that I take over as shadow Secretary of State for Defence in the aftermath of such an immense tragedy. I would have wanted to take this first opportunity at the Dispatch Box to pay a much fuller tribute to the bravery and dedication of our service men and women who are posted in various places over the globe. They represent our country at its finest, and in this uncertain hour we know that they stand prepared to do whatever may be asked of them.

This has been a week of horror. That point was amplified by the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath) and by the e-mail read out by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne). Many of us have visited New York and Washington; I have stood as a tourist under the twin towers of the World Trade Centre and marvelled at them, and I have visited the Pentagon for defence briefings.

This has been a week of horror, mass murder and destruction; of heroism and self-sacrifice; of loss and grief; and of the first acts of remembrance that will no doubt be repeated for many years to come on the anniversary of 11 September. Our hearts and prayers go out to the injured and the bereaved, who come from all corners of the world.

These are the factors that mark Tuesday's attack as one of the grossest violations of humanity that the world has seen since the second world war—an attack on the fundamental values of an entire world civilisation and on the values underpinned by every mainstream religion in the world. The minds behind this deed are every bit as evil as the minds behind the Stalin's pogroms, Hitler's holocaust and the killing fields of Pol Pot.

That is why every nation of the world must come together to fight this terrorist threat. I join most warmly in endorsing the Prime Minister's diplomatic efforts to support President Bush. They have so effectively helped to bring together a remarkable unity of purpose not just in NATO and the European Union, but in the United Nations. It is a coalition of states that extends among the Islamic countries.

That is a remarkable first step, but it does not resolve the future steps necessary to reduce and then to combat this dreadful threat. For there is a constant theme that must underpin everything that we say and do in the aftermath of Tuesday: there can be no appeasement. However cautious we may be obliged to be in what action is taken, however difficult it is to identify those who genuinely share responsibility for the atrocities, and whatever sacrifices need to be made to confront them, there can be no appeasement—a lesson we have had to learn from bitter experience in our own land and elsewhere in Europe when facing terrorism.

First, we must accept that this threat has been developing for some time. We must be prepared to ask ourselves: were we too ready to greet the end of the cold war as a so-called new world order? Such talk of a new world order lured many into a fool's paradise. Although we have successfully policed limited conflicts such as in the Balkans and we hope that we have successfully contained the occasional rogue state such as Iraq, across the whole of NATO, have we downgraded our defence capabilities too much? Have we been too ready to allow the main role of our armies to become that of a gendarmerie trapped in the thinking of conventional warfare? Have we reduced the mystique and secrecy of our secret services—our security services—and therefore possibly the effectiveness of our intelligence services?

In the meantime, while that has been happening, Africa has become a cauldron of military conflict and instability. Governments, from those in the former Soviet republics to those in central America, teeter on the brink of chaos, feeding the discontent of their peoples and the rampant corruption and gangsterism upon which terrorism thrives. For too long, have we taken too little care of that? We must accept that the security challenges raised by the new world disorder are far wider than we have hitherto been prepared to admit, possibly partly because we are reluctant to face the necessary expense and inconvenience.

We must face up to the threat of what is called asymmetric warfare. I am new to this brief, but I am struck by the fact that that term has been in the defence jargon

for some time. As long ago as 1998, the executive director of the Emergency Response and Research Institute of the United States, Clark L. Staten, addressed the question of asymmetric warfare in a comprehensive paper which demanded a significant shift in US Government thinking and resource allocation. He pointed out starkly how global conflicts were changing:

"Mass violence, injuries and deaths will continue to occur, although we believe they will happen in differing ways than one might currently imagine".

He went on, foretelling how terrorists

"will use unconventional tactics to carry out particularly heinous acts".

He even said, almost prophetically:

"Even a country as large and sophisticated as the United States could suffer greatly at the hands of an educated, equipped, and committed group of fewer than 50 people."

He also added:

"high impact terrorist incidents could prove a major challenge for those with an entrenched large force cold war mentality."

In this country, our own strategic defence review noted the threat of asymmetric attack. But the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, the right hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George)—again, as long ago as 1998—wrote:

"the Review has yet to address broader security issues".

He also said that it had failed

"to address the problems of 'asymmetric' threats—terrorism, possibly using chemical and biological weapons . . . and the other weapons which the weak may choose to deploy against the strong."

That underlines the truth of what the Foreign Secretary said earlier about the scale of the threat we face; these people will resort to weapons of mass destruction and even ballistic missiles if they have the opportunity. We must be prepared.

We must be prepared to commit the necessary resources to ensure that we have the capability to respond to that threat. We need what is known as layered defence: an ability to respond in a measured and effective way to the widest spectrum of threats. Our armed forces are already overstretched. While this is not the occasion to revisit that particular controversy, it is a factor which now surely more than ever must be addressed, particularly with reference to our security services. I urge the Defence Secretary to respond on that point. The heads of both MI5 and MI6 have voiced their concerns about the 2001-02 financial year, saying that the funding position would be "challenging". They also flagged up the possibility of being unable to maintain current service levels and meet new challenges. Can the Secretary of State comfort the House that resources will not be a constraint upon the necessary intelligence effort required to defeat the threat, particularly as British intelligence services can make such a uniquely valuable contribution?

Finally, when the time comes for military action, we, of all nations, should have the confidence to say to the United States, "We will be by your side." Is it not vital that any United States effort should be, and should be seen to be, part of the widest international effort? Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Prime Minister's warm words really do mean that the UK is prepared to commit our armed forces in support of whatever action is necessary to eradicate this particular threat?

I urge the House to set aside notions of a blank cheque for retaliation. That is not what we are talking about. There is no way of guaranteeing the certain success of any military venture, but the United States would never undertake anything but the most carefully planned and effective action—and, of course, we can expect the United States to consult her allies.

Much of this debate has been about how to beat the terrorist threat. Our response is this recall of Parliament, and this measured debate. There has been much pessimism, but let us have confidence. Our values are not under threat; they are vindicated by the very acts of the terrorists. Their way of life is ultimately self-destroying. All that we need do is carry out what needs to be done with absolute determination, and we will win.

2.10 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Geoffrey Hoon): I welcome the hon. Member for North Essex (Mr. Jenkin) to his new responsibilities, and, indeed, congratulate his predecessor on his election.

Let me begin by adding my personal expression of condolence with and profound sympathy for the American people—the families, friends and colleagues of those who have been killed or injured. Although these appalling attacks took place thousands of miles away from here, they are very close to the people of this country, because we, as individuals, are bound to the United States by ties of family, of friendship and of work.

One symbol of the strength of the relationship between our two countries is the number of British citizens who live and work in the United States, or who visit its cities—such as New York—every day. The hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis) gave one very moving example. The number of our citizens confirmed dead or missing is already into the hundreds. I know that I speak for the whole House in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of those who we know have died, and our thoughts are with those who still wait to hear news of their loved ones.

For those in the defence community, the tragedy is also close to home. The attacks focused on civilians in New York and Pennsylvania; they also focused on our colleagues in the United States armed forces, and the civilians who work with them. Many members of our two armed forces have trained together, deployed together and, in many cases, fought together. Officials in the Ministry of Defence work closely with their colleagues in the Department of Defence. The lives lost and the injuries caused by the attack on the Pentagon have had a particularly profound impact on everyone in the United Kingdom's defence community. I know that I speak for them all in expressing our sympathy and our support.

I have spoken to the United States Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, to express my solidarity and support to him and to the United States Department of Defence. We are united in our determination to bring those responsible to justice. The Chief of the Defence Staff and other senior military personnel have spoken to their counterparts to express their shock and their sympathy.

Our strong relationship with the United States, and with its armed forces, is a practical expression of our close personal and national ties. The Government are identifying help and expertise that we can provide in the immediate aftermath of this tragedy. We have already offered a wide-ranging package of assistance, including specialist search personnel and equipment and forensic experts. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) and, indeed, the hon. Member for North

[Mr. Geoffrey Hoon]

Antrim (Rev. Ian Paisley) eloquently pointed out, because we have faced terrorism ourselves, we have developed some of the world's best counter-terrorist expertise and capabilities.

Our own preparations have also included a raft of robust contingency plans, in the interests of national security and the protection of the public. The plans are well prepared, regularly exercised, tested, reviewed, and refined in the light of changing domestic and international circumstances. By their very nature, they cannot be made public; to do so would allow potential aggressors to undermine them. But should the United Kingdom be threatened in any way, we will not hesitate to defend ourselves.

Many parts of Government are devoted to monitoring and responding to the terrorist threat. Obviously, they include military experts. They also include the security and intelligence agencies, the police, scientists, and other specialists. I assure the shadow Defence Secretary that resources will not be an issue in that respect. We continue to learn from our own experience, and from the experience of our friends and allies.

It follows, therefore, that the events in the United States triggered an immediate precautionary response here, which I would like to outline to the House. Recognising that no specific warning was given of terrorist attacks in the United States, we immediately strengthened the position of key elements of our armed forces. This included reducing the notice to move of military personnel who would assist the police, if necessary, in guarding our airports. Ground-based air defence assets were also placed at a higher state of readiness in case they were required to guard key economic, governmental and strategic assets throughout the UK. Air defence aircraft of the Royal Air Force are constantly at a state of high readiness. Their role is to deter, to deflect and ultimately to destroy any threat from the skies.

Thankfully, it has not yet been necessary to take further measures or to utilise assets that were earmarked to provide specific degrees of protection earlier this week. Of course, we are continuing to keep this under very close review.

Our rapid reaction on this occasion demonstrated once again the flexibility, professionalism and dedication of our armed forces. It showed again how often we turn to them to help out in civil, as well as military, emergencies.

My direct responsibility is obviously for the armed forces, but I should also like to pay tribute to the very significant role that other Departments and agencies play in these circumstances. The police, for example, would quite rightly take the leading role in response to any incident. They would call on the armed forces' unique assets and capabilities, as well as those provided by other emergency services and local and unitary authorities. As we saw in the United States this week, the police, the fire service and other civil emergency services are often the first to place themselves in harm's way in order that they might help others. I know that our emergency services would have reacted with the same outstanding courage and self-sacrifice as was demonstrated by their American colleagues.

The police have been unstinting in their vigilance. Over the past week, working the longest possible hours, they have provided advice and reassurance to the many members of the British public who have been concerned about any threat to their safety. We can well understand why people have these concerns, but I must reinforce the message that the police have been giving: that while we should all be vigilant, we should not allow the events of the past week to damage or undermine our day-to-day way of life. The Government and the police are fully committed to ensuring that individual members of the public are protected in the event of any specific threat to any location or building. Until that occurs, panic or disruption can only play into the hands of those who are trying to destabilise our way of life. That point was well made by the shadow Foreign Secretary.

Police patrols on the streets of London have been intensified and all police forces have been put on full alert. This intensification of their work will continue throughout the weekend and for as long as is judged necessary.

Specific actions have also been taken to ensure that people and buildings that might become particular targets are protected. Military establishments both at home and abroad and Ministry of Defence and other Government Department establishments raised their security states. Security at airports and points of entry to this country were raised to the highest level. Specific advice on what to do was given to all our embassies and made available to British nationals overseas.

The Metropolitan police, working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, have set up an information centre at Scotland Yard where friends and relatives of the missing can seek detailed help and advice. A similar facility is being established in the British consulate in New York.

The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions co-ordinated the work of the Civil Aviation Authority and National Air Traffic Services to facilitate the return of aircraft to airports following the closure of US airspace. All flights over London airspace were halted and private charter flights were grounded, as was the case in other European capital cities.

Andrew Mackinlay: I want to pin down the Government on this. I understand that flights over London are to be restored. I must tell my right hon. Friend that that is foolhardy in the extreme, as it was even before this great tragedy. There has always been the danger over the metropolis of a major technical failure in an aircraft or of a collision. That danger has now been underscored and we should not bend or buckle to the interests of the airline industry, particularly now, and we should not have done so before. I hope that such flights are not restored, and that if they are it is only temporarily.

Mr. Hoon: I will not resolve that matter here today. It is a matter to which my hon. Friend can return if he judges that to be the right thing to do.

Inevitably, these events have caused disruption to many people's travel plans, but I know that they understand the need for increased vigilance at this time. The Government are working closely with industry and the airlines to minimise the disruption. Several military airfields and their facilities were made ready to help with the return of US-bound flights, but in the event the extra capacity was not needed. Assistance was provided with the management of airspace, while non-essential flights were cancelled.

The attacks in the US demonstrate the full evil of international terrorism. These were attacks on democracy and freedom themselves—on the rights of ordinary, innocent people to go peacefully and safely about their lives. To commit acts of this nature requires a fanaticism and wickedness that is beyond our normal comprehension.

Of course we have intelligence expertise and systems in place that are organised to try to prevent such attacks, but we have to consider what we would do if a terrorist attack of a similar magnitude occurred here. That is why, earlier this year, the Government set up a civil contingencies secretariat. Based within the Cabinet Office, this has drawn on the expertise that has been developed especially in the Home Office but also within other Departments. Part of the secretariat's job is to assess issues that could arise and alert departments, including, if necessary, local agencies that may be affected. That central co-ordinating role is crucial in bringing together the emergency planning functions of all Government Departments. It has been utilised extensively during recent days.

As well as its recent activity, the civil contingencies secretariat has undertaken work with industry and other organisations to identify potential threats, vulnerabilities and interdependencies, and to agree responsibilities for responding to a developing threat. As a result, the consequences of disruption in key sectors of our national infrastructure are now understood far better than they were and better preparations for our response are in place. We are therefore already learning the lessons advocated by the hon. Members for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and for Ruislip–Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson).

For example, the specific and mutual aid plans that are held by health authorities and trusts to ensure the maintenance of services have been reviewed. Communication plans for maintaining both the machinery of government and the emergency communications network are also in place. In addition, the armed forces stand ready to assist the civil agencies as required. To reply to the point made by the hon. Member for Ruislip–Northwood, that would include reservists, as necessary. All elements of government are now working together even more effectively than they were.

The bravery, resilience and determination of the American people in the face of Tuesday's attack have been a shining example to others around the world. Of course there is shock and of course there is anger, but they have made it clear that they will not allow the people who commit such crimes to win, and they have made it clear that they will see that they are brought to justice.

I want to make it clear to all those who commit these cowardly acts or harbour these brutal criminals that, like the American people, we will not be intimidated by atrocity. Our resolve, our vigilance and our purpose are strong and clear. We can and we will defend our people and our values against terror in whatever form it takes.

That is why, on Wednesday, NATO invoked article 5 of the North Atlantic treaty, under which the allies agreed that

"an armed attack against one . . . shall be considered an attack against them all".

The NATO allies of the United States therefore stand ready to provide assistance in exercising their right of self-defence. Each member of the alliance will assist by taking

"such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force".

Any NATO action that might flow from that would be subject to consideration and decision by the North Atlantic Council, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) pointed out. That was a significant act by the NATO allies: an unprecedented step in the history of the alliance.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said earlier, the murder of British people in New York is no different from their murder here at home. The United Kingdom has both an interest and an obligation to provide assistance to the United States to help bring those responsible to account and to remove the threat that terrorists pose to the international community.

That assistance has already begun. There have been close contacts between a range of Government agencies in both countries. For example, the Metropolitan police are in close contact with their colleagues in the New York police department. The Treasury and the Bank of England have been in close contact with the Federal Reserve. We are already sharing information that may be useful to the United States authorities in their search for those responsible.

We are looking at what we can do diplomatically and in the international community to reduce the threat of any more events such as those that we saw on Tuesday. We are looking at ways to deal with terrorist groups more effectively, to starve them of their resources and support and to implement these measures from a solid international foundation. We are also examining the contribution that the United Kingdom could make militarily in the event of any requests from the United States to assist in bringing to account those who have organised, abetted and incited these acts.

It is now three days since the events in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. We will all have to continue to live with their impact. We are not complacent, but we have taken sensible precautions and we will not be deflected from our purpose. We will continue to pursue our lives and fulfil our responsibilities at home and overseas.

Despite the impact that terrorism has had over recent days, we will not forget that, with our allies, we act as a force for good around the world. We must continue to do so; otherwise, the terrorists will have achieved one of their aims. That is why, for example, our armed forces will continue their important work in Macedonia, which is aimed, as elsewhere in the Balkans, at bringing peace and stability to the region.

We also remain committed to enhancing our close relationship with friends in the Islamic world—a point well made by the right hon. and learned Member for North–East Fife (Mr. Campbell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sarwar). The House will be aware that we are preparing for the largest exercise undertaken by British armed forces in the Gulf for many years. Exercise Saif Sareea will ensure that our armed forces are fully trained to meet their operational tasks, as well as demonstrating our commitment to peace and security in that region. We have no plans to call off the exercise.

We will not be deflected from ensuring that the effectiveness of our armed forces is maintained at the highest level possible, nor from demonstrating our solidarity with our many friends in the Islamic world. I pay tribute to the steadfastness of all those in the Gulf region who have expressed their sympathy and outrage following the events on Tuesday.

The attacks on our friends in the United States were an attack on values that are recognised right across the world. We will not tolerate that. Those values are not divided by religion, creed, race or political party. They will not be overcome by barbarism, arrogance or tyranny.

[Mr. Hoon]

The depth and breadth of the condemnation and disgust expressed by nations all around the world are an indication of the level of the evil and the horror of what we witnessed. They should also have brought home to the perpetrators of this crime and to those who give them active or passive support the world's resolve and determination to bring them to justice.

I agree with the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) that deeds, not simply words, will ultimately count. Make no mistake: that is what we will be doing. The United Nations, NATO, the European Union and the G8 will all work to the same end. I can assure the House that the United Kingdom will take a full and active role. This Government will never allow the perpetrators of atrocities such as those that we witnessed across the Atlantic on Tuesday to succeed in achieving their objectives.

Those who carry out such acts of evil will not deter us from doing what is just and what is right. That is the message that I have heard throughout this debate, from representatives of all parties, with all their different approaches to the international organisations. We have many different ideas, but we are all united in a consistent belief that we have to use the democracy that we enjoy here to further the opportunities for other countries to share in our values and traditions. Now is the time for all nations to show where they stand.

Angela Smith (Basildon): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved,

That this House do now adjourn.—*[Angela Smith.]*

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 4 October 2001

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock, notice having been given by Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order No. 13 (Earlier meeting of the House in certain circumstances).

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Coalition against International Terrorism

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Prime Minister, I have a short statement to make about security. In the light of recent events, security measures have been stepped up. Access to the Palace, both on foot and by vehicle, will be more strictly controlled. A primary element of this process will be the photographic identity pass, which Members should carry at all times and produce on request. Vehicles will be subject to search and Members are advised to allow sufficient time for their journeys, bearing in mind the likely delays on arrival at the House.

As Members may have observed, arrangements are in place for an armed response to an incident or intrusion should this prove necessary. This is in addition to the Palace of Westminster security force. Our own officers will continue their duties to control access to assist Members and visitors.

The House will understand that I cannot go into further detail, and I am not prepared to take questions about our security arrangements. I am sure that Members will give the security force their full support and co-operation.

9.35 am

The Prime Minister (Mr. Tony Blair): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for recalling Parliament on a second occasion so that the House can consider developments since we last met. Then the scale of the 11 September tragedy was still unclear. Even today we do not yet know the precise numbers of those feared dead, but a bleak picture has emerged: there are up to 7,000 victims, including many British victims and others from 70 different countries. Many were Muslims. It cannot be said too often: this atrocity appalled decent Muslims everywhere and is wholly contrary to the proper teaching of Islam; and we condemn unreservedly also racist attacks on British Muslims here, most recently at an Edinburgh mosque. These acts are without any justification whatever and the full force of the law will be used against those who do them.

I pay tribute again to all those in America who have been involved in dealing with the human consequences of the attacks—the rescue services and medical workers who worked tirelessly and with devotion in the most harrowing conditions imaginable. I pay tribute also to our own consular staff in New York and London and to the family counsellors and Metropolitan police officers who have supported relatives of the British victims; and above all, I pay tribute to the relatives themselves. Those I met in New York, still uncertain finally of the fate of their loved ones, bore their grief with immense dignity, which deserves the admiration of us all.

Since 11 September, intensive efforts have taken place here and elsewhere to investigate these attacks and to determine who is responsible. Our findings have been shared and co-ordinated with those of our allies and they are clear. They are: first, that it was Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda, the terrorist network which he heads, that planned and carried out the atrocities on 11 September; secondly, that Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda were able to commit these atrocities because of their close alliance with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which allows them to operate with impunity in pursuing their terrorist activity.

I will later today put in the Library a document detailing the basis for our conclusions. The document covers the history of Osama bin Laden, his relations with the Taliban, what we know of the acts of terror that he has committed and some of what we know in respect of 11 September. I enter a major caveat, however: much of the evidence that we have is intelligence and highly sensitive. It is not possible without compromising people or security to release precise details and fresh information that is daily coming in, but I hope that the House will find it useful at least as an interim assessment. The Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Democrats have seen the full basis for the document on Privy Council terms. For myself and all other Ministers who have studied the full information, we have absolutely no doubt that bin Laden and his network were responsible for the attacks on 11 September. That was also the unanimous view of the NATO members who were taken through the full facts on 2 October. Much more of the evidence in respect of earlier atrocities can be released in greater detail since it is already subject to court proceedings, and this in itself is powerful.

Indeed, there is nothing hidden about bin Laden's agenda. He openly espouses the language of terror; has described terrorising Americans as

"a religious and logical obligation";

and in February 1998 signed a fatwa stating that

"the killing of Americans and their civilian and military allies is a religious duty."

As our document shows, he has been responsible for a number of terrorist outrages over the past decade: the attack in 1993 on US military personnel serving in Somalia, 18 of whom were killed; in 1998, the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, in which 224 people were killed and more than 4,500 injured; attempted bombings in Jordan and Los Angeles at the turn of the millennium, thankfully thwarted; and the attack on the USS Cole nearly a year ago which left 17 crew members killed and 40 injured.

The attacks on 11 September bear all the hallmarks of a bin Laden operation: meticulous long-term planning; a desire to inflict mass casualties; a total disregard for civilian lives, including those of Muslims; multiple simultaneous attacks; and the use of suicide attackers.

I can now confirm that of the 19 hijackers identified from the passenger lists of the four planes hijacked in America on 11 September, at least three have already been positively identified as known associates of bin Laden, with a track record in his camps and organisation. The

[The Prime Minister]

others are being investigated still. Of the three, one has also been identified as playing key roles in both the east African embassy attacks and the USS Cole attack.

Since the attacks, we have obtained the following intelligence: shortly before 11 September, bin Laden told associates that he had a major operation against America under preparation; a range of people were warned to return to Afghanistan because of action on or around 11 September; and most important, one of bin Laden's closest lieutenants has said clearly that he helped with the planning of the 11 September attacks, and has admitted the involvement of the al-Qaeda organisation. There is other intelligence which we cannot disclose of an even more direct nature indicating guilt.

The closeness of bin Laden's relationship with the Taliban is also plain. He provides them with troops, arms and money to fight the Northern Alliance. He is closely involved with their military training, planning and operations. He has representatives in their military command structure. Forces under the control of bin Laden have fought alongside the Taliban in the civil war in Afghanistan.

For their part, the Taliban regime have provided bin Laden with a safe haven within which to operate, and allowed him to establish terrorist training camps. They jointly exploit the Afghan drugs trade. In return for active al-Qaeda support, the Taliban allow al-Qaeda to operate freely, including planning, training and preparing for terrorist activity. In addition, they provide security for the stockpiles of drugs.

In the face of this evidence, our immediate objectives are clear. We must bring bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders to justice and eliminate the terrorist threat that they pose, and we must ensure that Afghanistan ceases to harbour and sustain international terrorism. If the Taliban regime will not comply with that objective, we must bring about change in that regime to ensure that Afghanistan's links to international terrorism are broken.

Since the House last met, we have been working tirelessly and ceaselessly on the diplomatic, humanitarian and military fronts. I can confirm that we have had initial discussions with the United States about a range of military capabilities with which Britain can help and have already responded positively. We will consider carefully any further requests and keep the House informed, as appropriate, about such requests. For obvious reasons I cannot disclose the exact nature of our discussions, but I am fully satisfied that they are consistent with our shared objectives.

I believe that the humanitarian coalition to help the people of Afghanistan is as vital as the military action itself. Afghanistan was, of course, in the grip of a humanitarian crisis even before the events of 11 September. Four years of drought, on top of more than two decades of conflict, have forced millions of people to leave the country, and have left millions more dependent on international humanitarian aid.

Last week the United Nations launched an appeal for $584 million to meet the needs of vulnerable people in and around Afghanistan. The appeal covers the next six months. The international community has already pledged sufficient funds to meet the most immediate needs. The British Government have contributed £25 million, nearly all of which has already been allocated to UN and other agencies. We have also made available a further £11 million for support for the poorest communities in Pakistan, especially those most directly affected by the influx of refugees. I know that President Bush will shortly announce details of a major US programme of aid.

I, along with other Ministers, have been in detailed consultation with the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Ruud Lubbers, and other leaders. Kofi Annan has now appointed Lakhdar Brahimi to be his high-level co-ordinator for the humanitarian effort in and around Afghanistan. We will give Mr. Brahimi all the support that we can, to help ensure that the UN and the whole international community come together to meet the humanitarian challenge.

I can tell the House that action is already in hand to cope with additional outflows of refugees. UNHCR is working with the Governments of the region to identify sites for additional refugee camps. The first UNHCR flight of relief supplies, including tents donated by the British Government, arrived in Iran yesterday. A second flight will depart at the end of this week, carrying more tents, plastic sheeting, tarpaulins and other materials, so that we can provide essential shelter for refugees.

We are also stepping up the effort to get food into Afghanistan before the winter snows begin. A UNICEF convoy carrying blankets and other supplies left Peshawar for Kabul on Tuesday. A World Food Programme convoy carrying more than 200 tonnes of wheat arrived in Kabul on Monday. Further convoys have left for Afghanistan from Pakistan and Turkmenistan.

We will do whatever we can to minimise the suffering of the Afghan people as a result of the conflict, and we commit ourselves to work with them afterwards, inside and outside Afghanistan, to ensure a better, more peaceful future, free from the repression and dictatorship that are their present existence.

On the diplomatic front, over the past three weeks the Foreign Secretary and I and other Ministers have been in intensive contact with foreign leaders from every part of the world. In addition, the Foreign Secretary has visited the middle east and Iran. I have visited Berlin, Paris and Washington for consultations with Chancellor Schröder, President Chirac and President Bush, respectively. Later today I will travel to Moscow to meet President Putin.

What we have encountered is an unprecedented level of solidarity and commitment to work together against terrorism. This is a commitment that spans all continents, cultures and religions, reinforced by attacks like the one on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in Srinagar which killed more than 30 innocent people. We have already made good progress in taking forward an international agenda. Last week the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1373. That makes it mandatory for all states to prevent and suppress terrorist financing and requires the denial of safe haven to those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist acts.

The European Union, too, has taken firm action. Transport, Interior, Finance and Foreign Ministers have all met to concert an ambitious and effective European response: enhancing police co-operation; speeding up extradition; putting an end to the funding of terrorism; and strengthening air security.

We are also looking at our national legislation. In the next few weeks, the Home Secretary intends to introduce a package of legislation to supplement existing legal powers in a number of areas. It will be a carefully appraised set of measures—tough, but balanced and proportionate to the risk that we face. It will cover the funding of terrorism. It will increase our ability to exclude and remove those whom we suspect of terrorism and who are seeking to abuse our asylum procedures. It will widen the law on incitement to include religious hatred. We will bring forward a Bill to modernise our extradition law. That will not be a knee-jerk reaction, but I emphasise that we need to strengthen our laws so that, even if necessary only in a small number of cases, we have the means to protect our citizens' liberty and our national security.

We have also ensured, in so far as is possible, that every reasonable measure of internal security is being undertaken. We have in place a series of contingency plans, governing all forms of terrorism. These plans are continually reviewed and tested regularly and at all levels. In addition, we continue to monitor carefully developments in the British and international economy. Certain sectors in Britain and around the world have inevitably been seriously affected, though I repeat that the fundamentals of all the major economies, including our own, remain strong. The reduction of risk from terrorist mass action is important also to economic confidence, as 11 September shows, so there is every incentive in that respect also to close down the bin Laden network.

Three weeks on from the most appalling act of terrorism that the world has ever witnessed, the coalition is strong, military plans are robust, the humanitarian plans are falling into place and the evidence against bin Laden and his network is overwhelming.

The Afghan people are not our enemy, for they have our sympathy and they will have our support. Our enemy is Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network, who were responsible for the events of 11 September. The Taliban regime must yield them up or become our enemy also. We will not act for revenge. We will act because we need to for the protection of our people and our way of life, including confidence in our economy. The threat posed by bin Laden and his terrorism must be eliminated. We act for justice. We act with world opinion behind us and we have an absolute determination to see justice done and this evil of mass international terrorism confronted and defeated.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green): The Opposition are grateful to the Prime Minister for his statement. He is correct to condemn attacks on British Muslims wherever they take place, and on their places of worship. I join fully in supporting him in that statement. Furthermore, our support should also be stated for those who have lost loved ones, as the Prime Minister said. We watched their dignity in their suffering and were not only impressed but took it as a lesson to us all. I hope that it is one we will never lose.

It is just over three weeks since the terrible events of 11 September in New York and Washington. Although the initial shock may well have subsided, our outrage remains, our anger is constant and our determination to bring the terrorists to justice must remain undiminished. The Prime Minister said that he would put before the House some of the evidence that shows that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda planned and carried out the atrocities on 11 September, that they have the will and resources to carry out further atrocities, that the United Kingdom and its citizens are and could be targets and that bin Laden and al-Qaeda were able to commit those atrocities because of their close relationship with the Taliban regime. What bin Laden did before 11 September made shameful reading—what he did on 11 September adds to the existing list of charges.

I agree with the Prime Minister that there are good reasons why it would not be possible to release all the intelligence that he has. To do so could put lives at risk. The right hon. Gentleman has shared with me more than he is able to present here today and on that basis I am convinced that Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda and the Taliban are guilty as charged. Any war against these people is a just war. We must stand ready to fight for our democracy and for civilised values everywhere. Our prayers and our support, however, will also go out to our armed forces and their families for what they may be called upon to do in whatever may follow.

The events of 11 September show that terrorists such as bin Laden now accept no limits and that the rogue states harbour and nurture such terrorists, using them as instruments of their twisted purpose. In so doing, they place themselves outside the family of civilised nations. To defeat terrorism will require action on all fronts, as the Prime Minister rightly said. We need to strike at the terrorists themselves and to neuter the threat from the rogue states that give them succour. We also need to tackle the links between terrorism and the organised crime that helps to finance and sustain it.

I agree with the Prime Minister that the immense task ahead requires unprecedented levels of international co-operation. He is to be congratulated on his efforts in conjunction with those of President Bush to build a coalition of such diverse nation states. It is the clear responsibility of every civilised country to do what it can to stamp out this evil that threatens us all.

Some people may worry about the effect that military action could have on the survival of that coalition. Does the Prime Minister agree that it has been assembled for a purpose, which is to eradicate the threat of terrorism and the apparatus of terror as well as to bring those responsible for 11 September to account? It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Therefore, will he consider carefully the role that Iraq may well have played and any threat that it continues to or might pose as a sponsor of such international terrorism?

Some people have genuine and understandable anxieties that British involvement is more likely to make Britain a direct terrorist target. Surely our response must be to remind them of the hundreds of Britons who died in the World Trade Centre. Britain is already a target: it has already been attacked and could be attacked in the future.

We recognise too, however, that any action against Afghanistan will almost certainly increase the exodus to refugee camps in surrounding countries. Millions of Afghans have already been driven to them by a combination of drought and the collapse of existing aid programmes, as the Prime Minister said. Therefore, I welcome his statement about the increased level of aid. Will he also undertake to ensure that the money allocated to the refugee crisis is spent to ensure that the camps meet as closely as possible internationally agreed standards and

[Mr. Iain Duncan Smith]

respect for basic human rights and that if possible no one country should bear a disproportionate responsibility for housing them? Finally, after taking whatever action may be required, we must plan for the millions of refugees to be able to return swiftly to a homeland that will be able to sustain them in their normal lives.

The Prime Minister spoke of measures to be proposed by the Home Secretary. In the context of 11 September we will certainly give our support to whatever measures are justified and we will scrutinise them in the usual way.

The Prime Minister rightly emphasised that this is not a war against Islam, but a war against terrorism—all terrorism, as he said. That has been recognised in Muslim countries such as Pakistan and others and by the majority of Muslims in the United Kingdom, many of whom I have met to discuss this issue, as has the Prime Minister. However, a small number of totally unrepresentative groups and individuals remain, to whom the Prime Minister referred as abusing the freedoms that we enjoy to voice support and raise money for terrorism, and in some cases to plan acts of terrorism overseas. When Sheik Omar Bakri Muhammad can claim from the safety of this country that the Prime Minister is a legitimate target for assassination if he visits a Muslim country, we need to review our anti-terrorism laws as a matter of urgency.

The Home Secretary ought to be able to prevent individuals entering Britain and to deport them on the grounds of national security without the threat of his decisions being overturned as a result of the Human Rights Act 1998. The Government must not let the Act stand in the way of extradition to the United States of individuals facing terrorism charges. That would be the wrong route. Where the law is ineffective or inadequate, it needs to be remedied and I agree with the Prime Minister. I repeat our offer that the Opposition will co-operate with the Government in any way possible to ensure that that can be done.

The Prime Minister said in his speech to the conference on Tuesday that the structures of terrorism should be attacked everywhere. Does he agree that this means not just waging war in a distant land but that, as he has said before, it applies as much here in the United Kingdom as it does in Afghanistan and Colombia?

As I have pointed out before, terrorist groups, including the IRA, the UDA, the UVF and others, raise the vast majority of their finance through criminal activity such as intimidation, racketeering, smuggling and—worst of all perhaps—drugs. What plans does the Prime Minister have to wage war on the Mafia sub-culture and criminality that have grown up alongside 30 years of terrorism in Northern Ireland and to ensure that the rule of law is upheld?

At the weekend, the Sinn Fein president described terrorism as "ethically unjustifiable", yet words alone will not be enough. The people of Northern Ireland require deeds. Surely in the aftermath of 11 September, people everywhere will fail to understand why terrorists even in Northern Ireland do not demonstrate once and for all that violence is in the past and that they are now unequivocally committed to peaceful and democratic politics. I hope and believe that the Prime Minister will use this opportunity to place maximum pressure on those on both sides of the fence to stand by their agreements and to decommission their weapons as agreed.

Finally, we believe that the Prime Minister was right to recall Parliament today. It is important, given the gravity of the situation and the likelihood of British involvement in any future action, that we keep the situation under short-term review. Yesterday the Home Secretary made a number of important announcements to the conference regarding the domestic response to the terrorist threat. Surely, given the importance of that speech yesterday, there is now a strong case for the House to be recalled again—perhaps on Thursday and Friday of next week—so that that some of those measures can be debated and discussed.

This is not about revenge and it is not about retribution, and it is not only about justice against one man; it is about standing up for what is right against what is wrong. It is about upholding civilised values against anarchy and it is about defending good against the evil of terrorism. So today we should reaffirm our single and collective purpose in this House. No excuses can be made, no justification sought and no help offered to those who would carry out such deeds. Simply put, let right be done.

The Prime Minister: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support for the action that the Government are undertaking and also for his words about bin Laden and the hon. Gentleman's conviction that bin Laden is, indeed, guilty.

In respect of our armed forces, as I said a couple of days ago, one of the greatest blessings that any British Prime Minister has is the strength, determination and commitment of our armed forces.

In respect of the coalition, I read in parts of the media that the coalition is under threat but I have not noticed that at all in the discussions that I have had. I believe that those people who are part of the broad coalition of support for the action that we are undertaking know perfectly well that it includes military action. Indeed, not merely has that been made clear by, for example, the French President, but it was made very clear by the German Chancellor who himself is prepared to commit German military support for the action that we are undertaking. In Japan, the Japanese Prime Minister, in what was a bold and courageous move given Japan's history, committed self-defence forces as part of the logistical and support effort for any action.

I think that there is a very clear understanding right around the world that, in the face of what we are dealing with, there is no alternative unless the Taliban regime do what they have so far obviously failed to do and yield up bin Laden. If they fail to do that, there really is no alternative to taking action. Otherwise we will simply allow that terrorist network to remain, and we know that it will carry on committing acts of terrorism if it is able to do so. That is well understood.

One of the benefits of the way in which the United States Administration and President Bush have handled this issue over the past few weeks results precisely from the fact that they have not acted precipitately but have taken time to reflect and consider. Had there been a different way forward, it would have come through in these past few weeks—it has not. Therefore, I think that there is possibly a firmer and clearer understanding today among people who analyse the situation reasonably and sensibly that we have to take action.

In respect of Iraq, of course it is important that we act on the basis of evidence, but I point out that the no-fly zones are still in operation in respect of Iraq and that Britain, with the United States, takes action in policing them.

In respect of Britain being a target, I agree very strongly with the hon. Gentleman. Britain is in any event a target, as indeed are any of the main western countries—not simply Britain. Britain is known obviously as a very close ally of the United States of America, but acts of terrorism have taken place or have been thwarted in many of the major European countries. The situation is quite clear.

One of the things that will emerge from the document that we shall place in the Library of the House of Commons—to be fair, this is obviously known by the people who have studied such matters—is that we are dealing with an individual and an organisation that, as a matter of their strong belief and conviction, think it is right that they kill not just American civilians but other civilians around the world who have any connection with the west and western values. Indeed, they are prepared to commit acts of terrorism not merely against western countries but against people in Muslim countries as well. When people read the statements that have been made by bin Laden, they can see that there really is no alternative and that no common agenda can be established with such people.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important that the money that is allocated in respect of aid should be used properly to meet international standards. One of the things that we have been trying to do over the past couple of weeks is establish with the United Nations a sufficiently solid organisational capability so that the money is allocated properly. That is why I was grateful to Kofi Annan for appointing Mr. Brahimi to co-ordinate the efforts. They have to be co-ordinated properly out there on the ground, both inside Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries. That will involve a very big effort indeed.

The small but significant number of groups that are here and that abuse our freedom are precisely the reason why we need to legislate. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support—in principle at any rate—for such legislation, subject obviously to discussion of the details. It is important that we try to discuss within the main political parties how we can take forward these measures because the quicker they are done, the better they are done and the greater the consent for them, the better the legislation will be.

As we have tried to do in respect of the military action, we are very happy to make sure that there is proper consultation with all the main political parties on the measures that we propose. The Terrorism Act 2000 strengthened our law somewhat and did have an impact, but we recognise now that the law needs to be taken further.

Of course I agree with the hon. Gentleman about those terrorist groups that are still operating inside the United Kingdom. It is difficult to make further progress in the peace process until it is absolutely clear that those who want to play a major part in the government of Northern Ireland for the future have unequivocally given up violence for good. That is precisely the reason for the impasse. I believe, however, that it is also important that we maintain the peace process if at all possible. One of the lessons from the past few weeks is that, where we have a process in place, let us continue it. However, it has obviously got to be based on the principles that were set out in the agreement.

I again thank the hon. Gentleman for his support. We are now approaching the difficult time when action is taken. It will be difficult; there are no easy options in this situation. However, I hope and believe that there is a far clearer understanding today that, if we take the right military action, combine it with the right humanitarian assistance and build the right political and diplomatic coalition, we have not merely the best chance of succeeding but the best chance in succeeding of winning the greatest degree possible of support right across the world for what we have done.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Skye and Inverness, West): We welcome this further parliamentary recall and the Prime Minister's statement that has accompanied it. Let me make it clear from the outset that, as he knows already, the Liberal Democrats fully support the Government's efforts to protect our own citizens and the interests of our military personnel—their families are anxious—and, with that, to root out international terrorism. In all that, he has our support.

It is surely correct that today Parliament stands united against the threat to the security of our citizens and to global interests generally. Obviously the Government are facing profoundly serious decisions and, those decisions once arrived at, must be subject to proper democratic scrutiny. That is parliamentary patriotism and it is a key distinction between all of us and the foe that we face.

We are all here to give calm and, we hope, cogent and effective voice to the legitimate aspirations and apprehensions of those citizens and constituents whom we all seek to represent. Of course, significantly, they include many members of the Muslim community throughout the United Kingdom. The evidence that will be published later today, and which I welcome, will make their apprehensions better understood and make it possible for them to be better addressed. I hope that as time goes by it will be possible, on both sides of the Atlantic, to publish more evidence. There must be no doubt that the evidence to hand is persuasive—persuasive as to culpability and breathtaking criminality and, further, potential criminality.

Will the Prime Minister reflect upon the overarching need to work within the broad framework of the United Nations? Specifically, does he agree that gaining UN support on the strength of the evidence against bin Laden would help to reassure world opinion about the justice of impending military action? For example, as part of that would he consider the case for making available to Kofi Annan and the Security Council the full extent of the intelligence information that is now available?

There are several specific aspects. Does the Prime Minister concur that any forthcoming legislation must meet two tests? First, is it likely to impact directly on the clear terrorist threat and the campaign against it? Secondly, can we satisfy ourselves that it does not compromise civil liberties to such an extent that the terrorist is seen to win by default? We will certainly support moves on extradition, as we have already with our colleagues in the European Parliament.

On religious hatred, an extension of existing discrimination law should be supported, although a longer-term, fuller equality act might prove to be the best

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

way forward in days to come. Those are all matters for later, but what of the immediate military concerns? Is the aim to remove the Taliban regime from power? What analysis has been made of the possible political and humanitarian consequences if they are driven out of power and, ultimately, what shape or form of regime are we striving to see established in Afghanistan? What advanced planning is under way to deal with the humanitarian crisis that is already growing as each day passes? The more attention we can give to that, the more we can build upon the sound strategic patience of recent days and help to build a better state of future peace.

The Prime Minister: In relation to publishing more evidence, we will try to do so as we can. As was stated a moment ago, we have shared the evidence with key partners in NATO. We have to be careful about how we use it and where we disclose it.

In respect of acting within the broad framework of the UN, we intend to do that. The Foreign Secretary will say a little more about that in his speech. On anti-terrorist legislation, we have to make sure that it is careful and proportionate, but there are obvious gaps in our law. The right hon. Gentleman accepted that on extradition, but there are also gaps in the way that our asylum procedures operate which need to change or we will not be able to deal with this properly.

On objectives, as I said a couple of days ago, for the Taliban the choice is simple. They either surrender the terrorists and close down the terrorist network or they become our enemies. If that happens, and the regime were to change, we are already working in close co-operation with people in and outside Afghanistan to build an alternative and successor regime that is as broad based as possible, unites ethnic groupings and gives people the chance of a stable Government there. That is an extremely difficult task but from everything that I have seen and read, the Afghan people are as much victims of the Taliban regime as practically anybody else.

On the humanitarian effort, the key thing is planning. The money is there and we already have in place the necessary finance for the initial amounts that have been sought. The real problem, as we saw when we set up camps around Kosovo, is planning and capability. After consultations between myself and others, Kofi Annan has appointed one person in charge of that operation, but we need to ensure that the organisational capability goes alongside the money, otherwise it will not work.

David Winnick (Walsall, North): As someone who does not often agree with US foreign policy, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he accepts that the United States has undoubtedly shown much diplomacy and restraint in the face of the atrocity of three weeks ago? If there are obvious dangers in any military action, does my right hon. Friend agree that, unless the terrorists are apprehended, there are equally opposite dangers in not taking military action because that would be interpreted by the terrorist network as the democracies being unable and unwilling to defend themselves? That danger must be minimised at any cost.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It cannot be stated too often that the terrorist networks in Afghanistan are exporting terror around the world. Even before 11 September, they had organised an appalling list of terrorist attacks and, as my hon. Friend said, if we do not take action, there is no doubt that they will carry on committing acts of terrorism and be emboldened to carry out even worse attacks. As I said a couple of days ago, there is no doubt that if they could have multiplied the number of people killed on 11 September, they would have done so.

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): The Prime Minister was right to warn in his earlier statement that what happened on 11 September is by no means the worst that can happen. Given the risk to the United Kingdom of a terrorist attack using chemical or biological weapons, whether that threat is specific or not, can the Prime Minister tell the House whether it is the clearly stated policy of the Government to take all necessary contingency measures against such an eventuality, including the stockpiling of vaccines and antidotes where they are available, in order to ensure that the largest number of people would have the best possible chance of survival if the worst should happen?

The Prime Minister: I know that the right hon. Gentleman takes a close interest in these issues and, of course, it is the Government's policy to take all reasonable precautions in respect of any potential terrorist threat. It is important to do so in a way that does not unnecessarily alarm people, but it would be irresponsible if, particularly after what happened on 11 September, there were no detailed work being undertaken and reviewed constantly as to how we should react to any potential threat. I do not want to say more than that, but in so far as it is possible to take such precautions, we do so.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the staff of the consulate-general in New York? As someone who was there when the planes crashed into the buildings, I had the opportunity to visit the consulate-general on Thursday and, by that time, its staff had dealt with 800 to 900 inquiries from anxious relatives all over the world, including not only the United Kingdom but Thailand and Australia. They had issued 150 emergency passports and had found accommodation for many people who needed to stay there, but had lost their homes. Much more vital, they had also been able to provide telephone land links so that anxious families in the United Kingdom and all over the world could talk to people in New York about whom they were concerned.

My colleagues and I were able to watch, at first hand, the way in which the emergency services responded. It was remarkable to see those individuals, who arrived the very second that the first plane crashed, freely go into that building knowing that they might not come out. We now know that most of them did not come out—yet as others came down the stairs, they rushed up them. There were many unsung heroes on that day, such as the emergency services chaplain who was killed while administering the last rites to one of the victims, and the two individuals who carried one of their colleagues, who was in a wheelchair, down 66 floors to safety. The most ethnically diverse city in the world—New York—responded magnificently after the initial shock and ensured, as we must ensure, that not a single part of the ethnic community that makes up New York was blamed.

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. First, I pay tribute—I hope that the House will join me—to Tom Harrison and all his staff at the consulate-general's office in New York. They were quite magnificent. The relatives paid tribute, even amid their grief, to the work that had been done and the help that they had received. A lot of people here, such as the Metropolitan police, played a enormous part in helping to co-ordinate the efforts to sustain those involved, which was obviously difficult for reasons that we know. We have said many times before, but it is worth repeating, that the emergency services in New York were magnificent. I have ensured that the Government have, on behalf of this country, made it clear to key people, to pass on to all their staff, how admiring the British people are of the efforts that they made.

Peter Bottomley (Worthing, West): I expect that the Prime Minister will agree with me in commending those people in Worthing, and probably elsewhere, who will deal with the threat of Islamophobia by holding a fund-raising event—involving Muslims and those in other faiths, including the Christian denominations—for the fund for the victims of the disasters in the United States. Will the right hon. Gentleman pass on the thanks of the House to Mark Byford of the World Service and David Green of the British Council for making plain what they are doing in these times? Although the Chancellor no doubt has to keep the purse strings under control, may I suggest that he considers providing consistent extra funding—not only during this crisis, but beyond—to spread the idea of democracy and openness around the world, because the real way to confront such problems in the long term is to allow people to live in peace in their own countries, and that requires more democracy, not less?

The Prime Minister: I certainly pay tribute to people in Worthing and elsewhere who have made it clear that Muslims are with us in the struggle against terrorism. They have often been the victims. Indeed, many Muslims were killed in the World Trade Centre. I hope that people understand that, despite the often disproportionate publicity given the statements of a few extreme people who call themselves Muslims, the vast majority of Muslims were appalled at the acts that took place and condemned them utterly.

We are increasing the funding for the World Service, and it is worth it. It does a magnificent job around the world, as does the British Council. They are very strong British institutions, which play a part not merely in reaching people and in communicating with them, but in giving them some sense, if they live in a country struggling under repression or dictatorship, that there is a different world to which people can aspire.

Ms Julia Drown (South Swindon): I support the Government in the actions they have taken since the appalling events of 11 September. In responding to those attacks, does my right hon. Friend believe that children in particular should be protected? If so, will he ask Ministers to ensure that no British children—under 18s—are sent into action in our name as part of this conflict?

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall do all that we can to protect British children.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I assure the Prime Minister of our continuing support for the actions that the Government have to take. May I also say that I am greatly impressed by the careful and deliberate way in which the actions of the United States have unfolded during the past few weeks? We hope that that indicates how matters will develop during the coming days. However, we know that choices have to be made between difficult and sometimes unpalatable options.

Terrorism is terrorism, and it requires no further qualification, so I ask the Prime Minister to reject the spurious distinction that some people seek to draw between international and domestic terrorism. The events of recent weeks—I am thinking of the arrest of the head of the IRA's engineering department in Colombia while developing similar mortars for the FARC guerrillas, the expedition of Sinn Fein's Assembly chief whip to Turkey in support of a variety of Turkish and Islamic terrorist groups and the appearance on Saturday at the Sinn Fein conference of a notorious Puerto Rican terrorist—all show that the Irish republican movement is part of an international terrorist network and that there is still no sign that it is making the changes required by the Belfast agreement. I ask the Prime Minister to bear that in mind in coming days. I understand his desire with regard to the present process, but we must recognise that it has now become a completely one-sided process. All the terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland—loyalist and republican—have broken their ceasefires in recent weeks and months, and sooner or later the Government will have to deal with the machinery and the resources of IRA and loyalist terrorism with the same determination as they display elsewhere.

The Prime Minister: First, the legislation that we propose will apply to terrorism wherever it occurs—whether inside the United Kingdom or outside, or whether it is international or domestic. Secondly, of course, we have the current impasse in the peace process in Northern Ireland precisely because it is necessary, if people want to play a part in the government of Northern Ireland, for them to demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to peaceful and democratic means. Given that the right hon. Gentleman has played such a large part in that process, I hope that he understands that, before it began, we also had a very serious situation in Northern Ireland, where terrorist groups operated and killed people year on year. We know that the situation is still very difficult and fragile there. Therefore, we must try to find a way forward, consistent with the principles that we set out in the Belfast agreement. That is what we are trying to do. I know that, because of the huge part that he has played, he will want to see that process move forward, and I accept that it can move forward only on the basis of principle.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): The publishing of some of the evidence is obviously very welcome, and we wish the Prime Minister godspeed in his efforts to consolidate the international coalition against terrorism. Will he tell the House what convinces him that, given the tragic failure of the intelligence community before 11 September, its competency has improved since 11 September?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his good wishes in the action that we take, but we have to bear in mind two things. First, our intelligence services do a superb job. However, it is often difficult with

[The Prime Minister]

organisations that operate in a highly secretive way to be sure of exactly what will happen. That is so even for a nation with the resources of the United States at its disposal. Secondly—my hon. Friend will know much about this—one of the things that we learn as we deal with such issues is that there can be a great deal of intelligence traffic, the significance of which may not be fully recognisable until after something has happened. Frankly, if we operated on the basis of every single piece of intelligence that came in, we would disperse our activities rather too widely. It is difficult, but I really believe that our intelligence is clear, certainly with respect to the attacks. But we have now reached the point where we must recognise that intelligence, no matter how sophisticated, is insufficient to deal with the threat. That is why we must deal with it directly and at source.

Patrick Mercer (Newark): The Prime Minister has spoken of the strength and determination of our armed forces. How will that strength and determination be further reinforced by the use of specialist reservists such as Arabic speakers, interrogators, intelligence officers and, above all, medical men, all of whom so far have remained uncalled?

The Prime Minister: I pay tribute to the work of the specialist reservists and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we will use them as and when we need them. We are still considering the requests that have been made about the precise capabilities that we can offer, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we will make full use of all the different parts of our armed forces, including reservists.

Mr. Mohammad Sarwar (Glasgow, Govan): We face the most miserable humanitarian and refugee crisis in history. Millions of people face starvation and hundreds of thousands are desperate to flee Afghanistan. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that continuous supplies will be the top priority at this crucial time?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that. We have the money identified and we have experience of dealing with Afghan refugees, as there were some 4.5 million on the move before 11 September. People have been fleeing the Taliban regime for a long time. I am confident that provided that we put in place the measures that we have identified around the borders of Afghanistan, we will be able to provide for people in camps that are set up there, although it is a huge logistical organisational operation. However, it is also important that we try to get supplies to people in Afghanistan. That will be more difficult, in part because the Taliban regime have made it clear that they will take action against anyone who co-operates with western agencies, even relief agencies, but we are doing what we can.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will the President, I mean the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman knows what I mean. Does he agree that suicide aerial terrorists have been waging psychological and economic warfare against the west and that the effect on the air transport industries in particular has been especially grave? Is it not the case that two state carriers have had to seek the protection of their Governments from bankruptcy and that many thousands of jobs have been lost, not least in this country? Will he assure the House that the Government will take specific measures to give airlines the resources to mount the security measures necessary and that, if necessary, airport departure tax will also be lifted?

The Prime Minister: We have the insurance agreement that will be of some assistance and, obviously, we are looking carefully at airline security measures. Of course these are difficult times for the airline industries and we are in close discussion and consultation with them. However, I believe that one of the most important things that we can do is to demonstrate by the strength of the action that we take that people can have confidence in going back to using the airlines in the way that they did previously. We have some experience—obviously less so given the particular nature of the attacks of 11 September—from the Gulf war of a crisis in confidence among people using airlines. I believe that that will pass when they see that proper security measures are in place and that we are taking the correct action. As a result of what happened on 11 September, there is already a great deal more security in place and people should have confidence in the ability to travel as freely as they wish.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for outlining the coalition that has been built up not just here in the House but internationally. That coalition will be severely tested over the coming days and weeks. Does my right hon. Friend agree that Members on both sides of the House will be judged by their conduct in the House and outside; that we must not lose sight of the overarching specific objective; and that force will have to be used to preserve peace, however uncomfortable that may be at times?

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. We are about to go through a difficult time because when action begins there will be many difficulties and problems, as there always are with such action. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her support. Of course it is important, in so far as it is possible—people in this country have the democratic right to disagree and long may that continue—to demonstrate a united resolve in this House.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Prime Minister take the opportunity directly to distance himself from the reported remarks of Lady Thatcher, who seems unaware that all representative Muslim associations in this country have condemned the atrocities in the United States? Does he hope and believe that the evidence that can be published will carry all members of the coalition? Will he reiterate that the military options available will avoid, wherever possible, the loss of further innocent lives? Finally, a number of hon. Members have remarked on the cautious, determined, hugely impressive and highly focused response of the United States Administration. Given that that is the response of the country most affected by the appalling events of 11 September, will the Prime Minister commend that hugely impressive stance to the rest of the international coalition?

The Prime Minister: I have not read in detail the remarks of Lady Thatcher. I have already said in my

statement that the vast majority of Muslims totally condemn the attacks on 11 September. In respect of the evidence being shared with other allies, I repeat what I said in my statement—that this evidence has been shown to allies in NATO and they have accepted that it is compelling. I hope that we will be able to release more evidence. After the attack on USS Cole and the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, evidence tended to emerge over a period of time, and people will find in the document detailed evidence of the complicity of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden in respect of those attacks. The difficulty at the moment is that in the immediate aftermath of 11 September we have a desperate, urgent need to protect carefully our ability to gather further intelligence. That is the inhibition that is upon us and I hope that people understand that. The reason that I thought it right to release the document is that it shows at least the conclusions that we are able to draw from the intelligence that we have. As for the sensible way in which the United States has proceeded, I certainly recommend that to everyone and I think that it is supported by every member of the coalition that I know.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): My right hon. Friend said earlier that Sikhs and Muslims also lost their lives in the World Trade Centre. He will be aware that the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Church leaders have called for a national day of prayer tomorrow for peace, justice and reconciliation and that Muslims, Sikhs and other inter-faith denominations have supported that call for prayer. Does my right hon. Friend agree that tomorrow, in schools, workplaces and elsewhere, a moment of contemplation, meditation, reflection and prayer would give a sense of faith and hope to our people?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. I spoke to the Archbishop of Canterbury over the weekend, and obviously I have also spoken to other religious leaders. The Archbishop of Canterbury is deeply committed to inter-faith dialogue, which is important in so far as good can come out of the terrible acts of 11 September. A closer understanding between the faiths would be sensible and perhaps a closer education of our own society about the degree of common heritage and common values would also be valuable. It is important, in these times in particular, that people understand where those of the faith of Islam are coming from and that it is a peaceful religion. It is also important that people in the world of Islam understand that we recognise that and also understand elements of the Christian, Jewish and other faiths.

Mr. John Maples (Stratford-on-Avon): The Prime Minister has mentioned the need to change extradition law, but surely the problem is delays in the courts rather than weaknesses in the legislation. The United States has been seeking the extradition of three alleged members of the al-Qaeda organisation in connection with the African embassy bombings in 1998—one since September 1998 and two since July 1999—and France has been seeking the extradition from the United Kingdom of a terrorist suspect since December 1995. Not only are those delays unacceptable, they are almost certainly costing lives. If we are to be at the forefront of the fight against international terrorism, we cannot allow Britain to be used as a place where terrorists can seek safe haven from justice in our allied countries.

The Prime Minister: I wholly agree. That is why not only Britain, but other countries around the world—countries with very similar problems—are seeking to tighten their legislation. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the delays are in the courts, but, on the whole, they are caused by weaknesses in the legislation. That is why we need to change the legislation to eliminate those weaknesses.

We need to look very carefully at the powers we have and the ability to speed up the process. There is no point in our saying that we are leaders in an international coalition against terrorism if our own legislation is not up to the mark. That is another reason why it is important to act. I should add that we are not the only country considering such action—most European countries and other countries are considering the same thing. Our laws, rightly and properly, have been drawn up to deal with the generality, the majority, of cases, but in the face of the current highly specific threat—even if it applies only to a small number of cases—we have to ensure that our law has the integrity that we need.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 25 (Periodic adjournments),

That this House, at its rising this day, do adjourn till Monday 15th October.—*[Mrs. McGuire.]*

International Terrorism

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mrs. McGuire.]*

10.42 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Jack Straw): As we have been hearing for the past hour and 10 minutes, the House does not need to be reminded of the scale of the act of mass murder committed on 11 September. Although it appears that there may be fewer British victims than were at first feared, for Britain it remains the greatest loss of civilian life in any single terrorist incident. In any event, it was an attack on democracy and on civilisation. Even if no United Kingdom citizens had lost their lives in the atrocity, we would still share with the United States of America, our allies and our partners, a common determination to secure the mutually reinforcing objectives of justice and security.

Our ultimate aim is simply stated: that there should be no safe haven for terrorists anywhere in the world. In the meantime, we have unfinished business. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has just made clear, we now have—and we are publishing it—incontrovertible evidence that links Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaedah organisation with the attacks on 11 September. Our most urgent task is to hold those people to account and to make sure that they pose no further threat to global security. Our response will be targeted and proportionate to achieving those objectives.

Overthrowing the current Taliban regime is not a primary objective of our action, but if the Taliban continue to harbour terrorists they will be considered our enemy and will have to face the consequences. Whether the Taliban become a target is essentially a matter for them, not for us. That is underlined by the terms of United Nations Security Council resolution 1368, which speaks of all necessary steps being taken against not only the terrorists, but those who harbour terrorists.

Those objectives are not up for negotiation. All of us fully understand, not least from conversations with our constituents, that there are those in the House and outside it who are concerned about the prospect of the use of force, and many more who, while supporting the use of force, are profoundly concerned about its consequences. We share that anxiety and concern, but the danger would be much greater if we did not respond effectively.

Our aim is the precise opposite of the terrorists' aim: it is to protect innocent life, not to take it. There can be no possibility of reasoning with people who have no reasonable demands. We have to confront them, as we ought to have confronted fascism in the 1930s: had we done so, the world would have been spared the much bloodier confrontation of the 1940s. Our aim is not revenge, but the complete removal of the threat that terrorism poses to our values and our way of life.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out our overall approach in his statements to the House on 14 September and this morning, and most comprehensively and vividly of all in the address to the Labour party conference on Tuesday. The fact that his address was shown live on all major channels in the United States and in many other countries speaks volumes for the leadership that he is providing not only for our own country but around the world as one of the key allies of the United States of America. It underlines again the extent of the commitment that we as a country have pledged to the people and the Government of the United States.

We all admire the dignity, determination and restraint that President Bush, his Administration and the American people have shown at this most difficult of times. The close friendship between our peoples needs no further explanation today, but I will say that the truest test of friendship is in the hour of need. Twice during the last century, the United States came to Britain's aid; today, we have to come to the aid of the United States.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been making tireless efforts. He has held countless meetings and telephone calls with other world leaders; he has visited Berlin, Paris, New York, Washington and Brussels; and, as the House knows, he has now left for a visit to Russia, the interests of which are, like ours, directly engaged in the crisis and which forms an integral part of the global front against terrorism.

As my right hon. Friend said, let us not forget that, just this week, terrorism has continued to take an ugly toll of innocent human life—in this case, in India. In Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir, a suicide bomber struck at the heart of that state's democracy by detonating a bomb in the State Assembly, killing 38 and injuring many more. The terrorist organisation Jaish-i-Mohammad, which I proscribed when I was Home Secretary, has claimed responsibility for that outrage. The House should know that we know that the leader of that organisation is linked to Osama bin Laden. I know that I speak for the whole House when I condemn that utterly unjustified attack and express our condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of India.

International law was mentioned by several Members who questioned my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I cannot emphasise enough that the actions that the United States, we and other partners in the international coalition have in contemplation are entirely within the framework of international law. The founding text of the United Nations, its charter, provides at article 51 for the right of UN members to individual or collective self-defence when they come under armed attack. The UN Security Council has passed two resolutions in the response to the crisis. The first, resolution 1368, states that those directly responsible for the attacks should be held to account, together with those who harbour them. The second, resolution 1373, focuses on two key areas: suppressing the financing of terrorists and denying them a safe haven from which to operate. That is the first time that a resolution has imposed an obligation on all states to respond to the global terrorist threat.

Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): My right hon. Friend has outlined the role of the United Nations, and the Prime Minister said that the evidence against bin Laden and his associates has been shared with key partners. Will my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary confirm that one of those key partners is Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, and that the UN's role in the programme on which we are embarked will not be limited simply to organising humanitarian aid?

Mr. Straw: I believe that Kofi Annan has been fully briefed. It is he in particular who has pointed out the clear rights of member states to take action under article 51 of the charter of which he is the custodian.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not much use people asking for United Nations authority for action and then opposing the action all the same? That happened in Iraq when Mr. Benn demanded a United Nations Security Council resolution, got it and then opposed the action.

Mr. Straw: I have a feeling that my right hon. Friend has been waiting for some time to say that. [*Laughter.*] Which dish is it that is best served cold? [*Laughter.*] As ever, my right hon. Friend makes an entirely fair point. I have heard people say, "What about the United Nations? Why is not the General Assembly going to meet?" Notwithstanding the fact that the UN General Assembly headquarters are only a few blocks away from the site of the atrocity, it met the very next day. The Security Council passed a resolution, the text of which I have in front of me, and so too did the General Assembly in almost identical terms, except for the final paragraphs, which come within the ambit solely of the Security Council.

The extent and breadth of the international coalition and consensus that has been put together since the atrocity is extraordinary. Resolutions in the Security Council and General Assembly have, on the whole, been unanimous, which is almost unprecedented. As my right hon. Friend made clear, if we are to vote for and support their words, we have to ensure that we understand the meaning of those words, and the meaning of those words is that there has been the fullest possible support and endorsement by the international community as expressed within the General Assembly and Security Council for the military action now in contemplation.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Is not that exactly the point? The United Nations is no longer immobilised because of cold war enmities. It has the capacity for action. Is not the point that it is the most important international institution, not one of a large number?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman is right. The basis of international law for the whole world is the United Nations charter.

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): Are the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues trying to get through the United Nations, building on the resolutions to which he has referred, a binding Geneva-style, all-embracing convention against terrorism, to which every member state would be expected to subscribe if that state was to continue to receive the benefits of membership?

Mr. Straw: There are already a number of conventions and I shall come to the details. We are in the vanguard of those who have signed and ratified those conventions. The Government of India have produced a further draft convention. Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Defence and I discussed many matters with the distinguished Foreign Minister of India, Mr. Singh, including how, in alliance with the Government of India and many others, we can better progress the convention, which would provide additional powers. Meanwhile, there is Security Council resolution 1373, which for the first time in the history of the United Nations mandates member states—they are not given an option—to take a variety of actions to fight terrorism of all kinds on one definition.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Manchester, Central): This is an important point for those of us who recognise that action must be taken against the terrorists. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that under international law and the aegis of the United Nations action has to be, in the Prime Minister's words, proportionate, and that we cannot sanction action going beyond what is legitimate and proportionate?

Mr. Straw: Action must be proportionate, but we must bear in mind the proportion of the attack against the United States and the proportion of the threat still posed by the al-Qaeda organisation.

None of us has any quarrel with the people of Afghanistan, who have suffered more than anyone from the wickedness of the current Taliban regime. My right hon. Friend set out the humanitarian assistance that has already been made available and is being put in place. The Secretary of State for International Development and her Department have been in the lead, nationally and internationally, in ensuring that an aid programme backed up by money is put in place. We are using their expertise, which is unrivalled in the world, to ensure that proper coalition of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Coatbridge and Chryston): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Straw: I will if I may first make some progress.

Our help to the Afghan people must go beyond that. They have the right to expect a peaceful and secure future. In July, well before the 11 September atrocities, the Government hosted a meeting of Foreign Ministers from neighbouring countries at the request of the United Nations at Wilton Park, a Foreign Office conference centre. It was agreed that a future Government should be broad based and reflect the country's rich ethnic mix. Unlike the Taliban regime, the future Government and country of Afghanistan should be a member of the United Nations.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Straw: I will if I may make some progress first.

We want to work with all responsible Afghans to bring peace to their country and to help it on the path to stable development. The country needs irrigation, agriculture, schools, hospitals and roads. Afghanistan's friends will be generous. Our commitment to the Afghan people is straightforward. We say to them, "You have been ill served by those who have made your country a centre for terrorism across the world. As soon as this stops the world will work with you to build a better future for you and your children."

Sir Peter Tapsell (Louth and Horncastle): Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

Mr. Straw: I want to make some progress because many Members wish to speak.

[Mr. Straw]

Regional instability is a natural consequence when the rule of law collapses in a failed state such as Afghanistan, and it is as much a threat to the Muslim world as it is to the west. One country that knows from long experience the damage that the Taliban regime have done to the Afghan people and their neighbours is Iran. Last week, I visited Teheran for talks with President Khatami and the Iranian Government—the first such visit by a British Foreign Secretary in a quarter of a century. We discussed how our two countries could better work together to help the refugees who are already seeking shelter in Iran, 2 million of whom crossed the border before 11 September. We agreed to carry on the fight against drugs. As the House knows, 90 per cent. of the heroin on British streets originates in areas of Afghanistan under Taliban control. A high proportion of it is smuggled through Iran, which has already lost thousands of its troops in the struggle against this evil.

President Khatami has spoken of the need for a dialogue between civilisations. The need is now greater than ever before. The evil deeds of bin Laden and al-Qaeda are sanctioned by no faith, let alone one like Islam, which stresses tolerance and respect for human life.

When I visited Cairo last week, that message was reinforced by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, one of the world spiritual leaders of Sunni Muslims. He told me that the terrorist attacks against the United States went completely against the teachings of Islam and that those responsible should be brought to justice. We are, therefore, at war with terrorism and in that war we are on the same side as Islam.

We would all gain from removing barriers to understanding between peoples and faiths and from creating a much more inclusive world. The experience of 11 September shows the continuing need for Britain to be actively engaged in the world. When states fail or conflict breaks out, it matters to us, whether it happens in the Balkans, Latin America, Africa, the far east or the middle east. Few parts of the world have suffered more from conflict and acts of terrorism than the middle east. Last week, I talked to the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres as well as to Chairman Arafat of the Palestinian National Authority about the latest moves for peace. I made it clear how determined the United Kingdom is to help those parties reach a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement. The House will therefore wish to join me in expressing dismay at the further acts of violence against innocent civilians this week. The Palestinian National Authority should do more to prevent such acts and to punish those responsible. Israel's response should be neither excessive nor disproportionate.

I urge both sides to redouble their efforts to enforce the ceasefire, to implement confidence-building measures and to resume talks aimed at a settlement based on the principle of "land for peace". Peace with security can come only through such a political process, in which Israel's rights as a state and the rights of its citizens are fully recognised, and which at the same time allows the emergence of a viable, democratic and peaceful Palestinian state committed to co-existence with Israel and recognised and respected by Israel. That has long been the position of the United Kingdom, shown by repeated endorsements of many statements to that effect by the European Union and underlined again by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the Labour party conference. President Bush himself expressed the same view on Tuesday:

"The idea of a Palestinian state has always been part of a vision, so long as the right of Israel to exist is respected".

Mr. John Maples (Stratford-on-Avon): When the Foreign Secretary went to Iran and published an article in an Iranian newspaper using the word "Palestine", was that deliberate or accidental?

Mr. Straw: It was neither. It certainly was not accidental. I made it absolutely clear at the time. There was no apology. My use of the word "Palestine"—I do not retract one word of that article—places me in good company: with not only the President of the United States, but the Prime Minister of Israel, who just two days before the article appeared spoke in a speech on 23 September of the possibility of a Palestinian state.

Mr. Mullin: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Straw: I will give way for the last time to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Mullin: May I take my right hon. Friend back to the passage of his speech in which he referred to what might come after the Taliban? We should not leave the wretched people of Afghanistan to the tender mercies of the warlords. It was their inability to cease their feuding that led to the Taliban coming to power in the first place. Has he contemplated the possibility of seeking a United Nations mandate for the future government of Afghanistan, as happened in Cambodia and East Timor?

Mr. Straw: I agree. There are many lessons to be learned about why the current condition in Afghanistan developed—lessons not only for the Afghan people and those in surrounding states but for the whole international community. That is why the UN Secretary-General has already appointed a special high representative to deal with the matter on his behalf, and why huge effort and consideration is being given to the future structure of a Government and stable state in Afghanistan and the region as a whole. My hon. Friend's suggestion that there may have to be some UN mandate to cover that country is certainly an option that is under consideration. Of course, the decision will have to be made by the Security Council.

Mr. Tom Levitt (High Peak): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Straw: With great respect, I must make progress because many others wish to speak.

The middle east is a key part of the global consensus against terrorism that we are now seeking to build. Let me briefly outline how that consensus is strengthening.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have severed their links with the Taliban. Countries throughout the world are pledging support—financial, humanitarian or strategic—on the many fronts of the fight against terrorism. In the G8, we are looking at ways of cutting

off terrorist financing, strengthening aviation security and enhancing co-operation on intelligence and security matters. In the European Union, we have agreed to create a European arrest warrant, a common EU definition of terrorism and a specialist anti-terrorist team in Europol. All 19 NATO allies have accepted the evidence of bin Laden's and al-Qaeda's guilt and, as I have already made clear, resolutions have been passed in the Security Council.

Britain has long taken a lead against terrorism and, sadly, has had all too much experience of fighting it. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that later today in New York a statement will be made that the United Kingdom has accepted an invitation to chair the Security Council committee that will monitor the implementation of resolution 1373, the key UN resolution against terrorism. The fact that our fellow Security Council members have invited us to do so is a personal tribute to the great experience and skills of our ambassador to the United Nations, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, and his team.

As we have heard, Britain's anti-terrorist legislation, including the Terrorism Act 2000 that I introduced to the House as Home Secretary, is such that we have already complied with many of the obligations of resolution 1373. We are one of the few states to have ratified and implemented all 12 of the international anti-terrorist conventions, but we are considering what further legislative action we must take. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary gave details of that yesterday at our party conference and will give further details to the House in due course.

Simon Hughes (Southwark, North and Bermondsey): Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

Mr. Straw: With great respect, I am about to close my remarks.

I and others have said before in the House that the world changed on 11 September, but we should make it clear to our citizens that our way of life has not changed. We are all more vigilant, and so we should remain. We are seeking a step change in the response to international terrorism in order that we can better protect and enjoy our way of life and the way of life of peaceful peoples throughout the world. Combating the threat of terrorism is the first priority for our society and for the whole of the global community.

On the evidence that we saw in the United States on 11 September, it is obvious that this terrible organisation, these evil people, will strike again if they are given the chance, but I say to the people of the United Kingdom that we have no specific knowledge of any specific threat against this country or our nationals and we are deploying all the tools at our disposal—military, intelligence, police, economic, diplomatic and political—to ensure that those people do not get the chance.

As President Bush has made clear, in the fight against terrorism, against that evil, we face a long, hard struggle. Holding Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda and those who harbour them to account will be just the first step, but we will win, because we are defending the values of humanity and the rule of law and civilisation, which are shared by east as well as west, by Muslims as well as those of other faiths and by the great majority of the nations and peoples of the world.

11.7 am

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): I welcome the debate and the recall of Parliament. The whole House has listened with grave attention to the Prime Minister's statement and the speech of the Foreign Secretary. My hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition has outlined our response. I am grateful for the chance to do so more fully.

I join the Foreign Secretary in sending our expressions of sympathy to the Government and people of India in relation to the Srinagar atrocity. Although I welcome this opportunity, I must touch on a difficulty that has arisen because it is three weeks since we previously met to discuss the international crisis and because we are meeting for only one day.

Yesterday the Home Secretary launched a raft of proposals. We have already indicated that, where such proposals are clearly designed to combat and will be effective in combating international and domestic terrorism, we wish to give them a fair wind. It is therefore somewhat disappointing that the Home Secretary will not be explaining to the House today or answering questions on the proposals that he outlined yesterday to his party conference. I hope that he will take the earliest opportunity to do so. As the Leader of the Opposition said, we stand ready to see Parliament recalled again before the end of next week to enable him so to do.

Prior to the Home Secretary's announcements yesterday, we asked for the Secretary of State for International Development to address the House today on the growing humanitarian crisis. That request was rejected by the Leader of the House. Again I trust that the House will at the earliest opportunity have the chance to hear from the right hon. Lady.

It is now more than three weeks since the terrible acts of terrorism were perpetrated on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, and the deliberate destruction of so many innocent lives. Three weeks, and the horror of the images remains vivid; the anger at the evil of those outrages lives on; and the determination to bring to book those behind the crimes against humanity is undiminished. What has changed is that the first reflex reaction of a desire for a quick response has been replaced by a grimly determined analysis of the terrorist apparatus that spawned those acts, a systematic identification of those who were responsible for them and the preparation of the means by which its eradication can be achieved.

When we last met in this House three weeks ago, I expressed my hope for a controlled and measured response. I paid tribute to the coolness and restraint of President Bush and his national security team. How much more today must we make clear our admiration for the careful and conscientious way in which our American allies have built the case for action and are focusing on key objectives? President Bush has met outrage with reason and terror with carefully measured reaction. Our confidence in him and his team has not been misplaced. Today I reaffirm our commitment to support the Government in standing shoulder to shoulder with our American colleagues.

Needless to say, in the 23 days that have passed, some have sought to sow seeds of doubt as to whether any action is justified or sensible. I suspect that we shall hear more such voices today. Let me make this clear: to accede to such thoughts would be to betray the thousands of innocent people who died on that dreadful day, and would

[Mr. Michael Ancram]

reward the terrorist murderers who killed them. Indeed, with the passage of time, the need to take on the terrorists, to eradicate them and the apparatus of terror which they control, and to give no respite to those who shelter or hide them, becomes ever clearer and the case ever stronger.

The Prime Minister today outlined some of the incontrovertible evidence of Osama bin Laden's responsibility for, and link with, the murderous destruction of 11 September. As my right hon. Friend made clear, we accept that evidence. It is laid before Parliament today and it makes certain things very clear: to do nothing is not an option: to seek to compromise with bin Laden or those who support him would be to fly in the face of the total barbarity and inhumanity of the deeds for which he must bear the blame. He and his henchmen in al-Qaeda must be pursued and, one way or another, brought to book, and the network of terror that he has cast about the world must be destroyed.

Some also argue that, once that objective has been achieved, that should be an end to the matter. That, too, would be to miss the point. I was delighted to hear the Foreign Secretary say that that part of our objectives is a start, and only a start. To say that it is the end of the matter would be to leave the terrorist virus alive and flourishing in its various environments, ready to emerge stronger and even more deadly in the future. When the President and the Prime Minister declared their purpose to be the eradication of international terrorism, we applauded them because anything less would be to promote the possibility of even worse acts of terrorism in the future.

Bin Laden must be the first objective along with his friends and supporters, particularly in al-Qaeda, but the fight against international terrorism will have begun only once that objective has been achieved.

International terrorism is not a monster that, once the head has been cut off, shrivels and dies. It is more like a virus that spreads of its own accord, self sufficient within its own environment and location. The fight must continue with equal determination and resolve until the scourge of international terrorism and those who sponsor or promote it are removed.

There will be siren calls from those who wish to see no further action. They will be the "appeasement" challenges of our generation, and the Government will have our full-hearted support in resisting them. We must let those who stand beside us in the fight against terrorism know that we are with them until the campaign has been won. We must not flinch from addressing, too, the terrorism of Hezbollah, of Hamas and, closer to home, of the still active remnants of the Provisional IRA and the loyalist terrorists.

We need to starve the terrorists of their finance—often emanating from crime—which enables them to flourish and to perpetrate their acts of criminal violence. We must never appease them, nor allow them to gain advantage from their acts of terrorism. We must make it clear to any state that sponsors or promotes terrorism, against which we are committed, that we shall bring to bear whatever pressure is needed to ensure that such sponsorship or support is ended.

We must leave the terrorists no hiding places, no safe houses, and no communities who will give them shelter and protection. Like the eradication of a virus, it will be hard, long and not without risk, but the ultimate goal of freeing the world from the scourge of terrorism must be worth that hardship and risk. It can be achieved only if we constantly re-emphasise that this is a fight against terrorism—murderous, calculating, increasingly sophisticated and progressively more dangerous. It is not about religion or culture, and those who seek to suggest that it is are, in the end, the friends of terrorism. Where terrorism claims to be about idealism, that concept is invariably distorted and perverted in the psychopathic terrorist mind. That is what allows it to slaughter without mercy.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): The right hon. Gentleman uses the word "terrorism", naturally enough in this debate, very often. Is it not time for an agreed definition of terrorism? Does he recall that the Government of whom he was a member could themselves have been accused of sponsoring and supporting terrorism in other countries?

Mr. Ancram: I shall treat the hon. Gentleman's last remark with the contempt that it deserves. He may welcome the fact that, the other day, the European Union produced proposals in which there was an attempt to define an act of terrorism, but he knows as well as I do that there are great difficulties, on a United Nations or wider basis, in securing agreement on what actually constitutes terrorism. We shall support the Foreign Secretary in any attempt that he makes to secure such a definition in the future.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Kelvin): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that the Government of whom he was a member supported the mujaheddin holy warriors of the Northern Alliance, who gave birth to the Taliban, in their terrorist war against the Government in Kabul, which led us to this juncture in the first place?

Mr. Ancram: May I say to the hon. Gentleman, whom I have known for a long time, that I spent four years combating terrorism in Northern Ireland, and I need no lessons from him as to what constitutes a threat of terrorism. The House knows that what we are about today is a campaign to eradicate the virus of international terrorism because it threatens everyone—every religion, Government and nation throughout the world. We must continue to condemn those who seek to stir up religious or racial unrest on the back of 11 September. The origins of those outrages were not Muslim or Christian; they were not of any religion. Indeed, members of all faiths were the victims of them. Those evil deeds were the product of a perverted intelligence, and we must not allow them to drive wedges between people whose faiths are in fact about peace and ideals about human understanding. I support the Government's proposals to deal with that matter in future legislation.

The goal of freeing the world from the scourge of international terrorism can be achieved only if the international will exists. I pay tribute to the coalition that has been built up over the past three weeks, which is truly remarkable, and to the Prime Minister for his contribution to its formation. Last Friday's UN resolution was another

milestone in the history of international co-operation. The coalition is the more remarkable—indeed, the stronger—for the fact that it is not homogenous but comprises different levels of participation and, if I may say so, of enthusiasm. At the same time, it is bound together by the common understanding that international terrorism is a virus that can destroy us all.

May I pay a special tribute to the Government of Pakistan, whose courageous stand will be central to the first phase of the fight against terrorism? They have stood up for what is right and we owe the people of Pakistan our support and help, not just in the short term but in the difficult years that may lie ahead. We understand the sensitivities of their position and we respect them.

The fight against international terrorism must have twin tracks. The eradication of terrorism, if it is to mean anything in the long term, must also mean the delivery of hope—the hope of delivery not only from the oppression of terror, but from the oppression of poverty and starvation. In Afghanistan the two are linked, because so much of the humanitarian crisis that we are witnessing is the result of the depredations of the Taliban—but the crisis is wider than that, and if we are to be credible in our fight against terror we must be credible in our fight against humanitarian disaster, too.

The United Nations has said that Afghanistan is facing a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportions. That is a problem that cannot be ignored; it needs to be aired on the Floor of the House, and the Government must respond to it.

Before 11 September, Afghanistan had been ravaged by 20 years of civil war. As a result there are now 4 million Afghan refugees in the region, and 1 million internally displaced people. Now we are told that a further 1 million are likely to flee to Pakistan, half a million to Iran and 100,000 to the central Asian republics.

Afghanistan is also a country ravaged by drought of appalling proportions. The harvest has failed for the fourth year in a row, and the United Nations expects 7 million people to become dependent on emergency food supplies. The stark truth is that we are now working against the odds and against the clock to avert a devastating famine.

The Government have announced emergency funds to cope with the refugee crisis. We welcome that, but serious questions remain about standards in the refugee camps, and we look to the Government to assure us that adequate steps will urgently be taken to ensure that the camps are clean and safe and that the basic dignity of the refugees will be respected.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Coatbridge and Chryston): I am grateful that the right hon. Gentleman is devoting some of his time to the important issue of humanitarian aid. Does he agree that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development has given a tremendous lead, but that, as in other areas, if we act unilaterally we cannot solve all the problems that we want to solve? Because of their commitment, the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State are in a strong position to ask the rest of the world, especially the nations in the coalition, to make the same humanitarian contribution as we do—and that is just as important as addressing the problems that we are discussing today.

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is correct to say that that crisis, like the terrorist crisis, must be dealt with on the basis of a wide coalition. I am also sure that this country, and the Government, have a role in leading the coalition in the direction that he would like. As I said at the beginning, I would have liked to hear from the Secretary of State for International Development in this debate. I hope that at some time in the future we can debate this serious issue, and hear from her.

The United Nations says that we have a six-week window to feed the hungry, and it is terrifyingly clear that there is no time for delay. We need to hear now that the funds made available will be spent without delay to alleviate hunger. In particular, I would welcome information about what steps are being taken internationally to secure as soon as possible the reopening of normal supply routes into Afghanistan. That will be the key to getting aid to those areas.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Might it be time for the international community to consider the policies of the Governments and alliances that impoverished and drove into further deprivation the people of nations with which we were in conflict? When we use those tactics against nations, rather than dealing with the problems of their leaders, we are feeding the monster.

Mr. Ancram: Obviously, part of what we seek to do internationally is to ensure that in dealing with the crisis of terrorism we also deal with some of the reasons why terrorists have been able to base themselves in those countries—but it would perhaps be beyond the bounds of the debate to start dealing now with the global aspects that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

The problem must be dealt with on the ground in Afghanistan. We shall support international actions to ensure that that is done, and we urge the Government to ensure that it happens as soon as possible.

We approach the debate today in a continuing spirit of bipartisanship and support of the Government's reaction to the crisis. However, I would like to pose one or two questions, and I hope that the Secretary of State for Defence will be able to respond to them. First, will he assure the House that where—as in the case of bin Laden—incontrovertible evidence may become available identifying other terrorist organisations or states sponsoring terrorism, the Government will take a similarly robust stance?

What is the Government's current position in relation to Iraq? For years, the regime has been publicly condemned as a major sponsor of terror and a constructor of weapons of mass destruction. Now, suddenly, we hear little or nothing about it. Do the Government support a course of action aimed at eradicating the virus of international terrorism within Iraq, and could that be part of a second phase in the fight against international terrorism?

Dr. Julian Lewis (New Forest, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is evidence that Iraqi intelligence was involved in the first attack on the World Trade Centre in 1993? Will he continue to press the Government to

[Dr. Julian Lewis]

reveal their attitude on whether Iraq has been actively supporting bin Laden and his terror network since that time?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding the House of that, and I ask the Secretary of State for Defence to respond to what he has said when he replies to the debate.

I have another question to ask. The overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is apparently now a firm objective of the impending action. Will the Government tell us what specific plans there are to fill the political vacuum that will ensue, and who they see as the best alternative likely to achieve stability and peace in that region?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Could we be clear exactly what the attitude is towards Iraq? Some of us guess that if the Iraqi Government had had much to do with this, it would have leaked; but the truth is that many Iraqis might have been recruited to bin Laden's evil organisation by 10 years of bombing and sanctions. That has to be faced.

Mr. Ancram: Obviously, the hon. Gentleman is aware that I am not privy to all the intelligence information that is available to Ministers. The question that I am asking is: if there is incontrovertible evidence linking the Iraqi regime with acts of terrorist atrocity, what action will be taken? If we shy away from action, we begin to undermine our own case in the fight against international terrorism.

Given the escalation of the international terrorist threat, what plans are there to increase the resources available to the intelligence agencies? As the Secretary of State for Defence will be aware, the agencies' heads have described their current and prospective funding position as "challenging", and have flagged up the possibility of being unable to maintain current service levels, let alone meet new challenges. The House recognises the fact that the events of 11 September showed the tragic human cost that can result from inadequate intelligence, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be able to reassure the House on that important matter.

We debate this serious situation today still in what might be called the period of preparation. That is a time when patience is called upon, and cool nerves are vital, but also a time when our determination and resolve to take on the enemy, international terrorism—that virus of evil inhumanity—and to destroy it, must be strengthened and entrenched. As the Foreign Secretary said, we know that we face an enemy with a level of viciousness and a lack of accepted human values that we have never faced before. Three weeks ago, that enemy struck America with what were in effect human flying bombs, and we must keep that image ever before us. If we do not destroy that enemy, tomorrow it could be us.

We must not waver in our readiness to take part in the fight. We owe it to America for the way in which its people have always stood by us in our time of need—but our motivation is greater than that. This is also our own fight for our own freedom and security. If we truly believe in a world free from terror, and in our children's right to a life free from the blackmail of terrorists, it is a fight that we must engage in, and win. That is the challenge of what the Government face, and again today I offer them our support.

Mr. Speaker: I must inform the House that, in order to give as many Back Benchers as possible an opportunity to speak, there will be a limit of eight minutes on Back-Bench speeches.

11.29 am

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was fastidious in referring to his visit to Israel last week. He did not refer, however, to the rite of passage that he went through and which all British foreign affairs spokesmen undergo when they visit Israel under Likud Prime Ministers. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House had his meeting cancelled because he rightly visited Har Homar. When I was shadow Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shamir, then Prime Minister, cancelled a meeting with me, which led Abba Ebban to tell me that a meeting with Mr. Shamir and no meeting with him were of equal value.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has been vindicated in respect of what he said in his article and when he was in Israel. Since last week, the President of the United States has said that he believes that there should be a Palestinian land, as did my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister two days ago at the Labour party conference. However, I believe that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made an error regarding what appeared to be a comparison of the terrorism that is taking place now in the middle east with that which brought about the destruction of the World Trade Centre. I believe that there is a very great difference.

All terrorism, in any circumstances, is utterly to be condemned, but there are acts of terrorism that have a political objective. Even though the terrorism may be evil, the political objective may be valid. When Menachem Begin, as a future Israeli Prime Minister, ordered the bomb attack on the King David hotel in Jerusalem, he was seeking to establish the case for a Jewish state. When Mr. Shamir, also as a future Prime Minister, participated in the murder of the United States mediator Count Bernadotte, he did so for the same reason. When Yasser Arafat was involved in terrorist activity in the middle east—he was undoubtedly involved in such activity for a long period, before he learned better ways—his aim was to establish the case for a Palestinian state. As it happens, I agree with the objectives of both those groups of terrorists, although I totally oppose the terrorism in which they were involved. Even the unspeakable massacre in Srinagar this week, which both sides have rightly condemned, took place nevertheless within the context of the Kashmiri people's case for a right to speak in their future. The method was utterly wrong, but the objective was understandable and valid.

There is a difference between all those acts, which are based on methods that are utterly to be condemned but have objectives that are sometimes to be supported, and what took place in the United States three weeks ago. There is a very great difference indeed between terrorism with an objective—however wrong the terrorism itself may be—and terrorism that is carried out simply for the sake of terror, which is what occurred in the United States

and could happen elsewhere. That is why our Government, together with the United States and the international coalition, are absolutely right in deciding that they have to take action to extirpate the cause of that terrorism and, if possible, to bring to justice those who were responsible. That means military action. It would be foolish of us to deny that such action is necessary, although the Government are perfectly right to say that it must be proportionate and that civilian casualties must be avoided wherever possible.

Belatedly, the west has come to realise that the existence of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is an affront to all human values. It is sad that this terrible series of events in the United States should have brought to the forefront the need to deal with that fact. In my constituency, there are refugees from Afghanistan who have undergone the most terrible experiences in order to flee from the Taliban. They would be the first to want to go back to an Afghanistan that was peaceful and law abiding, and no longer treated women as chattels—the treatment received by the women who fled to my constituency.

I want to address one more comment to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and refer to the lessons learned in my constituency. Like most hon. Members, I regard my constituency as my university, as it teaches me about all these issues. I deplore more than I can say the stupid, ill-informed remarks made today by Lady Thatcher. All the messages that I have had from the many Muslims in my constituency are of total condemnation of the atrocities that took place in the United States. It is an ill reward for their condemnation that they have been the victims of attacks such as that on the Eileen Grove mosque in my constituency. I welcome the fact that the Government are taking action to deal with the problem. Those racists who have attacked Muslims in this country—peaceful, law-abiding people who support our Government's policy—are not bin Laden's enemies, but his squalid disciples. There can be no excuse whatever for not dealing with such people, which is why I shall support the legislation that the Government plan to introduce.

Sometimes, there is a sanctimony about expressions of unity in the House, but on this occasion what has been said on both sides of the House has been completely sincere, is utterly necessary and should hearten the Government and the international coalition in the action that they are rightly planning to take.

11.37 am

Mr. Menzies Campbell (North-East Fife): The Prime Minister rightly began his speech by reminding us that the events that have brought us here resulted in the death of 7,000 people from 70 nations in circumstances of unimaginable terror. Although it may be three weeks or more since the events took place, today we once again share in the sorrow of those who have been bereaved and bear their grief with them.

The passage of three weeks does not alter the fact that the events of 11 September were a deliberate and calculated atrocity that was conceived in cold blood, planned with skill and executed ruthlessly and regardless of the consequences. The cause of the attack was not American foreign policy, but an amoral disregard for human life. It is grotesque to suggest that a four-year-old girl, making her first and only flight in an aeroplane, should somehow bear responsibility for the actions of a Government whom she was never allowed the chance to grow up and vote either for or against. No grievance, however real or perceived, justified such slaughter of human life. To echo words that we have all used in the past three weeks, the violence was imprecise and disproportionate and was designed to maximise civilian casualties—the very reverse of the criteria for military response that the Foreign Secretary set out in his speech at his party conference and again in the House today.

I hope that we will put an end to some of the crude anti-Americanism that has characterised comment here in the United Kingdom. I have criticised American foreign policy in the House, as have many other hon. Members. However, the sort of crude anti-Americanism that we have seen in some quarters is wholly unjustified. In the period immediately after the atrocities, people were anxious that the sense of outrage and alarm might provoke the United States into immediate, retaliatory action. Indeed, that is what the terrorists hoped for. As some have already said, it is a measure of the maturity of the Bush Administration that no such thing has happened. The American constitution, let us remember, is composed of checks and balances, and it is clear that in the last three weeks those checks and balances have been at work.

I agree with the Foreign Secretary that there is no need for an express resolution from the Security Council authorising a particular military response. Article 51 of the United Nations charter, and resolution 1373—passed last week, on 28 September—authorised the use of force in self-defence. As the Foreign Secretary said, the resolution is unique: never before has there been a resolution, mandatory, imposing obligations on all members of the UN under chapter 7.

If we have a reasonable apprehension that there is the possibility of a further attack, pre-emptive action is justified in international law, whether carried out individually or collectively. As I have said before, I believe that the United Kingdom should make its forces part of that military response. We have an interest in doing so; but the United States is our ally and we have treaty obligations under article 5 of the treaty establishing NATO.

As the Prime Minister also made clear, military action must be based on intelligence and must have clear objectives. Before today, the Prime Minister had said that there was incontrovertible evidence of the involvement of Osama bin Laden. The 19 countries of NATO reached a similar conclusion, abandoning the conditional support that they had initially given in favour of unequivocal support. Today the Government—I think, uniquely—have decided to publish some parts of the intelligence. I do not recall intelligence of this kind being published, for example, at or about the time of the Gulf war. This is a unique occasion, and the House should understand that.

Only part of the intelligence is to be published. Why? Publishing all of it might well put at risk the lives of the people who provided it; but a more pragmatic and perhaps rather more cynical consideration is that such action might prejudice the availability of a valuable source in the future.

In so far as the whole evidence has not been published, I do not shrink from saying that we must take the Prime Minister and his colleagues on trust. The Prime Minister has gone to the country and he has come to the House of

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

Commons; and he has given his word that that is the case. The consequences for the Prime Minister and his Government, were that not to be so, are incalculable, and I therefore have no difficulty in taking the Prime Minister on trust in this matter.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell): If I understood correctly earlier, the leader of the Liberal Democrats argued for a greater demonstration of the intelligence information. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us what his party's position actually is?

Mr. Campbell: It is nice to see that the spirit of non-partisanship is surviving the whole of this morning's debate.

As my right hon. Friend said, if further evidence can be published without prejudice, it should be published. The Prime Minister accepted that himself when the point was put to him. I am saying that in the absence of publication of that further evidence, relying on the faith of what the Prime Minister has told the country and the House I am prepared to take the Prime Minister on trust. I do, however, raise a question to which I am sure the Foreign Secretary has addressed himself. That may not be enough for some members of this coalition, and it may be that some form of independent scrutiny or verification will be required. No doubt, along with his officials, the Foreign Secretary will give some consideration to how intelligence beyond what has been published here today may be made available to those whose presence in the coalition is of such fundamental importance.

The Prime Minister also made it clear that, if military operations were embarked on, it was axiomatic that there must be clear aims. I accept the aims set out in the Prime Minister's statement, in which he said:

> "We must bring bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders to justice and eliminate the terrorist threat that they pose, and we must ensure that Afghanistan ceases to harbour and sustain international terrorism. If the Taliban regime will not comply with that objective, we must bring about change in that regime to ensure that Afghanistan's links to international terrorism are broken."

That is a clear statement of objective justifying military action.

It is also the case that the coalition might well be under strain if action taken were other than proportionate to need. Let us try to deal with that word "proportionate". "Proportionate" does not mean "equivalent". Indeed, I think it was the Foreign Secretary himself who said, emerging from a meeting of European Union Foreign Ministers, that we were talking about "proportionate to need"—and "need" means no more than what is necessary to achieve the aims set out by the Prime Minister in his statement, and to neutralise the threat. The maintenance of the coalition will undoubtedly require careful observance of those principles. Of course, this also means—in contradistinction to what was done by those who perpetrated the atrocities—avoiding civilian casualties as far as humanly possible.

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The Prime Minister impressed on us the importance of humanitarian aid and the need to ensure that it is in place. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that women in Afghanistan are particularly at risk? They are already subject to cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment by the Taliban. Many are already war widows. In circumstances in which people are fleeing in fear, they will be more vulnerable than anyone else and should be given particular help.

Mr. Campbell: It is a sad fact of the conflicts in the Balkans, more recently, and also in Afghanistan that civilians, and women in particular, now bear the brunt. The hon. Lady has a long and distinguished record of bringing such matters to the House's attention and I agree with all that she has said.

If we are to make forces available, we must also make resources available—resources to meet the cost of the massive humanitarian effort required to feed, clothe and shelter millions of refugees throughout the region. I think we have a moral obligation to do that, but we have a pragmatic compulsion as well. Instability in the region would hardly be in our interests, and instability in a Musharraf Government unable to cope with a sudden influx of refugees would be directly against our interests.

Geraint Davies (Croydon, Central): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that our aims and objectives should perhaps go beyond getting rid of bin Laden and providing aid? Should we not aim to renew and reconstruct Afghanistan? Will not and should not the price of peace be much greater than the cost of war?

Mr. Campbell: I am coming to that, but I am happy to agree with the hon. Gentleman.

The Musharraf Government may well be at risk unless we provide the necessary resources for the humanitarian effort, but millions of Afghan citizens will not survive unless we do. If a military response is justified, a parallel humanitarian response is obligatory.

We should even now be considering how Afghanistan can be brought back from the clutches of the Taliban. I think the principle we should adopt is this: how can we best assist the Afghans to clean up their own country? As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) said, it would be too simple just to pile resources into the Northern Alliance. The suspicion and envy of the Tadjiks in the north and the Pushtuns in the south is legendary, and it would make no sense whatever for us to substitute for the Taliban a different kind of civil war. I was encouraged by the extent to which the Foreign Secretary acknowledged that there may well be a role for the United Nations in the reconstruction period to which the hon. Gentleman was referring. It might at least be worthy of consideration on another occasion whether this is a suitable opportunity for a UN protectorate.

The Home Secretary is to introduce new measures in response to the events of 11 September. I have no doubt that there will be points of agreement between him and us. The extradition process can be torturous, as we discovered in the case of General Pinochet. Surely it is not beyond our wit to fashion a system that is both fair and expeditious. If these are the principles that guide the alternative proposals that are to be made, they would most certainly have our support. In this area, justice delayed is justice denied, as much as in any other area of the law.

Mr. Richard Allan (Sheffield, Hallam): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that we still face a fundamental ethical dilemma in responding to the many

extradition requests where there is evidence that suggests that the individual we extradite may be facing torture and summary execution in the country to which he or she is returned? There are many examples. We should not avoid the dilemma. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the best way to resolve the dilemma is to strengthen the procedures of the international court? That would allow us to hand over individuals to a fair trial rather than the place where we would otherwise send them.

Mr. Campbell: If the international court were in existence, I would be wishing it to exercise its jurisdiction. It is not in existence because an insufficient number of countries have been willing to ratify the statute that would establish it. I cannot fail to point out that the United States is one of those countries. Perhaps the events of three weeks ago will cause some reconsideration of the United States position in that matter.

If we are to believe what we read in the newspapers, the Home Secretary appears to have backed away from introducing compulsory identity cards. If the proposal were to come before the House, I and others on the Liberal Democrat Benches would require considerable persuasion that it was necessary action to take.

We will examine with particular care any proposals that have the potential to penalise genuine asylum seekers. The pathetic men and women who try to cross the channel in inflatable rubber dinghies seem to me to be improbable terrorists. As we now understand, terrorists are much more likely to arrive in London in the first-class cabins of scheduled flights.

I, too, will say a word or two about the middle east. Israel has an unchallengeable right to her existence. However, as the Prime Minister said to his party conference, the Palestinians have a right to justice and to land. That has been echoed by the Bush Administration. We do not need another UN Security Council resolution to implement that approach. Resolutions 242 and 338 set out these principles, as does resolution 435 which condemns the policy of settlements in the occupied territories.

We must recognise that when the Foreign Secretary and I argue that resolution 1373 gives authority for actions of the sort that we are contemplating, there are some people who ask, "Why do you see more efficacy in some resolutions than others? Why do you attach more importance to the implementation of some resolutions rather than others?"

The continuing dispute between Israel and the Palestinians was not the cause of the terrible events of 11 September, but it is used as an excuse. If we are determined to eliminate or at least diminish the terrorist threat, let us ensure also that we eliminate the excuses for terrorism. I thought that the Foreign Secretary was right to visit Iran. I would not necessarily have chosen the language that he used in his article, but those of us who know him and those of us who have had robust political differences of opinion with him were outraged on his behalf when an official of the Israeli Government saw fit to describe him as anti-semitic. It was a disgrace. I hope that he received the apology that he undoubtedly deserved for that intemperate language.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Mid-Sussex): I share and wholly endorse the view that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has expressed. Those of us who wish Israel well regret very much that it should try to deal with the Foreign Secretary in the way it tried to deal with his predecessor when he said exactly the same sort of thing over the question of settlements.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman's intervention speaks for itself.

We must accept that any military action, however proportionate to need, runs the risk of casualties. I do not shrink from asserting that we should always be calculating and cautious about putting the lives of other people's sons and daughters at risk by inviting them to take military action on behalf of the United Kingdom. We should never make such a decision unless we are satisfied in the exercise of a considered judgment that it is necessary. It seems that it may be necessary now. It appears that our armed forces may truly have to be committed not only in the short term but in the long term. In either case, they are entitled to know that they go not only with our gratitude but with our prayers.

11.56 am

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I welcome the statement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which I thought was balanced and reasonable. I welcome especially the prominence that he gave to alleviating the plight of the Afghan people.

I accept that the perpetrators of the unspeakable atrocities in New York and Washington must be found and brought to justice. Their funding and other networks must be wound up, and those who harbour them must be obliged to hand them over. If that leads to the fall of the Taliban, no one will be happier than me. The danger that the lunatics will strike again is real and it must be faced.

On the plight of the people of Afghanistan, I say to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and to anyone who has any influence in this situation: have mercy upon the people of Afghanistan, who during the past 22 years have endured the unendurable. Our immediate priority should not be to start bombing anybody—let Osama bin Laden stew for a while—but to ensure that food and health care is available to the 6 million, 7 million or however many millions of people whose plight is so desperate.

I welcome the restraint that has been shown so far, but nothing will do more to undermine the international coalition that is being so painstakingly assembled than the sight on our television screens throughout the winter of starving people in Afghanistan. As the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) said, nothing will do more to undermine the stability of Pakistan than playing host to hundreds of thousands or millions of people who are starving on its doorstep, and who may not sit idly by while they are starving.

Secondly, as I said in my intervention on my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, we must not abandon the people of Afghanistan to the tender mercies of the warlords, the so-called Northern Alliance. They had their chance. They occupied Kabul. It was their inability to stop feuding and their complete lack of interest in the welfare of their people that led to the rise of the Taliban.

I was glad to hear what my right hon. Friend said about considering the possibility of a UN protectorate. In my view, that is the way forward. A protectorate was applied for a period in Cambodia, but not for long enough. The

[Mr. Chris Mullin]

UN left a little earlier than it should have done. However, that protectorate made a big difference when Cambodia faced the same sort of chaos as is now being faced by Afghanistan. A protectorate has also been applied in East Timor. In my view, it is the model for post-Taliban Afghanistan. There is a history of short-termism and cynical politicking in the relations between the west and Afghanistan, which have led to the present state of affairs. We must start thinking about the longer term.

Thirdly, we should not start what we cannot finish. I heard Henry Kissinger on the radio the other day saying—and he should know—that Americans do not always think through the consequences of their actions. He can say that again. We do not have to think back very far to the encouragement that was given, and perhaps the support, in the wake of the Gulf war to the uprising by the Shia people in the south of Iraq, who were then abandoned to the mercies of Saddam Hussein. By God, they were butchered.

At various times in the past, in both Iraq and Iran, attempts have been made to encourage uprisings by the Kurdish people. Then the line in Washington changed, people there got bored, their attention wandered elsewhere and other priorities arose, and the Kurdish people were left behind to be butchered. I do not want to see our Prime Minister, who has handled himself magnificently so far, being forced to justify the unjustifiable in the months to come.

I shall say a word about anti-terrorism laws, a matter to which we shall no doubt return, and in which the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which I have the honour to chair, will be taking a close interest. I have an open mind. If there are loopholes that prevent us from effectively fighting terrorism and which need closing, fine. However, there is in this country a long history of anti-terrorism legislation which has been rushed through in haste and repented at leisure. I hope that we will think carefully about any proposed changes.

I heard someone—it might have been the Leader of the Opposition—suggesting that it might be a good idea if the Home Secretary had the power to exclude people solely on the basis of intelligence. I think back again to the Gulf war and remember that, solely on the basis of what was alleged at the time to be impeccable intelligence, many Iraqi people who lived in this country and in the main ran take-away shops were rounded up and put in Pentonville. There was talk of sending them back to Iraq, where God knows what would have happened to them. After it was all over, every single one of them was quietly released, because the quality of the intelligence was found to be so dismal. Some of those people were my constituents, so I am familiar with the precise detail in those cases. It makes me nervous when I hear such proposals.

On ID cards, I am glad that we are not going forward too fast. There may be a case for ID cards. I do not rule it out, but the case must be made. Work has been done on the matter in the past. Under the previous Conservative Government, the Home Affairs Committee considered ID cards, and concluded that they would not work and would cost an awful lot of money. There may well be better things to do with £1 billion than introduce a not very effective system of ID cards. I could be persuaded, but I would have to be persuaded, as would many hon. Members in all parts of the House.

Finally, I shall briefly address the bigger picture, as the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife did a moment ago. As he said, the plight of the people of Palestine is not an excuse for terrorism. No one suggests that. As he also said, no one questions the right of Israel to exist. However, it is no use ringing up Ariel Sharon and telling him to exercise restraint for a few weeks while we assemble a fragile coalition, if we let him carry on as he has been doing as soon as the immediate crisis is over. We must recognise that the running sore in the middle east is the background to almost everything that has happened—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst): Order. The hon. Gentleman has had his time allocation.

12.4 pm

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Bracknell): I know that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who has just sat down prematurely, will understand if I do not pursue some of the interesting and characteristically thoughtful points that he was raising. I hope that the Secretary of State for Defence, who is in his place, will respond fully.

I particularly agreed with the hon. Member for Sunderland, South when he said that, to date, the Prime Minister's actions have been magnificent. It is right that those of us on the Opposition Benches fully acknowledge that the Prime Minister's role, not just in this country but internationally, has been what the people of this country have a right to expect from their Prime Minister. We will continue to give him our full support in all that he is doing.

In the few minutes available to me, I shall address the issue of international terrorism—the subject of this important debate, which has rightly led to the return of the House. If there are lessons to be learned from the dreadful events of 11 September, one of them must be that terrorism is wrong from wherever it comes. It can never be justified, least of all in a democratic country where every citizen has equal voting rights and where there is an independent judiciary, a free press and absolutely no excuse for resorting to violence rather than the ballot box. The House will realise that I am referring to a particular part of the United Kingdom—Northern Ireland.

As the right hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), the distinguished leader of the Ulster Unionist party, mentioned in his intervention, sadly the Provisional IRA and its political wing, Sinn Fein, have not, as we all hoped when the Belfast agreement was signed, given up violence for good or their links with international terrorism.

The whole House was shocked and disappointed when the Colombian authorities arrested three members of the Provisional IRA in that part of Colombia which is controlled by the narco-terrorists from FARC. Among the Provisional IRA men who were arrested was the Sinn Fein representative in Havana. They were all highly placed within the movement. To my mind, that drives a coach and horses through the possibility that Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA will fulfil their obligations under the Belfast agreement.

As the right hon. Member for Upper Bann said earlier, the process that we all enthusiastically supported, which was started by John Major and Lord Mayhew, tragically

has been entirely one-sided. For the men of violence, the terrorists—whether they are so-called loyalist or republican—it has been entirely take and no give. The House is aware that there has been no decommissioning, no handing in or getting rid of arms and explosives, even though more than 400 terrorist prisoners—so-called loyalists and republicans—have been released.

David Burnside (South Antrim): Will my right hon. Friend, with his experience as shadow spokesman on Northern Ireland, comment on the double standard that has been running through the debate all morning? The Garda Siochana and the Royal Ulster Constabulary have evidence relating to the guilt of the Real IRA in the Omagh bombing which has every bit as much credibility as the evidence supplied by the FBI and the CIA, and which is persuading the Government to take military action. Is that not a double standard?

Mr. MacKay: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. If I may, in the few minutes left to me, I will deal with it towards the end of my remarks.

There are international links between republican terrorists in Ireland and other terrorists around the world. A prominent member of ETA was present at the weekend Sinn Fein conference. The House will be aware of the particularly unpleasant bomb attack in the Basque capital only two days ago, in which the court was blown up but mercifully only one passer-by was injured. Equally, there are close links with the narco-terrorists of the FARC in Colombia. If anyone has any doubts about the way in which they wish to destroy democracy they have only to consider the dreadful death of the Colombian Minister who was kidnapped, tortured and murdered in the past few days.

I have a request for the Prime Minister and for the Secretary of State for Defence, who is to sum up the debate. As the hon. Member for South Antrim (David Burnside) said, we must treat terrorists equally. Terrorism is wrong. The House and the British people want from the Prime Minister the same robust response towards terrorism in Northern Ireland as to the dreadful events of 11 September. It is vital that those who are not prepared to renounce violence are treated in the only way that one can treat terrorists, which is to remove them, arrest them and take away their funds.

This is a bipartisan debate, but the House will forgive me for saying that there has been a lack of enthusiasm about taking that action. Many of us, from the Dispatch Box and elsewhere, have pressed the Government to take a tougher line on terrorism. They have given terrorists the benefit of the doubt again and again and they have been let down. I am not critical that they have given terrorists the benefit of the doubt, but it must now be abundantly clear that they will not decommission their arms and explosives and that they are totally committed to gaining funds from criminal activity and destabilising our democracy. I hope that the legislation that the Home Secretary and other Ministers will put before the House in the next few weeks will allow positive action against terrorism in Northern Ireland.

12.12 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The right hon. Member for Bracknell (Mr. MacKay) is right to say that this is a bi-partisan day for the House. In my 14 years as a Member of Parliament I do not recall a debate in which so many speakers on both sides of the House have been in agreement. Of course, we agree that this is a war on terrorism. This is not a war against Islam. It is not about faith, but about dealing with fanaticism and terrorism.

I commend the work done so far by the Foreign and Defence Secretaries, the visit made by the Foreign Secretary to Iran, and the visit that the Prime Minister is about to make to the Gulf and Pakistan. Britain is not going to do this on its own. It is right that we should stand with the United States. America is our closest ally and friend and the attack on the World Trade Centre was an attack on all countries that wish to eradicate terrorism.

Sometimes, however, I feel that we discover our friends in the Arab world only in times of crisis. It is extremely important that relationships are built up and developed over many years. The Arab states have enormous affection and respect for Britain and it is important for the Prime Minister to visit countries such as Oman to ensure that the support is there. The visit to Pakistan is also good. We should commend the role that India and Pakistan have played in unity on this occasion. The British Government should support the attempt by those two countries to work together to defeat terrorism.

I wish to deal in particular with the British Asian community and with the words of Baroness Thatcher that were quoted in *The Times* today. She stated that she did not hear enough voices of condemnation from the British Muslim community about the events that occurred in New York. I do not know what she has been reading or to what programmes she has been listening. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the only representations and comments that I have heard from the British Muslim and Asian communities have been words of condemnation for what has happened in New York as well as total support for the actions that the Prime Minister and Government have taken. Similarly, on the words of Mr. Berlusconi—although I think that he retracted them—it is important for people to understand the background to what has happened and to acknowledge the enormous contribution that the British Muslim community has made.

Tonight I shall go to Richmond in Surrey, which is the town in this country to which I first emigrated at the age of nine. Thirty one years after we emigrated to Britain, the country has changed. The Asian community has made an enormous contribution to the life of this country. I do not think that we would have imagined 31 years ago that some day someone called Hussain would be captain of the England cricket team. Perhaps in another 31 years someone called Patel may edit *The Daily Telegraph*.

It is important that we do not look at the British Muslim community and visit mosques only at times of crisis. Dialogue, which hon. Members have every day with constituents of Asian origin, is extremely important. Asians feel that they are part of the mainstream in supporting the Government in what they are doing.

We also need to support the Government's proposals, which were outlined by the Home Secretary yesterday at the Labour party conference. We need to introduce legislation to tackle religious hatred. Some of us have suggested it for some years. It is important to be tough on those who perpetrate acts of racial discrimination. We must look at the laws and the powers that have been given

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

to the Commission for Racial Equality to find out how we can make that body more effective. It should be doing much more work in this area, not only to bring communities together but to take a more proactive role in what is being achieved.

I come to the House in total support of what the Government are doing. I am proud that we have a Prime Minister who is prepared to take a leadership role in international affairs. It is also important that the Asian community speaks out in a united way, as the Muslim community has done—Muslim leaders such as Zaki Badawi, Iqbal Sacranie and Syed Pasha have all condemned what has happened.

I look forward to the day when, like the Jewish community in Britain, the Asian community has a body that truly represents it—a sort of Board of Deputies—in which it can say in a united way what it has said separately through its various communities. That day will come and the House should push for such a development. In the meantime, in the current crisis we must work together in a united way in Britain and in the international community to ensure that the perpetrators of this terrorism are defeated once and for all.

12.18 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Mid-Sussex): It is right that the House was recalled today. Hon. Members must remember that we have a central role to play in questioning, sustaining and fortifying our Government at this difficult time. I join hon. Friends on both sides of the House who have congratulated the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the others involved in the excellent work that has been done so far.

Like the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), I was in New York when this appalling attack took place and 300 of my colleagues from a firm with which I am associated were killed in the north tower. It was an unspeakable outrage, and the more so since the perpetrators of the crime hide behind a great religion that teaches, above all, compassion, love and respect for human life.

There has been no lashing out. America has reacted with great strategic patience and skill and, above all, with calm resolve. The coalition that has been built by the partners is extraordinary. An alliance that includes Russia, the NATO countries, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and all the other Gulf states and that receives the acquiesence of China and Iran would simply have been impossible before 11 September. Inevitably, such an alliance will always be fragile, but, as the Prime Minister said, that fact will not prevent us from proceeding, diplomatically and militarily, with boldness and resolution.

As the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) said, at the heart of this catastrophe lies the Arab-Israeli conflict. I warmly welcome what the Prime Minister said about that in his speech to the party conference and again today. When the pieces in his kaleidoscope settle, Governments must truly see to it that we bring all our influence to bear on a resolution of that problem. Some 34 years of occupation and daily humiliation and harassment of an entire people have led to appalling and grotesque consequences. There have been 10 years of unconvincing peace process following the Madrid conference and there will be many more catastrophes unless the Governments of the world—particularly those of the United States, Britain and their European allies—put their minds to dealing with this problem.

Our international influence depends on our ability to act in concert with others, notably the United States, Europe, the World Trade Organisation, NATO, the G8, the Security Council of the United Nations and so on. The Government need to use all the energies at their command to secure a just, lasting and, above all, honourable peace for both sides. As I said, I am encouraged by what the Prime Minister said today and I hope very much that the Government will proceed with great vigour and see to it that America does the same.

Moderate Arab leaders are under increasing and possibly irresistible pressure. I hope very much that they will welcome the spirit of what is intended and push forward themselves even if they are entitled to be cynical about the process.

Britain has a role to play and we need to be more confident about it. We can play a thoroughly worthwhile and important role both in our own right and as a trusted ally of the United States—an ally that is able to make a distinctive contribution, as the Prime Minister rightly has in contributing to the formulation of policy in Washington.

I warmly welcome the Foreign Secretary's visit to Iran. It is far too important a country to ignore and, in the new realities, it has a role to play. We need to develop the relationship on a continuing basis, not only on our own account but with our partners in the European Union. At the same time, we must urgently develop and grow a more pragmatic, sensible, mature, lasting and meaningful relationship with Russia, so I am delighted that the Prime Minister has left to visit Moscow.

Does the Foreign Secretary believe that the Foreign Office deploys enough resources to its middle east department? We are embarking on a long and drawn-out business, which will require increased commitments in an already very overstretched department.

Defence will also require more money, and I hope that the Prime Minister will repay as of right the great debt of honour that he owes to the armed forces. In particular, we will need to spend more money on our intelligence services, to whom we should be very grateful and of whom we are very proud.

Britain must take the chances offered by these events. The Prime Minister is right to say that the state of much of Africa is an affront to the world. If the world wanted to put that problem right, it quite clearly could. Britain has a unique role—standing as it does at the centre of the Commonwealth, the G8 and the Security Council—and we can develop a strategy with our partners and allies to try at least to deal with the problem in a co-ordinated way. It will be the job of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition to make sure that the Government press ahead with all those plans and that they do not simply slip off the agenda after a period of time in the face of pressing—albeit correct—local domestic difficulties.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (Mr. MacKay) said, terrorism knows no bounds. It is not defined by any ethnic group, so it is very difficult to fashion a strategy to deal with such a strange and

perplexing enemy. Broadly achievable military and political objectives are developing, but there will be no clear single or timely outcome. This campaign will not be defined by military action—although that must be an important part—and the only way to cope is by the Government and the United States working together through international co-operation and concentric alliances that are built on security, intelligence, diplomacy and economic and military efforts. All those elements must come together, not just in the fight against terrorism but in the resolution of the middle east crisis and, in particular, in dealing with the deep and abiding frustrations that have built up over the years.

As an immediate start at the World Trade Organisation conference in Doha, I hope that our Government will press for a fairer deal for poor countries as a matter of the most profound importance for now and for the future. Meanwhile, I endorse the words of my hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. As British forces prepare themselves for almost imminent action—it cannot be long delayed with the advance of winter and the approach of Ramadan—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

12.26 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (North Warwickshire): When the New York massacre took place, I was on a transatlantic flight. When I flew back to this country, it occurred to me that no one will again get on an airline flight—whether for a family holiday or a business trip—without a chill going down their spine as they recollect the images of the World Trade Centre and the aeroplanes going into it.

This is a time when we need to show full solidarity with the Americans in fighting terrorism. I commend the firm stance taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister from the first in helping to put together a coalition to help the Americans to fight terrorism.

I do not want my family to get on a flight in future and wonder whether they will get off it, and I do not want those constituents who work in tower blocks to wonder whether they will be able to go home. We need to ensure that the threat of international terrorism is dealt with.

I wish to make a few comments about several issues. I want to refer to the Muslim community in this country, to the calls made by many people for evidence to be provided about Osama bin Laden's involvement in terrorism and to the concern about the refugees and civilian casualties that may occur in Afghanistan.

I commend the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) about the Muslim community. We must do all we can to explain that this is not a war against Islam or against Muslims any more than fighting the IRA is a war against Catholics or fighting the UDA is a war against Protestants. We face a small group of fanatics who happen to be based in Afghanistan, but all religions have their fanatics.

I welcome the efforts made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to bring Iran into the alliance. It is important that we receive support from our allies in other Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, as well as from countries with which we have had less cordial relations in the recent past. It is also important that we send a clear message to Britain's Muslims that we are proud of them and their contribution to our country.

I was the Minister with responsibility for race equality for four years, and almost weekly I met members of various Muslim groups. I know them and their leaders well. I was delighted by the meeting that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister held in Downing street with many Muslim leaders and the clear messages that were given to them. They were also able to state their condemnation of the atrocities that took place in the United States.

I strongly welcome the announcement of new laws against religious violence and harassment and new laws to deal with incitement to religious hatred. I also welcome moves to sort out some of the problems in our extradition and asylum systems. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will consider extending the Race Relations Act 1976 to protect Muslims from religious discrimination. That was being considered in the Home Office and I hope that there will be an announcement in due course.

I welcome the Prime Minister's decision to publish some evidence today. That is important. I also welcome the endorsement of the background to that by the leaders of the Opposition parties who have been briefed on the details. The Taliban would have us believe that they will hand over Osama bin Laden if America can prove that he was involved in the New York massacre. I suspect that no matter how much evidence were to be offered, it would not be enough. It beggars belief that the Taliban, who oppress women, persecute homosexuals, feed their finances from the sale of drugs, behead adulterers and massacre their opponents, should pose as civil liberties lawyers when it comes to defending a mass murderer such as bin Laden.

What also worries me is the attitude of some commentators in this country who have demanded the publication of all the evidence, including intelligence information. I am worried by those who question the validity of a western response without proof, as though they expect telephone transcripts, video tapes, documents and witnesses who can be cross-examined. The British and American Governments are justified in maintaining some secrecy in protecting intelligence sources. Sharing background information with Opposition leaders was useful and important, but it is not necessary to share it more widely.

Based on available information, there is a need to act soon. The Government must know that they have the support of Parliament and the British people for that action. The Taliban's demand to examine the evidence should be seen for what it is—a cynical prevarication. We know that the Taliban are sheltering bin Laden. We know that bin Laden is a major terrorist and the prime suspect for financing the mass murder in New York. The Taliban must accept the consequences of helping terrorism and the British Government should support all reasonable action by the Americans to deal with it and to bring bin Laden to justice.

What struck me when reading some recent articles in our media is the fact that some people in this country are anti-American. It worries me that anti-Americanism has sometimes been the anti-semitism of the left, sometimes unreasonably, unjustifiably and based merely on prejudice. It is time to recognise that we must give some meaning to the deaths in New York, and that meaning must be to tackle and end the threat of international terrorism.

[Mr. Mike O'Brien]

It occurred to me this morning as I realised that it was poetry day that the words of the American poet, Archibald MacLeish, are right for us to recall as we think of those who died. He said:

"They say: our deaths are not ours, they are yours.

They will mean what you make them.

They say: whether our lives and our deaths were for . . . a new hope or for nothing is something for you.

They say: we leave you our deaths, give them meaning."

We have a responsibility in some measure to redeem the lives of those who died in New York. Ending the fear of international organised terrorism would give those deaths some meaning.

12.34 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (South-West Devon): I am pleased to take part in this debate and to make three points. First, I should like to place on record my strong support for the action being taken by our Government and our Prime Minister and by the American Government. It is right to take every conceivable step to bear down on the individuals responsible for this terrible atrocity. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan are despicable. They clearly harbour terrorists and sponsor acts of terrorism and are a legitimate target for our military response. I strongly support the leadership of President Bush and our Prime Minister at this time and commend them for many of the things that they have said and done.

It is worth reminding ourselves that, in politics, actions speak louder than words. We have lived through a time in international politics when charisma, soundbites and rhetoric have become all important. President Bush was criticised for his response in the first 48 hours when he was clearly a man in shock. Who would not be in shock as the leader of a nation in which such atrocities had happened? He had received a poor press over here before 11 September and many people had spoken poorly of him. We now need to reappraise our opinion of him. His leadership has been exemplary. He has surrounded himself with the best people possible and is determined to do what is right. That is a refreshing change from leaders and politicians who fill our screens with their rhetoric. I am not in any way impugning the excellent speech made by our Prime Minister at the Labour party conference this week and I am not having a sly dig en passant. I am simply saying that I would rather have a president in the White House whose actions are determined to solve the problem than a president whose rhetoric is intended to make us feel better for a while. I support the steps taken by President Bush and our own Prime Minister.

I also support the steps taken by the Secretary of State for International Development to make sure that humanitarian relief for the people of Afghanistan is handled properly. It is heartbreaking to see the women and children of that country suffer. Stories of military conflict throughout history talk about the soldiers and the leaders who send them into battle and about the consequences of success and defeat. We read very little about the women and children who are often the innocent victims of every conflict there has ever been. That applies now to the women and children of Afghanistan, and it is right that we should do all we can to provide aid and to offer as much comfort as possible. That is important and I support the Government's actions.

My second point is that, like several other hon. Members, I represent a constituency in which many service men and women live and work. Many of my constituents are marines or work for the Royal Navy and Plymouth has many fine defence facilities. Many of my constituents are already in the middle east preparing for some sort of military response or are on their way there and will be involved in conflict.

Like many of my colleagues, I spend a lot of time with military personnel as they make up a large part of my constituency and I never cease to be impressed by their courage and professionalism. Those men and women know the horrors of war, but they also know their duty. I have spoken to people in my constituency in the past three weeks who know that their lives and bodies might be on the line over the next few weeks and are ready to step forward to do their duty on behalf of us all. I want to pay tribute to them and say that we in this place will think of them every day. We know that they will make us proud; they always do. Thank heavens for our excellent and professional armed personnel.

As young men and women prepare to go and fight, it occurred to me that too many of us, especially in our younger generation, have taken for granted our essential freedoms and our democracy. We seem to live in a world where we do not think that we have to pay for anything. As young men and women go to the middle east, this is a reminder that there is a price tag for our democracy and precious freedoms. It is remarkable that there are young men and women who are prepared, possibly, to pay that price.

I now come to my third and most important point. I represent a constituency with an ethnic minority population of 0.01 per cent., but I have spent a lot of time in the past few years, and in the past few weeks, meeting members of our Asian community and our Muslim community in this country. I want to say loudly and clearly from the Conservative Benches that this is not a war against Islam; this is not a war against Muslims; this is a war against a few despicable people who will go to any length to cause terror and destruction here in the west.

I have heard nothing but condemnation of the terrible atrocity from the Muslims with whom I have discussed the issue in the past few weeks, so I want to align myself with those who say that we stand shoulder to shoulder not just with our American friends but with the Muslim community in this country. This is one of those moments when we can make a difference to the future. Many young British Muslims are internalising what is going on at the moment and asking themselves where their allegiances lie. By our actions and our language in the House, we can send them a very positive signal. They are as much a part of this country as any hon. Member. They are in their home. This is their country. We are committed to building a multi-racial, multicultural Britain in the 21st century, and it is right that Opposition Members make it clear that that is our commitment to those friends, brothers and sisters in this nation.

We live in serious times, and it is important that the House rises to the challenge. We are fighting for democracy, and I applaud the Government for the steps that they have taken so far. We think of and pray for our

young men and women who are on their way to that troubled region, or those who are already there. Above all, through our actions and our words, it is vital that we use this terrible atrocity to build stronger community relations in this country, so that we can all look forward to a better Britain.

12.42 pm

Mr. Piara S. Khabra (Ealing, Southall): I represent a constituency in which a large number of Muslims live. There are about 10,000 Muslim voters in my constituency. I have not met or seen any Muslim in my constituency who supports terrorism, but that does not mean that there are no individuals or groups who support terrorism, and I have seen some of their activities in my constituency.

I should like to offer my condolences to the thousands of people who lost friends and family following last month's brutal terrorist action, which represents a challenge not just to the United States, but to democratic nations across the world. Nearly 70 nations, including India and Pakistan, lost citizens in the attacks.

I have by no means been an uncritical supporter of the United States, especially in the light of some its foreign policy decisions. Too often, especially under the current Administration, the US has seemed to take the line that compromise with them means following their lead, or people get nothing at all. In the past year, America has acted in a dispiriting unilateralist way on issues such as the world criminal court and global warming, yet none of that, even by the furthest stretch of the imagination, can begin to justify the atrocity that the terrorists have committed. People who have said "I can see why this happened" are lending a dignity to those actions that they do not deserve.

Nothing can justify the deliberate taking of civilian lives, and people automatically forfeit their argument when they turn to such acts of terror, but whatever the moral confusion of those who perpetrated the terrorist acts, we have not held the people of Afghanistan responsible for them—and we should not—nor have we tried to blame any religion, despite the attempts of some to paint the coalition's moves as an attack on Islam. Such people wilfully ignore inconvenient events, such as the fact that NATO went to war against a Christian regime in Kosovo to defend a Muslim minority.

I am pleased that the coalition that is being formed and led by the United States and the United Kingdom has not simply lashed out and retaliated by, for example, the carpet bombing of Kabul. So far, the response has involved a careful assessment of the situation and a gradual and deliberate build-up of our forces. In a moving and symbolic gesture, the Security Council stood up, instead of raising its hands, in support of a motion condemning the atrocities as an unprecedented act. That reflects the rest of the world's willingness to literally stand up and be counted.

That unity has been reflected in the co-operation of some unlikely sources, and it will be essential if we are to take the next necessary steps. The Taliban must, at the very least, be made to hand over Osama bin Laden, and we are right in using targeted force to bring that about. However, the actions that we need to take, and the lessons that we need to learn, are not just in some distant conflict zones, but here at home, where we have seen some of the activities of the terrorists. I have often raised my concerns in the House about the threat posed by terrorists to the west's security and those who live here. Yet, too often, the west has turned a blind eye to terrorism abroad—for example, in Kashmir, where non-Kashmiris have committed terrible atrocities in the name of religion. We should address such issues not just for humanitarian reasons, but out of self-preservation. Acts of terrorism and the religious zealotry that often inspire them have a habit of spreading.

So far, the Government's policies have tended to be too soft, and too much has been tolerated from those who support terrorism abroad and sometimes in this country in one form or another. We should, for example, be prepared to stand firm against the religious fundamentalists in this country who openly call for a holy war. The coalition that has been built up by the US and the UK should also learn from the mistakes that the west has made in the past when confronting an enemy overseas. For example, the Taliban are, in large part, a creation of the policies adopted by the US during the conflict between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. The idea of jihad had almost disappeared from the Muslim world until it was revived, under American encouragement, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The country was left full of weapons and the notion of jihad has spread far beyond the Afghan borders. Let us be cautious when choosing and arming our new allies.

The fears of those who expected the United States to respond with an immediate show of force have not been borne out, and it is now time for us to concentrate on the responsible actions that we can take at home and abroad. We have already increased the aid that we are offering to the region, and it is important that we continue to work to avert the possible humanitarian disaster. We should not make the Afghan people suffer twice for the actions of their leaders. As a member of the Select Committee on International Development, I should like to ask the Secretary of State for International Development to consider that issue.

We must also be responsible at home. Of course, none of us enjoys having our bags checked at the cinema or spending yet more time checking in at the airport, but if we are to prevent a repeat of the events in New York, we have to take precautions. Such inconveniences are a small price to pay for our safety, and they do not represent a victory for the terrorists.

Our democracies are still standing firm. They will not be beaten down by cowardly acts. We should remain vigilant about the activities of racists in this country and abroad.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

12.50 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Aldershot): I was in California on the west coast of America on 11 September and I agree with all right hon. and hon. Members who support the measured response by the United States Government in the aftermath of the tragedy. The attacks caused the most severe destruction on mainland America since the civil war 140 years ago. The American people suffered a great shock and I was surprised by their measured response. By the time I left America on the following Sunday, virtually every house had the stars and stripes hanging outside or planted in the garden. There was a great determination

[Mr. Gerald Howarth]

among the American people to resist the challenge, not only to them, but to the rest of the western world, to our values and our democratic way of life. Central to that will be the role that our forces play in that activity.

The Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence said that action is necessary. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Soames) said a moment ago, the campaign will not be defined by military action alone. There needs to be military action as soon as we can possibly identify targets that can be eliminated with the minimum loss of innocent lives. We must make it clear to the Government, particularly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that we will support the reallocation of funding that will be required to ensure that our troops can meet that commitment.

I welcome the Defence Secretary's announcement that he intends to review the strategic defence review. That is right and proper in the aftermath of these horrific events. Quite clearly we will need to refocus our troops in order to meet the threat from international terrorism. That will need further funding, however, and I hope that the Minister for Europe, the right hon. Member for Neath (Peter Hain), will convey to the Defence Secretary that we expect some explanation from the Government as to how they will provide the necessary troops to meet the demands that will be placed on them shortly. Our troops are already heavily committed around the world. Overstretch is a popular word, but it illustrates the difficulty that our troops face in being involved in almost continuous back-to-back operations.

In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Patrick Mercer) the Prime Minister said that there are no plans to call up reservists. Members expect the Government to share with us as soon as they can what specific plans they have.

We shall have to move beyond looking at the military response to the threat from Islamic fundamentalism. A few days after 11 September, President George Bush senior said that while the United States had invested a lot of money in high-technology espionage, it had neglected human intelligence. He was absolutely right. One of the secrets of our success in Northern Ireland—if that is what it has been—is that we invested a great deal in human intelligence infiltrating terrorist organisations. That is where we must now redirect substantial investment. The United Kingdom is well placed to do that. We have the expertise—we have first-class people—and we have the experience.

I now turn to the Muslim world. There is no doubt that the events of 11 September were the action of a tiny minority of Islamic fundamentalists. However, if there were 19 people on those aeroplanes those 19 people achieved more in a few minutes than an entire generation of communist Governments. They had attacked mainland America. So we have to address the serious issue of Islamic fundamentalism. The Prime Minister reminded us that bin Laden has said that killing Americans is a religious duty. It has been made absolutely clear on both sides of the House that this is not a campaign against Islam. Indeed, it relies for its success on building a coalition with the Islamic world.

I salute in particular the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) who said that we must stand firm against the tiny minority of Islamic fundamentalists in this country who are doing a great disservice not just to the rest of the country, but particularly to the Islamic community as they are undermining the public perception. It may be that the newspapers are giving them more coverage than they deserve, but they are getting that coverage.

For the past five years I have been calling on successive Home Secretaries to take action against Omar Bakri Muhammad whose outpourings are offensive to the vast majority of people in this country, whether they are native British, Christian, Muslim, Jew or whatever. I was supported in my campaign by the Board of Deputies of British Jews whose then president wrote to me saying:

> "For some time the Board of Deputies and in the Jewish community have expressed concern about this individual and the activities of his organisation. Nevertheless, it appears that he has been able to continue to orchestrate a campaign of harassment against our community and in particular Jewish students on campus, whilst claiming state benefits from this country."

Why on earth is he still in this country? There are others like him, and they are not only abusing our hospitality and the freedom of speech for which this House has fought for generations, but they are polluting the minds of young, susceptible Muslims in this country. British Muslims were arrested in the Yemen—Lord knows what they were doing out there. We have to get to grips with the training camps that are operating here.

I will support the Home Secretary when he brings measures before the House, albeit that it will be the third set of anti-terrorism measures in four years. For goodness sake, the time has come when judges must no longer be allowed to determine policy. Parliament must determine policy. At our briefing last week, for which I am grateful, one of my hon. Friends asked the Prime Minister to produce some judge-proof laws and there was a great roar of laughter. However, it is part of our problem. The Human Rights Act 1998 must not be allowed to stand in the way of the human rights of the great majority of people in this country who support the Government in their determination to eradicate this particularly pernicious form of international terrorism from our midst.

12.57 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): There is no doubt that the events of 11 September greatly affected us all. The mass murder was wicked in its intent and I join other hon. Members in saying that it had absolutely nothing to do with Islam and in sending our sympathies to the bereaved in their suffering.

Since 11 September we have all been holding our breath, expecting the United States to act as it has done so often in the past—quickly and unilaterally. It is to the credit of the Prime Minister and others that they have held the line by going round the world establishing an international coalition. None of us would disagree with the aim of that coalition—the eradication of terrorism. That is in all our interests, not least for the sake of survival. I believe that that course of action has led to a desire for justice, not revenge. The fact that so many countries are committed to the eradication of terrorism has led to a much more mature debate. Instead of concentrating purely on the military option, the international community has also sought to address the humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding daily before us.

Millions of people are facing imminent starvation and fleeing the major cities of Afghanistan. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd) referred in

an intervention to the terrorism against women in that country. Some of us have raised that issue in the House in the past. It should be a source of great shame to us all that the world has looked the other way and ignored the suffering of those women. When the crisis is over, I hope that international attention will turn to the plight of women, not only in Afghanistan but in other countries of the world, and that we get rid of the nonsense that such things are done in the name of religion or of culture. Human rights are human rights and we should not deal with those who daily deny the human rights of others.

The overwhelming priority must be the saving of the Afghan people—we have to get food, shelter and medicines into Afghanistan. In that way, we will win the people's friendship and trust. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) said, whatever happens in the coming weeks, we cannot expose the Afghan people to yet another western-funded regime that is no better than the Taliban. A cursory examination of the so-called "Northern Alliance" reveals that many of its members are up to their murderous necks in the blood of innocent Afghans. Any future Government in Afghanistan must be founded on democratic values and on the restoration of civic movements and of law and order. That means a United Nations mandate.

I do not think that it will be possible to eradicate terrorism unless we understand and, more importantly, address the deep-rooted alienation from which the terrorists derive legitimacy and support. The eye-for-an-eye brigade will level the charge of excusing mass murder against those who want explanations and understanding, but that is a nonsensical charge designed to gag those who want debate—well, we shall not be silenced.

People must have noticed that the loudest applause during the Prime Minister's speech to the Labour party conference came when he acknowledged the festering sore that is the middle east. To the assertion that Israel wants secure boundaries, I reply that Palestinians want a state and it should not be beyond the wit of the international community to give them that.

We have to stop ignoring Kashmir. The people of Kashmir have a right to determine the future of their state—the UN resolution has been on the books since 1948. Why do we not listen to the friendly voices in the Gulf who tell us that we are alienating millions of Muslims by constantly bombing the people of Iraq and starving them through sanctions? That is a cruel policy and it is time that it was lifted. Half a million Iraqi children have died in the past 10 years—that is not a price worth paying.

I want the end of the Taliban. That is our common aim. However, bombing the poorest country in the world using cruise missiles at $1 million a time will not hold the coalition together or do anything to save the millions of starving Afghans.

I want the people who committed that heinous crime to be brought to justice before the International Criminal Court. That means that the Americans have to come on board and abide by the decisions of the ICC. The world changed on 11 September, most of all for the United States of America. The Americans now accept that they are as vulnerable as the rest of us to such mindless acts. If we want security, we must use international solutions: that means the United Nations.

The subject on which I shall end my speech is one that could not be mentioned at my party's conference: national missile defence. One thing is clear: NMD would neither have detected nor have prevented the terrorist attack that took place on 11 September. However, it seems that President Bush remains determined to go ahead. Before the attacks, NMD was already having a destabilising effect on international relations. On 22 August, President Bush said that the United States was preparing to withdraw unilaterally from the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

The Prime Minister has gained worldwide approval for his role in creating the international coalition. He has made much of our friendship with America, and it is true that we are her closest allies. However, he should tell his friends the truth. He could play an important role by withholding endorsement of NMD.

National missile defence is opposed by the European Union, by most members of the United Nations and by 276 Members of Parliament. The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs advised against it, as have many others. It is not a defensive system; it is offensive and we should have nothing to do with it. The Prime Minister could help to make the world far more peaceful by telling the Americans that NMD is no good. NMD does not protect this country, it makes it a more dangerous place and exposes the British people to greater peril.

1.5 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): These are difficult times. No one should underestimate the shock suffered by the United States and its citizens as a result of the terrorist outrages of 11 September; nor, simply because other countries' citizens, including our own, were killed in smaller numbers, should we forget that the crisis with which we now have to deal is truly international. It is international in terms of its repercussions for peace; for almost every domestic national economy and sector of it; for world trade, regional stability, diplomacy, military preparation and action; for the starving and for the rich; for those of faith and for those of no beliefs. That much is easy to say, because the problems are easy to describe.

In times such as these, it is understandable that even the English language runs short of words—or perhaps it is more accurate to say that those of us with some knowledge of the language find it hard to do anything other than resort to cliché. However, I do not want any clichés that I use in my speech today to inhibit me from asking us to think a little about the role of the House in the conduct of our national affairs.

Before doing that, I ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he winds up the debate, to reassure us that the Government are not going to introduce compulsory identity cards in order to combat terrorism. I know that other countries use them and that many of us willingly carry means of identification. ID cards have their uses, but they are not an answer to terrorism, as the hijackers showed us on 11 September. Terrorism is countered in the mind of the individual and by public opinion at one level, and by intelligence and evidence at the other. Let us use the weapons that we have already on the statute book, under the common law, and in the alliances that we have and are now building before turning to such measures as ID cards, which hold a spurious attraction for the busy politician.

ID cards are but fool's gold in the current crisis. Their only use would be to identify the remains of the innocent victims of the next attack, unless we prevent it through

[Mr. Edward Garnier]

knowing who our enemy is, where he is, what his strengths and weaknesses are, what are his numbers and where he next intends to attack. That takes intelligence, not ID cards. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), the shadow Foreign Secretary, said, our intelligence services need better funding to carry out that work.

I accept that in times of crisis any Prime Minister must be provided with the freedom to act quickly and effectively to protect the integrity of the country and its institutions and to safeguard its people. I applaud what the Prime Minister has said and done so far. I accept that not every decision that has to be taken can be taken following lengthy deliberations in the House or consultation with every interested party. I accept without question that when the Prime Minister says he has evidence against bin Laden that he cannot share with us in full, he is speaking the truth. The burdens on Prime Ministers at times such as these must be awful, knowing that they must take decisions that may well lead to young lives being lost or put at risk.

A former Law Lord, the late Lord Pearce, said during the 1968 case of Conway *v.* Rimmer that in times of national emergency

"the flame of individual right and justice must burn more palely when it is ringed by the more dramatic light of bombed buildings."

Article 15 of the European convention on human rights permits a member state to take measures derogating from its obligations under the convention

"in time of war or other public emergency threatening the life of the nation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with other obligations under international law."

I hope that that is of some comfort to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Howarth). However, there are limits beyond which a state may not go, even in grave emergencies. It is open to question whether and how far the normal restraints on Government must yield to the higher interests of the state.

That is not a new dilemma. For many years, we have had to struggle with the proper approach to the contest between individual rights and the needs of Government. In the first and second world wars, a wide range of emergency powers was given to the Executive to make general regulations and to take administrative decisions restricting civil liberties. In the first world war, the Home Secretary could order the internment of anyone he considered of hostile association, and in the second he could detain without trial those whom he had reasonable cause to believe were hostile or had been involved in acts prejudicial to public safety. Draconian powers to restrict the free movement of individuals still exist under the Emergency Powers Acts of 1920 and 1964, but they have not been imposed at any other time of war since 1945, including during the Korean war, the Suez crisis, the Falklands war or the Gulf war.

A terrible wrong has been committed and thousands of innocent people going about their daily lives had their existence snuffed out at the whim of a collection of evil fanatics. Yet more thousands of the victims' relations must live on with only the memories of their loved ones to cling to and, worse, their deaths broadcast time after time on the television. What effect all of that must have had on all of them is too horrific to contemplate; but terrible though the events of 11 September were, no matter how far reaching the economic, political and social consequences of the outrages may yet prove to be, it cannot in all reason be said that we are facing—to quote another international definition of an emergency—

"an exceptional crisis affecting the whole population amounting to a threat to its organised life."

The political and administrative functions of government at federal, state and city level in New York, Washington DC and Pennsylvania continue, as do their equivalents more or less everywhere in the world, except perhaps in Afghanistan where they have not recently existed in any form that we would recognise or respect.

With that in mind let us remind ourselves that there are no constitutional restraints on the assumption of emergency powers in the United Kingdom. The parliamentary and legal precedents do not make a constitutional distinction between those periods of war and national emergency when it may be justifiable to grant the Executive some special powers, and other periods when it would be less appropriate. We cannot under our constitutional arrangements guarantee against the indefinite prolongation of emergency powers, even by special majority. Many of the emergency powers assumed by the Government during the second world war were preserved or renewed for a number of years after hostilities ceased.

We must do our duty as elected Members of Parliament, sent here to protect the interests and rights of our constituents, as well as the country we live in. The sheer size of this Government's majority may have made some of us forgetful, but to hold this or any Government to account or to criticise this Prime Minister for some of his more fanciful rhetorical excursions is not the same as spitting in church. We in Parliament are the only brake on Government power that the constitution recognises. Let us therefore set the limit beyond which the Executive must not be permitted to go. Let us carefully consider any Bills that are put before us and to the best of our collective knowledge, experience and common sense grant to the Government only those extraordinary powers which they can persuade us that they need.

I welcome this and the earlier recall of Parliament. Now, at this time of crisis, we need to see the Prime Minister metaphorically, if not literally, chained by one wrist to the Dispatch Box, so that he and the Government are reminded of their relationship with the electorate. At this time of crisis we should not only do our duty to the electorate and our country in standing up for the rights of Parliament, but show the planners and perpetrators of the outrages of 11 September that parliamentary democracy matters and that parliamentary democracy can play its part in vanquishing terror.

1.13 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Manchester, Central): I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) on an excellent speech. His central point about the need for the Government through Parliament to be accountable to the people is desperately important at a time when we risk jeopardising some of our fundamental freedoms if we get the balance wrong. When we seek possibly to make war, those same constraints on the Government of the will of the people and accountability to the public must apply.

Like many other Members, my constituency has a large number of Muslims. It is not only Muslims who are offended by any attempt to whip up disagreement between the Muslim community in Britain or, indeed, worldwide and humanity generally on this issue. There was an attempt to burn down a mosque in the neighbouring constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). I have attended that mosque and many of my constituents go there. I suggest that Opposition Members may like to consider whether they wish formally to make it clear that they dissent from what Lady Thatcher said. Her remarks were not only offensive but incredibly damaging to society, particularly in terms of building consensus about the need for action against terrorism which will command the support of all sectors of society, Muslims and non-Muslims. I have attended mosques where it has been made clear that the actions in New York were anti-Islamic and deserve condemnation by people of any faith. We need to establish that clear understanding of where modern Britain's interests lie. It is not in division between Muslims and non-Muslims.

How do we respond to terrorism? I listened to a former senior United States diplomat who was responsible for negotiating parts of the nuclear arms control treaties among other things. He pointed out how within a short space of time it would be possible for terrorists to take possession of nuclear weaponry, not by missile delivery or even in such a way as to require missile defence to be deterred, but in a suitcase, and to destroy not 7,000 people but perhaps 700,000 or 7 million people. That is a profound point. We must make sure that our society can act firmly and destroy the capacity of terrorists to threaten every one of us.

In a remarkable speech, the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) rightly reminded us that it is obscene for a four-year-old child to die as a potential perpetrator of further hatred. What nonsense—what a vile, bitter view of this world. Every state has an obligation to defend its citizens, and a prime part of that is now defence against terrorism.

I understand the need to take action to wipe out those who committed the crime in New York and those who support them, but I caution the Government. If we are to maintain this worldwide coalition that we will need not just for this one action but in the long haul, we must maintain the credibility of the coalition's actions. Therefore, we must give real meaning to the concept of proportionality—though goodness knows what it means after the events in New York. That means that when the Prime Minister and the American Administration rightly say that there is to be no attempt at revenge, they mean it.

I have a letter from the father of a victim of the Lockerbie bombing. I have come to know him over the years. He says that he has lived through terrorism and does not want to see revenge post Lockerbie or now post New York. He is right. What we seek is, of course, justice. We also seek the capacity to stop terrorists. That is very different from revenge.

We see the military mind move towards mission creep—what starts off as a neatly contained operation becomes something very different. I ask my colleagues on the Treasury Bench to think very carefully about the objectives of our campaign. Yes, the Prime Minister is entitled to support so long as we are clear about what we are trying to achieve. He in turn must be clear that he is accountable for ensuring that the military are not allowed to go down that seductive path which takes us way beyond a proportionate and proper response into a world not only of vengeance but one which allows discordant voices to say to moderate Arabs, for example, "You are now backing the wrong side." We have seen a little of that in our handling of other issues in the middle east, particularly in respect of Iraq, and perhaps we now need to consider fundamentally the lack of success of the policies that we have pursued there.

We must have a sense of proportion more generally. I am delighted that in this campaign against international terror we are talking about the inclusion of the Chinese and Russians. The campaign makes sense only if we bring on board such powers. We are not building an unconditional coalition. If in the desire to build a world coalition, we give up, for example, the right to raise serious issues, we fundamentally undermine the whole reason for building the coalition in the first place. Let me refer specifically to relations with President Putin, who is trying to move Russia forward. He is entitled to say to us in the west, "You never recognise the terrorist threat to my country from Chechnya." However, we would not be right to ignore the human rights abuses by Russian forces in Chechnya.

If we are building the coalition, let us build it on the basis that we know what our objectives are. Let us recognise that our response has to be proportionate—it should not be about vengeance but about taking out the terrorists to protect us all and to guarantee the safety of our citizens. Let us not lose sight of the fact that what makes us different from the terrorists is that we will not sanction everything.

I can remember when Governments who are our close friends allowed terrorists to operate in their name in places such as Nicaragua. Let us not forget that. Let us not forget that we cannot move back to a world of hypocrisy if we are to defeat terrorism. We will defeat terrorism by building a world of values. We should maintain that sense of values in everything we do.

1.21 pm

Mr. Simon Thomas (Ceredigion): On behalf of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party, I welcome the statements by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. I note with gratitude that there has been an inevitable but welcome cooling of language, particularly this week with the Prime Minister's important speech to the Labour party conference and his statement to the House today. It comes on top of the cool response so far by President Bush and the United States Government. I confess that, like many other hon. Members, I have been surprised by that cool response, but I am very grateful for it and welcome it. It is a tremendous credit to the United States level of democracy and to its Government that they have been able to respond in that way, to stay their hand to date and to build an international coalition to deal with these matters.

We accept that there is a natural right to self-defence for any country and also a right under the United Nations charter, but I think it is fair to say that the actions being discussed go beyond that. The talk is about war, about international action against other countries. I make it clear that we would not support or condone the United Kingdom going to war against the Afghan people.

[Mr. Simon Thomas]

Both our parties accept that military action may form part of the dismantling of al-Qaeda and the network that has supported terrorist atrocities. We accept the evidence of bin Laden's guilt in previous atrocities, which in themselves would justify the taking apart of his network. We accept that, following the New York and Washington horrors, there is an implication that would demand that bin Laden and his associates be brought to international justice, but in trying to achieve that we must remember that the shedding of blood would be the fertiliser for further terrorism. The new world order that has been talked about so much recently cannot be built on blood. That is not bleeding heart liberalism. There is no example of terrorism or a terrorist movement being defeated by military action alone.

I think that the Government accept that in the way they have talked so much about the wide coalition of states that need to take action. Now that we are talking more seriously and directly about how to bring bin Laden to justice, as the Prime Minister said in his statement, we must ask what the objectives of that action are. The first question that I put to the Secretary of State for Defence is whether all negotiations have been exhausted, particularly in the light of some recent movements coming out of Pakistan and Afghanistan. I am not clear whether the Government's aims still rest just with al-Qaeda as a movement, whether we are extending our military aims to the Taliban themselves, which I accept is a horrendous regime, or indeed whether the Government will listen to the siren voices who want us to extend military action to Iraq and even Iran, Libya and other countries that have undoubtedly sponsored international terrorism in the past.

This then must be the opportunity for the United Nations. Any world order needs to be based on global governance and global policing. We already have that establishment: it is the UN. We have already had an important UN resolution on terrorism, but how much more powerful would it be if we could get a UN resolution supporting the military steps that the Government and the United States Government are discussing? That would surely bring on board other countries that are wavering over that action.

It is worth recalling in that context that in allowing self-defence the UN charter also demands that countries going to war or considering going to war seek redress first in the International Court of Justice. Those international institutions have been under-used and undervalued in the past, particularly by some of those who are talking about a new world order, so the lesson must be that we must work with those institutions and international agreements such as that on Kyoto and the International Criminal Court and desist whenever we can from unilateral action. Of course, it is possible to have unilateral action that includes more than one partner.

We accept that the difficulty is that the Taliban are not the recognised Government of Afghanistan. They are a usurping Government. Indeed, Pakistan hardly has a legitimate Government. Again I ask the Secretary of State whether there are discussions and thoughts to create a UN mandate for Afghanistan and possibly a UN protectorate to deal with the huge humanitarian problems that will flow from whatever action is taken.

Finally with regard to the United Nations, a vital question that was raised by the leader of the Liberal Democrats is why the evidence against bin Laden cannot be shared with the Security Council. It would send a clear message to the Arab countries about the way in which the Government seek to work. Is there any country on the Security Council that we do not trust to see the evidence on international terrorism? If we do not trust any country on the Security Council to see that evidence, our fight against international terrorism is over before it has begun.

I have tremendous admiration for those who may be about to lay their lives down for this country and for international justice. I want their efforts and the risks that they are taking to be effective and to bring results. That is why I believe that United Nations involvement will be vital in the long-term aim that the Prime Minister set out in his speech to the Labour party conference. If we are to commit our forces in that way to settle conflicts and to fight terrorism, we must do everything at home to minimise the dangers to our own forces.

On the day of the horrors in New York, an arms trade fair took place in London sponsored by the Government, at which arms were being sold to both sides in the civil war in Uganda, a war which we may now want to get involved in following the Prime Minister's new vision. There are obvious things that we must learn about our way of dealing with international conflict and the arms trade.

As many hon. Members have said, it is not a conflict between civilisation and barbarism, between east and west. We have much more in common: our common humanity. We need to take the opportunity to condemn and ensure the elimination of attacks on Muslims, which I regret to say have occurred both in Wales and Scotland over the past three weeks. In looking at the legislation that the Government will introduce on such matters, both our parties will be totally open-minded on the way forward.

I add only one warning, of which the Government must be aware. Despotic Governments have used accusations of terrorism against their opponents. Those opponents often come to our shores seeking asylum. We must be careful that we do not exclude such people who have been targets of state-sponsored terrorism.

We need to recognise that only bread and dignity bring peace. Dignity may be restored if the outstanding issues surrounding Palestine are resolved. There has been a welcome move in that regard by the Government. The bread that we need to bring forth is the increase in spending on international and overseas aid. We still do not spend 0.7 per cent. of gross domestic product on such aid, which we agreed to 25 years ago and reaffirmed in an international agreement in Rio in 1992. We need to uphold those international agreements. The £25 million announced today for humanitarian aid for Afghanistan, although welcome, will not, I suspect, be enough. In all our actions, let us feed bodies and minds, not hatred.

1.29 pm

Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): May I join other right hon. and hon. Members in expressing my horror and outrage at the events of 11 September and my deep sympathy, as well as that of my constituents, the people of Dunfermline and west Fife, for all those who lost a loved one, a colleague or a friend on that dreadful day?

Credit is due to the United States President and Administration for the manner in which they have resisted the pressure they must have come under to take immediate

retaliatory action and instead opt for considered short-term and long-term approaches. Like other hon. Members, I pay tribute to the key and pivotal role that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the UK Government have played in building and strengthening a global alliance, which rapidly formed to express its horror at what happened on 11 September.

It is difficult to find something to say that has not already been said in the thousands, if not millions, of words that have been spoken in the past three and a half weeks. Therefore, in the limited time available I shall focus on just one or two aspects of the implications for defence and security of the events of 11 September. I join others in paying tribute to the UK armed forces, who have already played a role in events so far and look certain to do so in the weeks ahead.

It is vital that international terrorism is combated by measures on a range of fronts. I welcome those that have already been taken to restrict the financing of terrorism, to share intelligence much more coherently and effectively, to co-operate in policing and to build a global alliance the likes of which we are unlikely to see again in our lifetimes. Although I recognise that there are no quick fixes or easy answers, I believe that action on all fronts is required.

On defence, those who believe that a homeland policy is the answer are clearly wrong. No nation, however large its army, air force or navy and however massive its equipment, can singlehandedly take on this type of international terrorism and be effective. As Lawrence Freedman, professor of war studies at King's college, said in a newspaper article last month, the attacks of 11 September

"challenge the western military ethos which is dominated by talk of precision strikes against military targets".

I had heard the term "asymmetric warfare" before 11 September, but I now understand more clearly what it means. High-tech, super, lethal weapons count for nothing if one does not know in which direction to fire them and has no clear military targets or infrastructure at which to aim them.

The United Kingdom needs to look again at its strategic defence review and what it said about dealing with such terrorist threats. We must look at the configuration of the rapid reaction forces and at the level and capacity of our special forces. We must consider the most appropriate attack methods when dealing with an enemy that deliberately targets innocent civilians and ensures that they are in the firing line of any military response.

We are dealing with an enemy who pays no regard to the Geneva conventions. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said earlier, we are dealing with an enemy with whom we cannot negotiate because it seeks no rational political objectives, only the destruction and extermination of those it hates using violent means.

We must also review our defence procurement to see what equipment, weaponry and logistical support we need to counteract international terrorism. We must look even more carefully at those to whom we export defence equipment and do our utmost to support the UN Secretary-General's call on Monday for tighter restrictions on biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. It is clear that the terrorists will use them if they can obtain them and transport them in a rucksack, holdall or suitcase.

The events of 11 September have implications for the operation of NATO. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss some of those implications with fellow parliamentarians from NATO member countries in the near future. I welcome NATO's decision that article 5 was relevant provided that evidence was received confirming that the United States had been attacked from outside. I understand that NATO ambassadors received that evidence this week.

I also welcome NATO's recognition that it is a transatlantic alliance and that we must offer the US support in return for the support that it has provided to us over the years. However, NATO must accept that a monolithic military response to international terrorism is hardly appropriate and must consider the terms of the Washington treaty agreed in 1999.

Like many who have already spoken, I hope that in the weeks and months ahead we shall continue to find new ways of working that will bring bin Laden and al-Qaeda to justice, bring food and shelter to the Afghan people, and result in the end of a brutal and oppressive Taliban regime and its replacement by an interim Government acceptable to all parties under the auspices of the United Nations. I hope that we shall see a better world, free from fear, oppression and poverty.

1.37 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I share the sense of many in the House at this time of seriousness, and I understand something of what people in Washington and New York went through. I welcome the humanitarian approach of the mayor of New York, who is reported to be giving caskets to some 5,000 people with some of the ashes from the remains of the World Trade Centre. I say that I understand it because I have had to officiate at funerals where the only evidence of a person's body was a wedding ring. Two lovely young women were killed with others in an indiscriminate attack on a hotel. When we are dealing with international terrorism, there is no difference between New York and Newton Abbey, or between Warrenpoint and Washington.

We speak about tightening our laws, whereas it might be wiser if we were to implement some of them. Earlier in our debate, the right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) said that, when in government, he had fought terrorism for four years. The then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke, admitted that the Government had not used the full rigour of the law in dealing with terrorism in Northern Ireland.

We talk about our forces being called into action in the service of the free world, to free Afghanistan if necessary from the thrall of the Taliban. I trust that, in our humanitarian concern, we shall not just welcome Tommy when he is in action and forget him when he is at home, as we did after the Gulf war and as we have done, dare I say, in the case of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, who have been cast aside as a sop to terrorism. Why do I say that? It is because Gerry Adams is on record as saying that even the new police service that we seek to devise in Northern Ireland will simply be treated the same as the RUC was if any Catholics join that force.

We have to start being realistic in dealing with terrorism, wherever it comes from. I join those who condemn the attacks on Muslims as individuals and on

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

their mosques, and I support the leader of the Muslim community in south Belfast, who has gone on the record complaining about them. Whether the attack on the mosque in south Belfast was the work of a particular racist or a reaction to what happened in New York, it could easily be the result of an endemic violence which means that halls, churches and homes are attacked day in, day out by elements of the community who have grown up with a sense of lawlessness. Sometimes when people are brought before the courts one would almost think that the prosecuting police officers were the guilty ones, rather than the people in the dock. That is something that we have to face in implementing our laws.

I am not doing now what I did when I tried to table a question asking a Minister what his interpretation of the law was, and was told that that would not be acceptable, because the courts, not Ministers, interpret the law. I said, "So that means that we who pass these laws here in Parliament don't know what we meant by them." We talk about tightening the laws, and I hope that when we do that we will be more explicit and will not simply provide a haven for barristers and solicitors to make more money out of disputations over meaning.

We are speaking about humanitarian issues, but I note that not once during the debate have I heard a reference to the humanitarian workers who were already working in Afghanistan seeking to help impoverished people. Those workers are now prisoners of the Taliban regime, and they were imprisoned before 11 September. We must bear in mind those who pay a price when they seek to help people in some parts of the world. I understand that there are at least two people from the United Kingdom, some from Australasia and some from Germany, as well as several native Afghan citizens.

I was interested to hear the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) say that the attack on the World Trade Centre was without purpose. I do not know where he has been, because it is significant that 11 September is a historic date, and bin Laden was aware of it. He was giving a message to the western world. If any of us minimise that we will not be keeping our eye on the ball as we deal with his intentions and those of the others whom he has gathered around him.

I appreciate the calm building up of an alliance, but it is sometimes a little like our missionary enterprises in the Christian church, in that many good men pray that the Lord's will be done, but add, "Don't send me, send my sister." When things begin to go wrong, it will be a moment of testing. How many members of the alliance will stand together when the issues have to be dealt with? I have more trust in our own steel, and in that of the United States, to see through to the end that to which we have set our hands.

Intelligence is necessary. We have been told that Washington was taken by surprise. I understand some of the difficulties of intelligence gathering, but I could not help but think back to my visit to Washington two weeks before the Shah of Persia was overthrown. Apparently, the CIA had known nothing about it, and his overthrow took them unawares. They knew that there was some agitation, but they did not think that anything would happen. However, an Iranian taxi driver in Washington told me a fortnight in advance that the Shah would be overthrown.

I wonder to what extent the difficulty has been not that there has not been enough intelligence, but how far bureaucrats and politicians—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): Order. I am afraid that time is up.

1.45 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I apologise to the House because I will not be here for the winding-up speeches. I have to deal with a personal problem at that time.

I welcome the fact that we are having a debate here today, but we should be slightly careful about parading British democracy all around the world, when this Parliament is almost unique in having no right to vote on the deployment of British forces anywhere in the world. That is done through the royal prerogative, by the Prime Minister. We should look a little more to our own parliamentary procedures.

I listened with care to the speech by the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Howarth), and recalled that he had rather strongly opposed General Pinochet being brought to trial anywhere in the world under any kind of international procedures, and then mounted quite a severe attack on the British judicial system. We should be careful. For good historical reasons, we have a separation of powers between Parliament and the judiciary—and that separation should remain. We in this Parliament have knowingly, freely and deliberately passed a Human Rights Act that brings the conventions on human rights into British law. I fully support and understand that. That includes in our law the prohibition of the death penalty, and it means that we should not deport anyone from this country to anywhere where they would face the death penalty. The same applies in any other country that has abolished the death penalty. It does not help our cause in opposing any terrorist act if we reduce our own standards and diminish our own laws.

We should be careful about how we label organisations. Last week, as I came away from the Muslim welfare centre in my constituency, I was asked to do an interview for the South African Broadcasting Corporation. They asked me what my concerns were about civil liberties in this country. My reply was that I was concerned about the easy way in which organisations and people inconvenient to the current British need are labelled terrorists and condemned as such. I recalled that less than half a mile away stood, for the best part of 25 years, the offices of the African National Congress and the South West Africa People's Organisation. Successive Prime Ministers, and one in particular—although never Labour Prime Ministers—labelled those as terrorist organisations, but they now form the Governments of Namibia and South Africa, and President Mandela is now, rightly, a revered figure throughout the world.

I attended Friday prayers at the Seven Sisters mosque in Finsbury Park last week, and there were 1,500 people there. Many of them were terrified of the abuse that they had received on the streets, and that their shops had received. They were terrified of the bottles thrown through windows and the way in which women had been abused on the streets for wearing Islamic clothes. Their whole religion had been denigrated because President Bush started off on 11 September saying things like,

"This is a war between civilisation and the rest of the world." I do not think that he had thought about what he was saying, but the danger is that such language, parroted by the worst aspects of the British media, becomes an open sesame for nasty racists on the streets of inner London to have a go at anyone whom they believe to be Islamic. As I was walking away from the Labour party conference I heard teenagers in Brighton, seeing somebody whom they perceived to be a Muslim on the other side of the street, start shouting "bin Laden" at him. That is the kind of dangerous harmful nonsense that goes on.

No one among the 1,500 people at the mosque in Finsbury Park did anything other than condemn what happened to the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, and they did not want any more deaths. I had the impression that they were also concerned about launching a military attack on Afghanistan, which would not bring back any of those who tragically died in New York or Washington, but would result in civilian casualties and could unleash a chain of events in which this country would be sucked into an Afghan civil war.

We have to think a little more carefully about the history of Afghanistan, including the west's support of the mujaheddin against the Soviet-backed Government in the late 1970s and early 1980s, its funding of the mujaheddin, the mujaheddin's spawning of the Taliban and the CIA's funding of the bin Laden organisation. Bin Laden used that money to build bunkers throughout Afghanistan. For all we know, he could have done the same in many other places. What goes around comes around. I hope that people in the United States, in their terror and understandable desire to see an end to any terrorist threat, think also about some of the regimes and friendships that they have spawned over the years, and the production and financing of the phalanx of organisations that currently exists.

In the construction of a global alliance against terrorism, we should think a little more carefully about the human rights records and perceptions of some of the countries that are involved. When the Prime Minister travels to Moscow—I imagine that he is already on his way there—and meets President Putin this evening, I hope that he will convey the condemnation of millions of people around the world of the activities of the Russian army in Chechnya and of what it is doing to ordinary people there. When images of what is happening are translated into other parts of the world, many people are horrified, just as we are horrified by what happened to the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September. If we are serious about the rule of law and human rights, we must be very careful to condemn abuses of human rights, whoever commits them, whoever they are committed against and however uncomfortable or inconvenient it is for us to do so. If we are not consistent, we will, understandably, receive the charge of hypocrisy.

When President Bush talks about bringing bin Laden or whoever else to justice, I try to work out what sort of justice he means. Successive United States Administrations have specifically ignored or condemned decisions of the world court that were inconvenient for them. For example, the United States refused to accept views on the mining of harbours in Nicaragua and questions about the validity of nuclear weapons. Specifically, it refused to sign up to the International Criminal Court conventions, which is one of the reasons why the court has not yet been established. If we are such a close friend of the United States, cannot we use our relationship as a basis to persuade it that, in the interests of justice and of causing no more needless deaths, we must have an international rule of law and a proper international court at which criminals can be brought to justice? Cannot we persuade it that, instead of using the United Nations only for humanitarian aid—although God knows plenty of aid is currently needed—we must respect the fact that if we want a world order that is based on justice, a world body must administer it. I do not believe that the Pentagon or NATO can administer world justice. The United Nations provides the basis and principle that are needed.

People around the world have many different views. Everyone is horrified at what happened—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

1.53 pm

Mr. Keith Simpson (Mid-Norfolk): However else we define this act of terrorism—Ministers, other hon. Members and the media have used a wide variety of definitions—we must be aware that it has a political objective. The terrorists might be motivated by the desire to hurt people and there may be a criminal element, but if hon. Members fail to recognise that there is a political purpose, they will underestimate what these people are trying to achieve.

A number of hon. Members have spoken about the failure or inadequacy of the western intelligence services. I shall not speak about those issues in detail, although many lessons must obviously be learned. Far more important is our underestimation of the international terrorists. These people were not idiots or some form of militant headbangers on cocaine. They carefully planned what they were going to do and achieved their objective. If they had not done so, we would not be here today. Let us not underestimate what they achieved. Without praising their actions in any way, I remind the House that they achieved a stupendous and successful first, as far as they saw it. They co-ordinated widespread international activity to crash two American airliners in the centre of New York and to bring down a world symbol, and they managed to land an aircraft on the centre of American military power, the Pentagon. Without the bravery of the passengers and crew on another airliner, they might well have taken out the White House. The international repercussions are enormous. Although many people are prepared to condemn these acts, we should all be aware that some men and women around the world are not only toasting what happened but thinking that the west is incredibly vulnerable.

It gives me no pleasure to flag up my suspicion that the United States Government, the British Government and those of Germany and other countries were in full and absolute panic after what happened on 11 September. They had every reason to panic. Our national security had been directly breached in an unimaginable way and we could do nothing about it. It is a sobering thought that an American President has devolved huge responsibility and given to two senior American air force generals the right to shoot down any American or international airliner that might present a major terrorist threat, if they think that such action is required.

[Mr. Keith Simpson]

We must rethink our approach to the problem. I believe that the Americans are rightly in a state of shock. For the first time, the United States of America itself has come under direct attack. Yes, it has had terrorist incidents before, but it has now been attacked directly and in the most appalling way. It is no longer an island that is isolated from the rest of the world, and that will have a major impact on American foreign and defence policy. As a by-product, casualty limitation, which has become an honourable principle of war in the United States and in NATO, has now disappeared entirely. The United States is determined to bring the culprits to book and is now prepared to tolerate military casualties for the simple reason that 6,000-odd civilians died. Whether we like it or not, it will be acting in a more robust manner.

One of the major lessons that we are learning is that, whatever the arguments in terms of morality, international relations and everything else, all western Governments—let me say that I endorse the actions taken by our Government—must not only think about how to stop what happened on 11 September from happening again, but hunt down the people who did it. If the perpetrators are not brought to international or national justice, other organisations will repeat the attacks. They will either commit a copycat crime, although that is probably unlikely, or do what other hon. Members have talked about and use chemical, biological or—God forbid—nuclear weapons. It is the task of our Government and security forces not to refight the last battle, but to think in conjunction with others about how to prevent any repetition of the attacks.

Amid all the consequences of 11 September, an impact has been felt in the House of Commons on the two days on which it has sat during the recess. Not only have party politics on the whole disappeared and domestic politics been put on a back burner, but the Prime Minister rightly invited to No. 10 the leading members of the main Select Committees that are directly involved. I urge the members and Chairmen of those Committees to take the initiative. In the past—I speak as a former special adviser under Lady Thatcher's Government—Select Committees have all too often been seen merely as talking shops with little influence and impact. They were almost "annoying, but irrelevant". However, I believe that, following the Prime Minister's invitation, they have an important role to play, not least because I think our own public are worried about the future. They are not just worried about the fact that we may find ourselves involved in widespread military action; they are deeply apprehensive about future terrorist acts. With the best will in the world, our Government and the American Government—apart from taking some defensive steps—have not come up with a foolproof answer, and I do not expect them to.

When Parliament returns, we shall need a major debate. As I have said, however, we should be in no doubt about this: 11 September was a major terrorist success, there are some very nasty people out there who wish to do a copycat, and it is our task to make certain that we support our Government to ensure that that does not happen.

2.1 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush): Last Tuesday, in a remarkable speech, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke for me and, I suspect, many millions around the world. There were three reasons for that. First, my right hon. Friend was very clear, and very focused on what needed to be done to deal with the immediate emergency: that included taking the necessary and appropriate military action. Secondly and very importantly, he indicated that he understood some of the circumstances—particularly the instability in the middle east and surrounding countries—that aggravate these problems.

In saying that, however, my right hon. Friend did not fall into a trap into which many do fall: that of saying that being able to explain the circumstances that aggravate the political or economic instability of regions such as this somehow excuses those who take or organise terrorist actions. There can be no excuse. There can be no excuse for individuals, groups or nation states. That is why it may well be appropriate and necessary to deal with some aspects of the Taliban regime.

It is important to understand this. If we do not, we shall make another mistake that people make and assume that Arabs in particular—I have many Arab constituents—have not the free will and the ability to solve some of the problems in their own countries, and to know that those problems exist. They do know; and they resent the implication, often made with good intentions, that Saddam Hussein and others of his kind—including the Taliban—are there only because of what the west, or the United States, has done.

Those people know that there is a democratic deficit in some of their countries. They know that there is a human rights deficit. They know that some of what the west has done aggravates those problems, and they know in particular that the double standards between Israel and Palestine cause a lot of discontent on the streets. I agree with them about that. But never—please—make the mistake of assuming that because somehow or other the west gets its actions wrong in such areas, that justifies the reaction of either terrorist groups or, indeed, the Saddam Husseins of this world. My Arab constituents resent that assumption. They believe—they know—who is responsible for the misery of the Afghan people and for that of the Iraqi people, and it is not the west.

Thirdly, the Prime Minister spoke for me by doing something incredibly important: he put this destructive act in a context in which something optimistic could be built from it at the end of the day. We may well—I think we will—secure greater international agreement on how to deal with violence of one type or another, and that alone is important. We may—indeed, we must—put more emphasis on resolving the difficulties between Palestine and Israel. I agree with almost all that has been said about that so far, and about the all-important need to ensure that Israel recognises its responsibilities to move in that regard.

Let no one dismiss the hope that the Prime Minister expressed last Tuesday for a better world; the only people who object to it are cynics and depressives. Of course it can be dismissed, as one or two rather right-wing journalists did when speaking to me on Tuesday night. They said, "You will never deliver it." Well, I would far rather enter this century—this millennium—with that expression of hope, and that agenda, than ever to return to the agendas of the past, when it was assumed that war could not be prevented, that it was not possible to go in for peacekeeping, and that it was not possible to deal with

the Rwandas and the Bosnias. We can. We did it in Bosnia, and, as the Prime Minister said, we should have done it in Rwanda.

The real danger underlying so much of this—we are all aware of it, although we may not have expressed it in these words—is that of a clash between civilisations and religions if we mishandle it. Pakistan is crucial: it contains 143 million people, it has a nuclear weapon, and if it becomes unstable—it is already unstable, in fact, but if it becomes another Iraq or, indeed, Iran of the 1980s—we shall be in serious trouble. The handling of this is therefore very important, which is why it is right to keep emphasising the importance of Islam.

By Islam I mean not just a religion—I speak as one who has very little time for any religion, as I am not religious—but a civilisation. I dearly hope that the BBC will show the programmes that it featured late at night before 11 September at an earlier time, because those programmes were exceptionally good. They told people about Islam and what it stood for. There are fundamentalists in all walks of life—in religion, and in politics. Fundamentalists and authoritarians are the danger, not any particular religious or political belief. I say that with some feeling.

I want to emphasise something else. This is why I particularly wanted to speak in the debate. The Afghan taxi driver from my constituency who, when I checked the other day, was still lying in intensive care paralysed from the neck down, is there not just because of the bigotry and religious hatred that can boil around, but because of incredible ignorance. What sort of people did not put two and two together? Why did they not think, "Perhaps this guy is an Afghan refugee; if he is, he may have problems with the Taliban; therefore, he may be our friend rather than our enemy"? It is not just wicked; it is incredibly stupid.

My last point has already been made by a couple of Members. There is a danger of people being anti-American. This country has good reason to draw some lessons from history. Let us look back at a few pages of history. It may surprise people to know that, 100 years ago almost to the day, *The New York Times* described Britain as a great power that was destined to rule the world. The French and the Germans said the same. We retreated into isolation; and only the *Daily Mail* could have produced, just a few years later, the headline "Fog in the Channel—Europe isolated".

Great powers are destined to be both admired and resented. Great powers do get their interventions wrong, and they do harm as well as good; but it is important to keep the balance in our own minds too, because they do much good. Many people will say that, and in my constituency—which represents so many from around the world—they frequently do. We should listen to them, look back at our own history, and use it to learn lessons for today.

2.8 pm

Patsy Calton (Cheadle): I endorse what was said by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell), and will not go over the same ground.

I was one of those who were in the American capital at the time of the attacks. I was a member of an all-party delegation, with colleagues, many of whom are here today. We were evacuated very precipitately—not surprisingly, given the nature of the attacks and the fact that there was still a plane in the air at the time. It lives with all of us that we may well be here now because of the bravery of the passengers on the plane that came down in Pennsylvania.

On the previous day, 10 September, we had engaged in a number of discussions with leading politicians and State Department officials. As friends and allies, we were nevertheless bringing to their attention our concerns about some areas of American foreign policy, specifically the aftermath of Kyoto, the Palestine-Israel conflict and national missile defence issues. The comments were striking and the Americans were more than prepared to listen. We were given a clear sign that the Bush Administration welcomed comment and criticism and that what we said would not be ignored. The events of the following day put much of that out of our minds. I pay my own tribute to the dignity and unity of the American people whom we saw, and to the bravery of the firemen and policemen who had to handle what happened.

I agree entirely with the comments that have been made about the need for military action to be proportionate. It should be time limited and we should be looking for clear outcomes. Humanitarian aid should be part of the work that produces the outcomes that we are seeking.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife and my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal Democrats said that we should be involving the United Nations, and specifically Kofi Annan, in providing legitimacy for the action that we would have to take. In my reading of Colin Powell's biography, the lesson of Vietnam is that the public, in a protracted action, need to be convinced of the legitimacy of any action taken.

I am more than happy to accept the word of the leader of my party, as no doubt other Members are prepared to accept the word of their leaders, but we must accept that the public will sometimes need a little more than the say-so of leading politicians. It is important to bring in someone who is seen to be neutral.

I turn to the work that we need to do in our communities. In my constituency, the work of the chair of the Cheadle Muslim Association, Mr. Assad Zaman, has built bridges between the Muslim community and parts of that community and others. Some of the first messages of concern for my own safety came from the Muslim community in my constituency.

We must voice the message that action or activity is not being taken against Muslims and Islam. We need to go further than that. We are leaders in our communities, and as such we should assist the integration of people from other cultures and other faiths. In particular, we need to respect one another's cultures and faiths; merely crying for integration is not sufficient.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) talked about the force of law in terms of racist attacks and the need for it to be brought to bear. There is relevant legislation on the statute book already but too often, sadly, it is not being used when it should be. Legislation should be extended to deal with religious attacks to cover the Muslims in my constituency and elsewhere.

Politicians should be careful about their language and so should the media. I was much taken with the comments of the hon. Member for South-West Devon (Mr. Streeter),

[Patsy Calton]

who talked about the need for positive language when dealing with these issues. We need to be careful because it is not only what we say that matters. There is the potential for misunderstanding on the part of people with different cultures and faiths.

The Muslim population in my constituency is concerned about the linkage of asylum seekers with race issues. They are concerned also about comments about a just war. Justice has specific meanings for people of the Muslim faith. Similarly, I hope that "crusade" has dropped out of the language.

I was impressed by the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) in the debate on 14 September. It was a brave and compassionate speech that came at a time when perhaps we would have been talking only about retaliatory action. The hon. Gentleman made us stop and think. We all did well to do that in the circumstances.

Good can come from the present situation in allowing and encouraging greater co-operation that involves different communities, different countries and different ethnic groups and faiths. They can be united in their determination to prevent terrorist attacks. We cannot continue to act as though we are different people throughout the world. Terrorism must not be allowed to work its way between us.

2.16 pm

Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): It has just been reported on Ceefax that a Russian aireraft flying from Israel to Siberia has been destroyed by a terrorist bomb with the loss of 66 passengers and 10 crew. I refer to that to bring home to the House that it seems that some people—probably, I guess, those who perpetrated similar atrocities elsewhere recently—are already carrying out the further strand of their attacks.

We must send our sympathy to the people of Israel, to the Russians and to India for terrorist actions that took place earlier this week. Further atrocities will clearly bring home to us the realities of the situation. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, we must prepare for further atrocities. I speak as a Co-operative Member. Three years ago, in August 1998, nearly 200 employees of the International Co-operative Alliance—they were mainly Kenyan citizens—were killed by Osama bin Laden in his attack on the American embassy in Nairobi. What sort of crime could development workers perpetrate to justify such an act? They were working to try to help co-operative development in Africa. Some of them were Muslims.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that there was no basis for the policy of bin Laden and his organisation. He argued that it had no objective. I must disagree. His objective, in his own words, is to destroy the Zionist crusader alliance and its international collaborators. That objective probably covers all or most of us in this place and many hundreds of millions of people throughout the world. In these circumstances we must recognise that this is a conflict that will continue for a long time and be prepared for the consequences.

I am pleased that the Russians are involved in the coalition. I am pleased also that the Prime Minister is going to Russia today to cement the relationship. However, we should praise also President Bush and the American Administration, and those words do not come easily to me. The attack in Kenya in 1998 led to an almost instant, punitive and controversial response by President Clinton against the alleged chemical plants in Sudan. We have not seen such a reaction from the current American Administration, and we should all welcome that. That shows a level of maturity and seriousness, which I hope will be continued in future.

We must take action against bin Laden, his organisation and his allies. Those are not just the people whom he has directly under his control. There are sister terrorist organisations, some of them on the list that our Government published in the schedule to the Terrorism Act 2000—organisations directed against the Government of Egypt and other Arab Governments, not just against the Americans and the Israelis.

We must recognise that in the conflict there will be voices, some of which we have heard in this country, saying, "Yes, but what about this?" or "Yes, but what about that?" My position is that there can be no excuse, no qualification and no justification—no what-aboutery—to justify the crimes on 11 September or the crimes carried out today.

Sometimes people claim that there is a problem with the definition of terrorism, freedom fighters and resistance movements. We should examine the tactics pursued by an organisation to realise its aspirations and achieve its goal, however legitimate. The goal may be legitimate, but the tactics unacceptable. Mass murder, the killing of children, placing bombs in discotheques, blowing up aircraft and machine-gunning buses are not acceptable tactics in any struggle. We need to say that. That is why we are right to call for an end to all terrorism, as well as dealing with the wider issues and conflicts.

Bin Laden is not carrying out terrorism because he was poor. Many of the idealistic young men recruited to his organisation, including a few misguided British people, had wealthy backgrounds and went to public schools. They did not join the organisation because they personally were oppressed. They adopted a particular ideological position and followed the logic to the terrible situation in which we find ourselves.

We must be clear that even if we eradicated all the poverty in the middle east and even if the Palestinians had a state, it would not satisfy the aspirations of Osama bin Laden and what he stands for, because his agenda is wider than that. For those reasons, the House is right to unite behind the Government and the international coalition and to send out a forceful message that when action is taken to free the people of Afghanistan, to free the women of Afghanistan and to defeat international terrorism, we are all in it together.

2.22 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (North-West Norfolk): I entirely agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mike Gapes) about what motives these terrorists have. I shall deal with that in a moment.

There cannot be many constituencies that have not been affected in some way by the appallingly barbaric outrage. Relations of victims, the victims themselves or members of the armed forces who are currently in the middle east may live in those constituencies. In west Norfolk we have

the largest Tornado base in the country at RAF Marham. Many constituents of mine will be involved in the RAF in the weeks ahead, if military action is contemplated.

I join many other hon. Members in congratulating the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on their response and the work that they have done to react cautiously and build a wide coalition. Partly as a result of that approach, the recent United Nations resolution on terrorism was a positive move which will go a long way towards cutting off the funds of the various terrorist organisations.

Turning now to extradition. I believe that our law is inadequate. Rightly or wrongly, Britain is seen as a safe haven for terrorism. We have been used as a communications centre for the al-Qaeda movement. At least 10 of the 19 hijackers passed through London. If we are serious about combating international terrorism, we must urgently examine our extradition laws. We have rightly demanded that the Taliban hand over bin Laden or face the consequences. We have often complained when the United States has failed to extradite swiftly suspected IRA terrorists to this country.

The case of Lotfi Raissi brings the matter into sharp focus. He is the 27-year-old Algerian pilot who helped a number of the hijackers to train as pilots. He is wanted in the USA in connection with the outrage. I welcome the fact that FBI agents have been to interview him, but unless our law is changed and an amendment is made to the European convention on human rights, particularly article 3, which is now incorporated into our own law, the extradition process may go on for two to three years. That is simply not good enough.

MI5 should not have to lobby for the reform of the convention. I despaired the other day when I read of the remarks of Lord Chief Justice Woolf. In normal times, yes, basic freedoms should take second place to the fight against terrorism, but we are not living in normal times, as various other cases show, such as the case of Adel Bary and Ibrahim Eidarous, who were both arrested in London in connection with the 1999 US embassy bombings. They face extradition to the US.

Extradition proceedings against Khalid al Fawwaz, a well-known fund-raiser for al-Qaeda, have been going on for two and a half years and have cost well over half a million pounds. He is on benefit in this country, and there is no prospect of that extradition being brought to a swift conclusion. Finally, there is the case of Sheikh Omar Abu Omar, a close ally of bin Laden. He has been sentenced in absentia in the Jordanian courts. He is living in the United Kingdom on benefit and is fighting extradition.

I do not believe that it is beyond the best legal brains in this country to devise a new framework for extradition that protects many of those who face extradition, but which can deal specifically with known and suspected terrorists—

Mr. Galloway: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bellingham: I will not, as I do not have much time left. I am sorry about that.

Mr. Galloway: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for live cases which are before the British courts to be referred to in the way that the hon. Member for North-West Norfolk (Mr. Bellingham) is referring to them—declaring people guilty whose cases are still being considered by the British judicial system? Is not the hon. Gentleman making a terrifically irresponsible speech?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Certainly, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) is correct to say that details of cases currently under jurisdiction should not be referred to. I personally did not hear the hon. Member for North-West Norfolk (Mr. Bellingham) say that the person to whom he was referring was guilty.

Mr. Bellingham: No, Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not in any way suggest that the people whom I mentioned were guilty. I referred to the system. Everything that I said is on the wider public record. It has been in the newspapers, on the radio and elsewhere in the media.

The European convention on human rights will have to be amended and new primary legislation will be required in this country. The attack against terrorism that will take place throughout the western world must also involve the IRA and the other terrorist organisations operating in Northern Ireland. When President George W. Bush speaks of cutting off the finances of terrorist organisations and introducing legislation to that effect in Congress, I hope that he will bear in mind Noraid, the fund-raising arm of the IRA, which has been raising large sums of money in America.

We must consider the background to the appalling atrocities. We must examine the mindset that drives the self-sacrifice terrorists to the deeds that they committed. One of the most striking aspects of the attacks, as the hon. Member for Ilford, South pointed out, is that we are not speaking about people brought up in the slums of Cairo or Tripoli. We are speaking about people who had a university education, were highly intelligent and had much to look forward to in their lives. What drove them to commit those atrocities? They have a mindset that is completely alien to our culture and way of life.

I feel strongly that until we deal with the two issues in the middle east that are creating festering sores in which this type of terrorism breeds, we will not solve the problem. I am referring to the Palestinian question. Without going into great detail, I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Soames) said. Until we sort out the Palestinian problem and the Palestinians have their own sovereign state this problem will not go away. That may not be the policy of my party, but it is my firm view.

I also strongly believe that until we deal with the plight of the Iraqi people such a breeding ground in that country will continue to fester. Iraqis of my generation—those in their 30s and 40s—are very pro-British. They always have been—we have many friends in Iraq. The new generation, however, feels unbelievably bitter about the sanctions, which have not had one iota of effect on Saddam Hussein. After the war we all believed that the Sunni and Shia Muslims and the Kurds would unite to overthrow Saddam Hussein, but that was wishful thinking.

Until we tackle the plight of the Iraqi people—look at what is going on in that country and deal with the anger and hatred that is building up—and the Palestinian question, we will not solve the problem of international terrorism.

2.31 pm

Hugh Bayley (City of York): I will not be present for the reply to the debate as I have been asked to go to Paris this afternoon to represent my party at a meeting of the Socialist International.

The Government and the Prime Minister in particular have responded well domestically and on the international stage to the crisis. We have a clear duty to protect our citizens from atrocities. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mike Gapes) pointed out that the risks are very real and continuing.

I have read the evidence that the Prime Minister placed in the Library this morning and I believe that military action is a necessary part of our response to make it less likely, or impossible, for further atrocities such as those committed on 11 September to take place.

I was pleased to hear the Prime Minister say this morning that he believes that the humanitarian coalition is as vital as military action. The humanitarian crisis faced even before the events of 11 September by the people of Afghanistan was very real. After 23 years of war, seven years of Taliban misrule and three years of drought, food production in the country last year was half the normal production—in some parts of the country it was only one tenth of the normal level. Twenty five per cent. of children born in Afghanistan die before the age of five.

The problems faced by women are particularly acute. I have no idea what it costs to buy a place on a truck going from Kabul to the border, but it will be out of the price range of any of the 700,000 war widows in Afghanistan, who are not allowed by the Taliban to work and have to survive as best they can on the help of friends or family or by begging on the streets. They and their children will be major casualties.

The United Nations published a report headed "The Deepening Crisis" a week before the World Trade Centre attack, which talks about 5 million Afghans being displaced within Afghanistan or as refugees to neighbouring countries. Last Friday, the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its "Donor Alert" report estimated that a further 2.5 million Afghans are likely to flee their homes from fear of conflict or conflict itself. Some will move within the country, about a million are expected to cross the border to Pakistan, 400,000 to go to Iran and 100,000 to central Asia.

The United Kingdom has well-established aid programmes in Afghanistan and elsewhere to assist Afghan refugees. The Department for International Development has responded quickly and positively to the crisis with the allocation of a further £25 million on top of the £35 million in aid that it sent to Afghanistan last year, as well as another £11 million of aid to Pakistan, in particular for the poorer areas that are likely to receive refugees. About £15 million of that UK aid has already been disbursed. Speed is essential. Food supplies need to get through before the winter sets in as communications will be frustrated by the winter weather as well as by a breakdown of law and order which may follow military action.

Is £36 million enough? No. In its report on Friday, the United Nations called for an international fund of $584 million—just under $200 million for food aid over the next six months and about $270 million to help refugees.

It is instructive to consider what happened in Kosovo. Fewer than a million Kosovan Albanian refugees fled south to Macedonia or Albania. Although that is still a huge number, it is about a third of the number that the UN estimates will flee Afghanistan. The logistics were easier in the former Yugoslavia than they are in and around Afghanistan and the donor community pledged $2.6 billion for Kosovo in 1999. The United Kingdom has provided more than £100 million in bilateral aid to Kosovo since July 1999.

At present the UK's contributions come from the Department's contingency reserves, which is the right place for them to come from. However, will the Secretary of State for Defence say in his reply whether, if additional resources are required—I accept that we will not know that until we know the number of refugees—the Treasury will make them available to ensure that the Department for International Development does not have to cut necessary aid programmes in other parts of the world?

Furthermore, in addition to planning military action to constrain and defeat the terrorists, will the Secretary of State's Department plan for the armed forces to carry out humanitarian tasks? Our armed forces played a magnificent and important humanitarian role in the former Yugoslavia. Given the size of the humanitarian task, I am certain that we will need support from the military to provide security, so that aid can get through to the people for whom it is intended and is not looted or captured by bandits, and possibly to help build refugee camps or provide wider logistical support to aid operations. Is that planning taking place and, most importantly, is it taking place in consultation with the Department for International Development?

Obviously, meticulous military planning is taking place with regard to action against terrorism. It must be meticulous because it is a matter of life and death for those involved, including a number of my constituents as my constituency is a garrison town, and our armed forces will be at risk because of the military action that we are taking. Will the planning be as meticulous for the humanitarian role that they may also be called upon to perform, which will also be a matter of life and death for Afghans?

2.39 pm

Mr. Gregory Barker (Bexhill and Battle): I add my voice to the chorus of approval from the House in praising the considered, purposeful and resolute leadership of President George W. Bush. He has been severely tested in the most tragic and appalling of circumstances and within months of taking office. He has been tested, but he has not been found wanting. We are, indeed, very fortunate to have such a man in the White House. I also praise the achievements of the Prime Minister in forging such a close and effective working relationship with the President.

The Conservative party, perhaps more than any, has always known the value of the special relationship, but the Prime Minister has demonstrated that the bonds that bind our two nations are not the property of any one party but the prerogative of all. I am sorry, therefore, that the leader of the Liberal Democrats found it necessary to sound off at his party conference when he warned about writing blank cheques to America.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the hon. Gentleman understand that Senator Biden, Senator Strom Thurmond or any legislator in the United States would be as

concerned to ensure the safety of British forces and British interests as any Member of the House of Commons?

Mr. Barker: I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is right, but the only thing that has been hasty and ill considered has been not the actions of the President of the United States but the rhetoric of the leader of the Liberal Democrats at their conference. His remarks were hasty and ill judged.

The President did us all a signal honour when he acknowledged in Congress that America has no truer friend than Great Britain. However, I am particularly glad that the Prime Minister is reaching out not just to our oldest allies but to new-found friends such as Russia. I wish the Prime Minister godspeed in his journey today. Russia has more motivation than most to join us in the war against terror.

I lived and worked in Moscow two years ago when the city was convulsed by the terrorist bombing of residential apartment blocks. Hundreds of innocent civilians were slaughtered, literally in their beds. The fear in the city that ensued was almost tangible as people went home at night not knowing whether they would wake up the next morning. In recent years, similar atrocities have been perpetrated right across the Commonwealth of Independent States, and I believe that President Putin has the makings of a staunch ally in the new global war against terror.

Although our national security must never be compromised, I would like greater emphasis to be placed on the effective sharing of intelligence when it is safe to do so. We have an unparalleled history of successful intelligence sharing with the United States, and now on matters of terrorism we can and must be more proactive with others. There is still plenty of scope for better collaboration with our European partners, particularly those within the Schengen bloc, and with other nations such as Russia that stand ready to march with us against this new threat.

The Prime Minister has helped to stitch together a remarkable coalition, and of course any ensuing military action will be bound to impose a strain on so broad an alliance. However, the Government must make sure that this new spirit of international co-operation is converted into solid, tangible and practical benefits as quickly as possible. Better and more effective cross-border intelligence is such a benefit and it will be a key pillar of any counter-terrorist strategy that is to prove successful.

In this new and complex war against terror, our salvation will be in the detail. The Prime Minister has set the right course. It will now fall to him and to all his governmental colleagues to deliver. We hope and pray that they can.

2.44 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The events of 11 September arguably represent the most significant defining moment since the fall of the Berlin wall. It is not that international terrorism is new, but the scale and the audacity of the event that took place in New York and the unprecedented way in which the terrorists had the capacity to inflict war on nation states changes for ever our approach to dealing with terrorism itself. Terrorism is not a battle between conventional military forces; it involves ordinary people and the values and principles with which they run their lives.

There is no doubt that bad and undemocratic government creates the conditions in which terrorism can take hold. If the fall of the Berlin wall brought freedom, it also raised expectations. In many parts of the world, open access to television and to a view of the world that had been long denied to the people behind the structure of the Soviet Union meant that they wanted and expected to receive the benefits that they had seen. Of course they did not receive those benefits and, because in many countries they could not express their anger and opposition, some people became prone to listening to the voices of extremism. They perhaps believed that those voices represented the way forward.

Anger caused by domestic problems is to an extent fuelled by the way we conduct international relations. There are examples that show how members of the Muslim world might fall into the trap set by Osama bin Laden and others. In the Gulf war, American troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia where two of the most holy Muslim sites are situated; we continue to police the exclusion zones in Iraq; and the United States has uncritical support for Israel's actions in the middle east. Rightly or wrongly, many people in the Muslim world see all that as an affront and as proof of western disregard for Muslim societies and their rights, values and opinions. Such dissent can breed terrorism, because in many of those countries there are few ways for anger to be expressed through legitimate channels. Some Governments are happy to see the popular discontent in their own country directed outside the country rather than at themselves.

Terrorism is a symptom of the absence of democratic government, where people feel marginalised and impotent. The converse is also true. Strong democracies are a counter to terrorism, and as a part of our response to the atrocities in New York and Washington we need to review and reinvigorate our involvement in supporting democracy and the rule of law in the belt of countries that stretches from Morocco to Pakistan.

I have learned today that the Pakistan Government have seen the evidence linking Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda to the recent terrorist acts. They consider that the evidence is strong enough to stand up in a court of law, and it is useful to know that in this debate.

If we are to respond to terrorism, we must ensure that other countries have the democracy and accountability within their own culture that we have here. Parliaments in such countries must be made to work and must be filled with people who truly represent the interests of their communities. Political parties must seek out a constituency and offer a real channel for communicating public discontent and for translating it into change. Local communities should be helped to make local government work for them, and people should start to have confidence that their Government are there to serve them and that they can seek legal redress through the courts.

It is vital that the United Kingdom plays its part to promote the development of inclusive and pluralist democracies throughout the world. I chair the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the organisation has the necessary expertise and experience to take a lead in this important task. We do that in conjunction with partner organisations in Europe and the USA.

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

The organisation works directly with local partners to develop culturally appropriate democratic structures. It works with national and local government, with civil society and with other international partners. Its work in Africa, central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has demonstrated that it has the necessary flexibility, sensitivity and robustness to tackle the difficult task of developing democracy in a wide range of cultures. We are uniquely placed in having that organisation to help us.

At our conference, the Prime Minister declared his unswerving support for justice and prosperity for the poor and dispossessed in all parts of the world, particularly where the international community has failed to take adequate action to ensure that justice and international law are applied. The middle east is just one such place. The Prime Minister clearly does not divorce the future security of the state of Israel from the issues of justice for the Palestinians. As he said, they should have a

"chance to prosper and in their own land, as equal partners with Israel in that future."

The two are inextricably linked.

The current situation is a far cry from justice. The slums of Gaza, to which the Prime Minister referred, hit the news again yesterday morning with the heavy Israeli military reprisals after the shooting dead of two Jewish settlers by Hamas gunmen. Such killings are reprehensible, but as well as condemning the killings we must address the sense of injustice that is rife within the Gaza strip, where appalling squalor and the deprivation of basic human civil liberties create a breeding ground for frustration. In Beach Camp, more than 70,000 Palestinian refugees live in three quarters of a square kilometre without proper drainage or clean water. Quite literally in the midst of the deprivation, Israel provocatively chooses to allow the existence of settlements, where Jewish citizens enjoy prosperity and the protection of an inflated Israeli military presence, which is denied to the refugees.

The greatest and most overlooked factor in the repeated failures to bring about a just and lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians has been the failure to address the issue of Palestinian refugees. During the Camp David talks there was no acknowledgement from Israel of any legal, historic or moral responsibility for the refugee phenomenon. Behind the scenes, only minimal and tentative offers to accept the return of a token number of refugees were being made. The refugee problem is huge, and it is central to any viable peace process. Palestinians comprise the largest and one of the oldest groups of refugees in the world. As well as the refugees in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, two thirds of the Palestinian population in Gaza and one third of the population on the west bank are refugees.

The joint parliamentary middle east councils in this building produced a report asking the Palestinian refugees to say in their own words how they envisaged living in peace side by side with their Israeli colleagues. That report is full of hope and I recommend it—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Time is up.

2.53 pm

Mr. Paul Keetch (Hereford): I extend my thanks to the Secretary of State for Defence and his officials for the way they have kept me and the shadow defence team informed of events over the past few weeks. It has been most welcome.

On 11 September, we witnessed a ghastly symptom of the old disease of terrorism. Seven thousand people are dead with no warning, no demands and no mercy. For me and I am sure for many other hon. Members, the sight of jets flying low over London to Heathrow will be a permanent reminder of the people who died in those tragic events. Nothing can justify such a savage attack on freedom and such a disgusting assault on innocent lives. It was outside the bounds of international law and showed no regard for human rights. Our response should remain always within international law. We must respect the human rights that the terrorists seek to destroy.

It is probable that in the next few days or weeks, British troops will be involved in military action. Hon. Members must always remember that the members of the armed forces and their families are our constituents and our friends. I and many of my Liberal Democrat colleagues have members of the armed forces based in our constituencies. At such a time it is right to praise the professionalism of the people who may go to war. I know that there are individuals from my constituency who are already out there. If they are deployed, we will pray for their safe return home.

I support proportionate military action against terrorism, but I understand that military force is a tool, not a policy. The aim of any action must be clearly stated and the scale of operations must be directed towards achieving that aim. In short, such action must be targeted, based on sound intelligence and fall within the boundaries of international law. I am confident that that will be the case in this instance.

I join other hon. Members in praising President Bush for the measured way in which he has responded to the crisis. He is a credit to his nation. He understands that any disproportionate action would achieve nothing, except to create anger and discontent, split the coalition and make those bent on committing acts of terror all the more aggressive and desperate. We should never respond to terror with terror; we should respond with justice and humanity.

There have been those who have criticised my party's position and say that we should have offered unequivocal support. Indeed, the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Barker) did so a few moments ago. It is sad that in a debate where members of all political parties have tried to speak for Britain, at least one Back-Bench Opposition Member criticised another party. I should tell that hon. Gentleman that, together with my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Inverness, West (Mr. Kennedy) and others, I met the United States ambassador when he came to our party conference two weeks ago. We explained our position to him and he said that he supported and understood it.

If one says "We support everything that you do", there can be no debate, no questioning and no scrutiny. Throughout the extraordinary and strong relationship that has existed between the United Kingdom and the United States since the second world war, there has never been a blank cheque between Britain and America. During the

war in Vietnam, the Americans pleaded with us to send troops but we, quite rightly, said no. During the Falklands campaign, the Americans supplied us with important intelligence, but they never deployed troops. During the Suez crisis, they rightly said no to our requests.

Mr. Andrew Turner (Isle of Wight): In that case, can the hon. Gentleman explain why so much fuss was made about a blank cheque when nobody was ever suggesting such a thing?

Mr. Keetch: I am sorry, but just such a suggestion was clearly made by Conservative Front-Bench spokesmen. They said that they would support any action. One does not start a military campaign by saying to a close ally—however close that ally may be—that one will do whatever it wants. I am not suggesting that the Government are adopting that course. We have never given such a blank cheque to America, and America has never given such a blank cheque to us.

Mr. Barker: The hon. Gentleman is right—there have been no blank cheques. Perhaps he will explain why the leader of the Liberal Democrats was addressing remarks to the Conservative party, when everybody else thought that he should be addressing his remarks to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Keetch: The point of my right hon. Friend's comments, which I support and which have widespread support across the country, was to ensure that any action should be within international law as well as being appropriate and responsible. Nothing that we have said has suggested anything else. I was saddened that the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle chose to raise this issue during this well-natured debate.

Several hon. Members have said that our military campaign should be based on sound intelligence, and that is right. We should remember that a bomb is only as smart as the intelligence that targets it—we all remember the events surrounding the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. We possess some of the finest intelligence services in the world. We must develop our intelligence to try to track down the perpetrators of the events in New York and Washington and to ensure that such events never happen again. To that end, I must add my voice to the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) who in the past has raised concerns about the cuts at GCHQ. Surely, sound intelligence must be the basis on which we fight this conflict.

At the Labour party conference, the Secretary of State for Defence announced a review of our forces. No doubt we will see more details of that in due course. I hope that this new chapter of the strategic defence review will not be used as an excuse to merge and scrap regiments, as has been rumoured since the beginning of this year. We must recognise that any review of our armed forces without looking at finances would be a wasted opportunity. We must address the imbalance between commitments, capability and resources if we are to stop the inordinate strain on our armed forces. If we do not, before long we will be driven once more into a wholesale, strategic defence review.

We in this House should not think that we are so important that every sentence we utter is listened to in the United States. On Monday this week I had the privilege of meeting Bob McNamara who served with distinction as the Secretary of Defence under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. He was Secretary of Defence during the Cuban missile crisis. It was his view that we should never underestimate the power that allies could have in US politics and that Britain, as America's closest ally, could have a vital role in shaping US policy. That is why our words do matter. We must make the right noises and talk of justice, not revenge.

The Prime Minister's speech in Brighton earlier this week has been described by many as Gladstonian, so I urge hon. Members on both sides of the House to remember the words of William Gladstone, when he talked about the life of a person in Afghanistan and about justice, not revenge. He said:

> "Remember that the happiness of his humble home, remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan, among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own."

We should remember that when we go into action because those words, spoken in 1879, are as true today as they were then.

3 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Staying on the reference of the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Keetch) to winter snows, may I ask the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Bradshaw), a very direct question? What assessment has been made of the consequences both for humanitarian aid and for military action of the indubitable fact that, within seven or eight weeks from now at the latest, the passes of Afghanistan will become impassable? That is my first question.

In a carefully considered comment, the Leader of the Opposition asked about action against Iraq and, bluntly, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's response was somewhat ambiguous. Unpalatable though it may be and although some hon. Members may think that I am away with the fairies, I shall ask this question: is this not an opportunity at least to start talking to the Government of Iraq? The fact is that anyone who knows anything about the Baath party knows that it is highly secular and that the Iraqi Government loathe the Taliban. That is the fact of the matter. The Iraqi Government have no time for what the Taliban represent. Might not this be the opportunity at least to start a dialogue and to find out what Baghdad has to say?

Bluntly, it is my opinion that the Government of Iraq had nothing to do with this. That may be right or it may be wrong, but it is my opinion, for what it is worth. It is also true that anyone—Saudis, Yemenis or Iraqis—may well have been recruited to the evil organisation of bin Laden because the bombing and sanctions have gone on for 10 years. The hon. Member for North-West Norfolk (Mr. Bellingham) made an interesting speech and asked similar questions from the other side of the House. I hope that that issue will be addressed in the wind-up speech.

3.2 pm

Mr. John Baron (Billericay): First, I join other hon. Members in congratulating the United States on the restraint that it has shown in the face of the terrorist attack. My thoughts and prayers—indeed, those of the

[Mr. John Baron]

House generally—are with the American people at this time and, indeed, with all those who have suffered loss, not least those in my constituency.

Tensions are running high in the middle east at the moment, and it is essential that any action—and action there will be—must be focused, thought through and considered. In bringing bin Laden and his terrorist accomplices to justice, a primary aim must also be to minimise the loss of innocent life, for we all know that two wrongs do not make a right.

I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Government on the handling of this affair so far, and especially the part that they have played in forging an international alliance against terrorism. We all agree with the Prime Minister's and the Foreign Secretary's confirmation today that we will fight all forms of terrorism anywhere in the world. However, I have one concern—does the Government agree that if the new globally co-ordinated fight against terrorism is to have legitimacy and credibility, there must be consistency of approach in its application? Yet the fact remains that, despite bending over backwards to appease terrorists in Northern Ireland, we have not managed to ensure any decommissioning of weapons, and I agree with the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) and others who have made that point. That is clearly wrong. We send troops to Macedonia to decommission warring factions there, but we cannot disarm terrorists in our own backyard. That contradiction in our approach will not help us in the eyes of the international community when it comes to fighting terrorism.

Lembit Öpik (Montgomeryshire): Although the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there is more than a little confusion and frustration about such matters, especially on the Unionist side, does he also accept that the other lesson for us from Northern Ireland is that it is necessary to enter into a dialogue to address the motives that drive terrorism? Indeed, a former Conservative Prime Minister was instrumental in creating that dialogue.

Mr. Baron: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. Dialogue is terribly important, but in Northern Ireland we have a democratic process by which people can engage in dialogue through the ballot box. There are parties, politics and everyone has a vote. There is no excuse whatever for taking up arms in Northern Ireland—or, indeed, in the whole island of Ireland.

I want briefly to raise two other related issues, the first of which relates to defence spending. I am concerned that defence spending now represents about 2.5 per cent. of gross domestic product—the lowest level in real terms probably since the Napoleonic wars. This year's allocation represents yet another cut in real terms. My concern is that that approach not only puts our own security at risk, but adds to the risks to our own troops on the ground. We all know that our troops in Kosovo, for example, did not have enough boots and that their radios were not up to sufficient standard so mobile phones had to be used. We know that the SAS has yet to receive its new Chinook helicopter. I ask the Government to realise that they cannot penny-pinch when it comes to the cost of defending the realm.

Finally, I want to raise the broader issue of police numbers, which is related to terrorism. There is increasing evidence, particularly in my constituency, that police resources are being stretched too far. That is not the local police force's fault. The police do not have sufficient numbers to police the local community as they would wish. Will the Government now realise that, in addition to a much tougher approach towards terrorism, we owe it to the vast majority of law-abiding citizens to get much tougher with criminals in general? Part of the fight against crime must include many more police on the streets—as many as 25,000 to 30,000 more. That is the sort of step change required. I ask the Government to consider such an approach, for, if nothing else, the events of 11 September have shown that we must do all we can to protect the law-abiding majority, whether from criminals or terrorists.

3.8 pm

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Not only were the events of 11 September appalling and devastating, but in the days and weeks that have followed all of us, whether or not we are politicians, have had to question many things as we try to come to terms with the way in which the world needs to respond. In the military sphere, there is now talk about having to come to terms with asymmetrical warfare. In many ways, we will have to come to terms with issues involving asymmetrical politics as well, as we face often contradictory pressures, all of which will have to inform our actions in the days, weeks and months ahead.

As we rightly commit ourselves to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of the USA, we know that the events in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington were attacks not only on the USA, but in a very real sense on us all. For that reason, the response must be international. The Government have contributed a great deal to the emerging coalition, but there are still real issues to address about how the coalition functions and its relationship to institutions such as the United Nations. I certainly welcome the Foreign Secretary's comments today on that matter. I emphasise to my right hon. Friend that if international confidence in the coalition is to be maintained over months, not just weeks, a real sense of international ownership must be brought to bear as well. Given the changed situation, in the coming months I look forward to greater emphasis being placed on the demand that we have supported in the House for the International Criminal Court. Perhaps we will now have some allies among those who so far have resisted that.

The contradictory pressures are nowhere more evident than in Afghanistan, where we are considering the likelihood of military action while simultaneously trying to address a humanitarian disaster of mammoth proportions. I am not opposed to a military response, and if we expect our military forces to operate in Afghanistan they have to have the means to do so. However, the targeting of any such action is vital to minimise civilian casualties. A successful humanitarian effort will not only save lives, but will be as important as military action in isolating support for the Taliban in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

In the brief time that I have available, I want to raise two issues. The first is on the meaning of terrorism and the second relates to the situation in the middle east, our response to which will have huge significance for the prospects of building the different world to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister rightly referred in his speech to the Labour party conference this week.

I very much agreed with my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) when he said that there was a danger of talking about terrorism as having one definition or about terrorists as an undifferentiated group. For the families and friends of innocent victims of terrorist acts, it makes no difference who or what the terrorist is and whether their loved one has been killed in a hijack, by a bomb or by a bullet. That is why, for my constituents and others in Birmingham, the twin towers outrage brought back many memories of the pub bombings of the 1970s. The circumstances and the scale are very different, but the pain and loss felt by loved ones is the same.

Determining the response of the international community to terrorism is more complex, however. No single response is appropriate in all situations. In truth, there never has been an international consensus on what should be defined as terrorism. At one of the spectrum is al-Qaeda, which has global objectives and a strategy of hate in which means and ends are intertwined in a cycle of violence. It is a fanaticism that has grotesquely distorted Islam and has rightly been condemned by Muslims world wide. In the light of recent events it is not clear whether any level of violence would be regarded as unacceptable by groups such as that. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary observed recently, there really is no diplomatic alternative to confronting such groups.

We also know that innocent civilians have died in attacks born not out of a distorted global strategy, but out of despair, poverty and oppression, which all too often we in the west have allowed to continue for decades. We should not underestimate the anger that such apparent double standards has engendered in many parts of the world. While it is right for the international community to say that the deliberate targeting of civilians or the use of terror for political ends is wrong whatever the cause, the fact remains that ultimately it will not be the suppression of such acts that defeats them, but solving the injustices that causes them.

That is why finding a solution to the situation in the middle east has moved centre stage and Britain's contribution is vital. It is important to state and restate that Israel has a right to security and Israelis have a right to live in peace. Internationally, we can help to safeguard those rights. I was pleased when on Tuesday and again today my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister emphasised that the rights of Palestinians must also be recognised as, to use his words, "equal partners with Israel" in shaping their common future. We need to understand what equality means in that part of the world.

I have had an interest in the middle east for many years, but it was only when I saw for myself the squalor of Gaza that I was able to comprehend the scale of inequality that has been tolerated for more than half a century. I began to appreciate a bit more how daily inequality felt when I was in a car that was stopped at a checkpoint between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Apparently, we were stopped and turned back for no other reason than the fact that the driver was Palestinian. Even though things are much worse now, at the height of the peace process I began to understand how ordinary Palestinians felt when the world was applauding the progress being made. while their homes were being expropriated, apparently without a murmur of international opposition.

In that part of the world violence and terror has been used on both sides, and it needs to be condemned on both sides. Bin Laden has little interest in the Palestinian question. Indeed, the continuation of that tragedy suits him down to the ground. However, if we are to defeat Bin Laden and his ilk we need to address it. Given our relationship with the middle east. we are in a unique position to take initiatives there. Now, in this new situation, the United States has a great deal of power to do something and Europe has a significant role to play. Ensuring that Israel has the security that its people deserve and need and that Palestinian rights are no less precious and the Palestinians have their own state will not only make the world a safer place, but I hope that Israel and Israelis will also understand that it will contribute perhaps more than anything else to something that they crave—peace and security in their own land.

Many people have asked whether some good can come out of the tragedy of 11 September and in some ways it is difficult to see how it can, but if we are resolute in our determination to outlaw terrorism and bring the likes of bin Laden to justice, and if we can begin to tackle the causes of despair, oppression and poverty that have been clearly revealed in the middle east, just maybe some good will come out of it and those 7,000 people will not have died entirely in vain.

3.16 pm

Patrick Mercer (Newark): We heard some prophetic words from the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) when he referred to Osama bin Laden being allowed to stew for a while. I suggest that is precisely what we should not let him do.

We have just seen on Teletext that a few hours ago another aircraft has been destroyed by an act of terrorism, this time over the Black sea, with upwards of 70 deaths. There is no doubt that terrorists see this as a long-term affair, not a short-term one. There have been terrorist operations in Srinigar and the Islamist movement in Uzbekistan is now threatening the bases that the American forces hope to use north of Afghanistan. The terrorists are in for a long-term operation. American forces have already been warned off—not just for this operation but to replace units in theatre in six months' time, so units from the 10th mountain division already have the warning for the next unit to take over from them in six months.

What about ourselves? We are promised a review of our strategic defence review, but what capacity do we really have to defend the nation? I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) about police numbers. In my constituency, Newark and Retford are also horribly short of policemen, who provide us with security at its most basic level.

In military terms, what interceptor aircraft are available to protect Heathrow? On 11 September the order was given to get aircraft in the air, yet there was none available. What nuclear, biological and chemical warfare defence do we have? The old civil defence system is long disbanded. The Army has one nuclear, biological and chemical warfare regiment at its disposal and that is currently deployed. The Territorial Army has trained troops but no equipment to defend us. Currently, the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre and the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre are desperately short of manpower. There are photographic interpreters, Arabic speakers, intelligence

[Patrick Mercer]

officers, interpreters and interrogators, all of whom are reservists or territorials. The regular units need them now, yet they have not been called. These people cannot reasonably be asked simply to volunteer to leave their employment to assist; they must be told officially to do so.

In the 1970s and 1980s a battalion was regularly deployed at Heathrow airport to exercise for just this sort of emergency. It has long gone; no such battalion exists any more at Windsor. What about our defence medical services? There are 14 field ambulance units on war establishment but we can field only three. In the past, the Territorial Army had home defence battalions, as did the Regular Army. Now, the TA has all but gone.

Mr. John Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Will the hon. Gentleman remind the House who decimated the British forces medical support services?

Patrick Mercer: I do not seek to attribute blame. I merely say that something needs to be done, because we do not have the people we need to do the job now.

What about aggressive operations as opposed to those that are purely defensive? We are desperately short of pilots to man the few aircraft that we have. I have already mentioned the TA, our regular forces are overstretched, and I am told that there is no plan to replace any of the regular units that are currently in theatre on Exercise Saif Sareea. Last but not least, what is being done to take advantage of the current atmosphere to recruit the 8,000 soldiers, not to mention the seamen and airmen, of whom our regular forces are short? What is being done to seize the initiative—to go out and recruit while the climate is right and people want to serve their nation? The answer is not very much, if anything.

Our armed forces are in a parlous state. We have heard how our defence spending has been cut during the past 15 years. I suggest that we are not ready for sustained operations. While we have tiny numbers of special forces who can be—indeed, probably have been—deployed, the operation in which we are engaged might not be short term, and we are likely to need troops, weapons and equipment. In the 1930s, far-sighted politicians took unpalatable decisions and prepared us for a war that some regarded as inevitable; the result was victories such as the Battle of Britain following hard on defeats such as Dunkirk. I suggest to the House that we need to remedy the current situation, and remedy it soon.

3.22 pm

Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Like many others, I rise to express my full support for the Government's actions. I especially welcome the evidence that the humanitarian contribution is moving up the scale of priorities. That issue is of great importance, and I am sure that the Select Committee on International Development and others will want to become more involved than they have been thus far in terms of consultation and so on.

In the time available to me, I shall focus on an issue related to the Government response to which no one else has referred: money laundering. Over the past few weeks, it has become commonplace to say that we must cut off the terrorists' supply of money and that the Government must respond better to the problem of money laundering. I fully support that view, but I do not want us to rush into a knee-jerk response that allows us to kid ourselves that we have done something about the problem when we have not.

It was pleasing to hear the Government's announcement this week that they had seized £59 million of Taliban money. It is good to see that the European Union is struggling to issue a directive on money laundering, and that the Queen's Speech contained a commitment in respect of money laundering. However, such things have been said before, so I remain unconvinced that much will actually happen.

Earlier this week, there was a puzzling announcement that we are now to regulate bureaux de change—apparently, the United Kingdom is the only country in Europe that does not already regulate such bodies. The Government say that each year £3 billion to £4 billion, 65 per cent. of which is estimated to be illegal, goes out of the country through those organisations; but I wonder how long the Government have known that and why we are attending to it only now. The Prime Minister has rightly pointed out that 90 per cent. of the heroin on sale in Britain comes from Afghanistan, to a street value of £2 billion to £3 billion; but how many prosecutions have there been in that respect?

Earlier this year, the International Development Committee examined corruption and, in that context, money laundering. We found a sorry scene indeed, the most notorious aspect of which is the Abacha case. The Nigerian Government asked us to help in tracking down £4 billion that had been taken out of Nigeria by Abacha, and to freeze Abacha's assets. Two years later, we have not done it, even though Governments such as Switzerland's—hardly famous for transparent accountancy—have done it, as has Liechtenstein. However, the papers this week reveal that we are still going through the process of judicial review and that nothing has happened.

Our structures are a mess, and I am not the only one who says so—every independent observer says the same. The head of the United Nations Development Programme, Mark Malloch Brown, told the Select Committee:

"I think different countries have different Achilles heels on corruption. The United Kingdom has . . . this banking issue"

as its Achilles heel. London is a major financial centre and is therefore attractive to money launderers, but the current UK response to money laundering is piecemeal and unco-ordinated. Our approach fails to acknowledge the importance of money laundering to the worldwide problem of corruption.

The Select Committee was deeply concerned about the role of one of this country's most valuable financial assets: the City of London itself. A recent book on the subject states:

"Because of its key strategic position as a global financial centre the United Kingdom is a major laundering centre."

I shall be pleased if we now take money laundering seriously, but let us not indulge in a knee-jerk response. I have a proposal to make to the House, because I think that the House should be involved. We should not merely accept the piece of legislation that the Home Secretary produces; estimable though it may be in itself, it cannot possibly be adequate to the task. As a consequence of the Scott inquiry into the control of arms exports, the House set up the Quadripartite Committee, comprising four

Select Committees—on Trade and Industry, on Employment, on International Development and on Foreign Affairs. Under the chairmanship of Ted Rowlands, the Committee produced a powerful piece of work that, through a consensual process in the House, resulted in the Bill on arms control that is currently going through Parliament.

I propose that we consider establishing a Quadripartite Committee on money laundering, so that we cannot kid ourselves that we have tackled money laundering, which is a huge industry, when we have not done so. We should ask members of the Select Committees on International Development, on the Treasury, on Foreign Affairs and on Trade and Industry to examine the issue of money laundering and do a thorough job. If, over the next six weeks, we simply pass a piecemeal measure, we will fail to tackle a problem of huge importance.

Mr. Derek Wyatt (Sittingbourne and Sheppey): Does my hon. Friend agree that we would do well to consider making one member of a company's board of directors legally responsible for incidents of money laundering, so that when laundering is discovered—*The Guardian* today quotes a figure of $1 billion and says that HSBC, Barclays bank, National Westminster bank and others are involved—directors are fined and banks are stopped from dealing?

Tony Worthington: My hon. Friend has illustrated the value of my suggestion, which is that we should explore Members' ideas about how to tackle corruption and money laundering once and for all in a way that involves the House. We must not content ourselves with a small Bill that only pretends to do the job. I commend that idea to the House.

3.29 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): The hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mike Gapes) has informed the House of today's terrible tragedy, whereby another aircraft has been taken out of the sky. I am sure that the whole House sends condolences to the families and friends of those who have been killed.

The Americans are coming to terms with terrorism happening within their country for the first time, but it has been happening in this country for 30 years. In 1969, I was in Northern Ireland as one of the first troops to go into the Province. I well remember marching into Londonderry in full colonial riot gear. One of the lessons that we had to learn at the start of those troubles, and which thankfully the United States has learned already, was the need for forbearance. We learned quickly that colonial riot drill banners that said on one side, "Disperse or we fire", and on the other, "Anyone crossing the line will be shot", would not work in that environment. I am not suggesting that punitive action is not necessary, but we have to go about things gently.

The second lesson that we learned, which is pertinent, was that friends can change sides. I ask the Minister to beware of that. It is often forgotten that we went in to protect the Catholic community. I had many cups of tea on the Falls road, but a few months later those residents were effectively against us. We must be careful with the alliances that we build in Afghanistan.

All the work that has gone in on the political front to solving the problems in Northern Ireland is a great example to the world. The work of the hon. Member for East Antrim (Mr. Beggs), other Members representing other parties and my right hon. Friend the former Member for Huntingdon, Mr. Major, has made a huge difference. If we are to get a global resolution, we must constantly look to diplomatic initiatives, not just to the military option.

For that reason, in 1988, I together with some other colleagues clandestinely met Yasser Arafat in Tunis. He was then a terrorist. One of my colleagues was a strongly pro-Israeli Member. We went out to talk to Arafat and to try to gain some understanding. Subsequently, we visited the west bank and saw the problems. In line with the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and my hon. Friend the hon. Member for North-West Norfolk (Mr. Bellingham), we concluded that those problems had to be sorted out. One of the fundamental problems now is that Arafat is not responsible for Hezbollah and the other extreme groups. It is no good driving tanks into Gaza and shooting up the police station, which Arafat does control. If there is to be any chance of conflict resolution, that must be understood. In much the same way in Northern Ireland we cannot just drive tanks down the Falls road. That simply would not work.

The other great issue out there concerns the settlements. During the third Reich the Germans talked of lebensraum, or more space. I am not suggesting that more space should be found. One cannot go into another country or these territories and simply drop one's own people on the mountain-tops without consequences. The settlements have caused much unhappiness across the whole of Arabia. We must be alerted to those facts.

During the Gulf war I was the secretary of the Conservative Back Bench defence committee and the foreign affairs committee. Intelligence was given to us privately. I commend the Prime Minister for trying to inform the House more about what is going on today by putting papers in the Library. That war was self-contained. Now we are in Afghanistan. Let us not forget that of the 16,000 troops in the second or third Afghan war only one came out alive, and that was because the Afghan authorities let him out. This theatre is very different and we must proceed with the greatest possible caution.

Good has already come out of this conflict, as new alliances are being forged. I had a lot to do with building alliances at the end of the cold war with newly elected Russian Members through the Future of Europe Trust, which the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. MacDonald) and I set up. Russian terrorist problems are legion. Someone tried to fly an aircraft into the Kremlin not long ago, but that is often forgotten.

We have a great opportunity to build that alliance. Iran has suddenly come in from the cold. I do not disagree with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—we should take another look at Iraq. It has had sanctions for 10 years, yet the problem remains. Now that we have the possibility of dramatic change, let us at least address it. It is important that somebody should be finding out what the parameters are.

At the end of this conflict, we shall probably be dealing with all the tribes in Afghanistan. The only way forward is to have a UN mandate. We cannot hand over to one group or another. We have co-operation from all the surrounding countries and we need to build on that with a mandate.

[Mr. David Tredinnick]

We are fortunate in the quality of our leadership in this conflict. The Prime Minister has set a good example and I cannot deny that he has done the country proud. My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) has arrived at the right time because he is a security expert and a soldier. We are blessed that he is on the Front Bench with all his experience of dealing with terrorism. He can say a lot behind the scenes. It appears that the President of the United States has found himself, too. Some of us were not 100 per cent. happy with his performance before the war broke out, but he has demonstrated great leadership at a time of great crisis.

I speak for all my constituents when I say how much we feel for those who lost their lives in America and their families. Last night I spoke to a friend in New York who explained the ghastliness of it all, saying that they do not want to do anything except see their closest friends. The day before yesterday, I spoke to a Russian who said, "We have been living under threat, but we are now experiencing some sort of relief. We are coming out of the cold and people are understanding us—understanding the fact that Grozny was built by the Tsars and that we see it as a Russian town." Those issues must be understood.

We live in a time of great horror and great hope. We have great hope because new coalitions are emerging and we have a tremendous opportunity to make the world a better place, notwithstanding the ghastliness of this terrible tragedy.

3.36 pm

Mr. Malcolm Savidge (Aberdeen, North): The 11 September was not just an American tragedy but a global tragedy. As our Prime Minister saw from the start, it required, therefore, a united global response. Within hours of the atrocity, we heard some more extreme voices, such as Richard Perle, who advocated widespread indiscriminate vengeance and accelerating missile defence. On the first, we must be grateful that President Bush has shown careful judgment and listened to wiser counsels, especially those of our Prime Minister. We have had the promise that the military aspects of our response will be targeted and proportionate.

On missile defence, the justification given for it is the fact that there are rogue states whose dictators insanely hate the United States, seek to obtain rockets and weapons of mass destruction and are sufficiently irrational not to be deterred by nuclear annihilation. On 11 September, three of those four rogue states sent messages of sympathy and support to the United States. Even if their motive was cynical—to avoid reprisals—that does not imply that they are impervious to deterrence. The fourth rogue state is Iraq. Saddam Hussein may be insane, but I believe that he has a murderous obsession with self-preservation.

Only North Korea has attempted to test a long-range rocket, which could not have reached the United States. The test failed and has never been repeated. The Ministry of Defence, looking ahead 30 years, describes a rogue rocket attack as low risk. The Foreign Affairs Committee's report suggests that the threat has been exaggerated, probably pushed by political and commercial interests rather than strategic thinking. The Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously warned against some of the dangers that could follow from missile defence. We have had similar warnings from the present Chief of the Defence Staff and his predecessor. Such concerns have been expressed in Parliament and in the country, where a series of opinion polls suggest that 70 per cent. of the public are concerned about the proposal, not least because of the fear that in trying to reduce a comparatively low risk we may increase far more grave dangers; not least if it breaks down the whole system of treaties, arms control and non-proliferation; not least if it divides us at a time when we need global unity; or if it starts to destabilise any of the nuclear weapons states, and that increases the risk of proliferation not only to rogue states but to terrorists.

We should remember that terrorists can be impervious to deterrence. They can be difficult to identify and to locate, as we have seen recently. They can deliver weapons of mass destruction by van or boat, which are as impervious to missile defence as the type of attack that occurred on 11 September. Rogue states may prefer to use smuggled weapons rather than a rocket, which could invoke a pre-emptive attack before it was used, or lead to nuclear annihilation after it was used.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary said in the previous debate that there was a real danger of terrorists getting hold of biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. Reference has just been made to the visit by two United States elder statesmen, Robert McNamara and Thomas Graham, to talk to Members of Parliament and Front-Bench spokesmen of the three main parties They both say that they think that there is a threat of nuclear terrorist attack within five to 10 years. Thomas Graham says that he has seen the room in which the previous South African Government made their nuclear weapons. He said that none of the apparatus in that room would be difficult to obtain and could probably be obtained in the average British city and certainly in London. Six nuclear weapons were produced, which were considerably more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb and could be packed on to a van.

I want to compare two threats: the threat of smuggled weapons and the threat of rogue state missiles. The first is real, immediate and high. The second may not be illusory but is certainly distant in time and low.

This is a time for extremely delicate diplomacy. I hope that our Prime Minister will use the immense respect that he has gained in the United States from his international statesmanship not just to suggest that it should be moderate in its approach to this crisis, but to encourage it to reconsider priorities with regard to missile defence, the biological weapons convention and treaties and multilateralism as a whole. This is not a time to emphasise policies that create disunity and division. We need the greatest global unity to pursue not just this campaign but the world vision that the Prime Minister expounded on Tuesday.

I hope that the American Administration will listen to the voice of the American people. Before this tragedy, opinion polls showed that 77 per cent. of them believed that the greatest threat came from terrorism and only 10 per cent. believed that it came from rogue state missiles. Immediately after the tragedy, *Newsweek* did a different survey in which 72 per cent. of people said that they believed the immediate priority was airline security and other security and only 18 per cent. said that it was missile defence.

This is a time to recognise that we need international unity to fight not only terrorism and its causes, but proliferation. One of the tragic lessons of 11 September was surely that the unilateral military invulnerability of any one state is a dangerous delusion. Increasingly, the national security of every state depends on the common security of all nations.

3.44 pm

John Barrett (Edinburgh, West): Although our thoughts are with the victims and the families and loved ones of the 7,000 who died in New York and Washington, we should give some thought to the victims of terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, refugees on the move and in camps, starving, eating grass or nothing. It is not only in the west that terrorism is ruining lives.

We heard earlier who is responsible and that the evidence points clearly to bin Laden, al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime. I look forward to as much of that evidence being published as possible but accept that not all of it will be in the public domain. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) said, we have to take on trust what we do not see published. It is important that we convince not only hon. Members and our allies, but the general public and the general public in other countries that what we are doing is right. We must be believed.

We have identified who is co-ordinating the training for terrorism in Afghanistan and the regime that allows that to go on. Who allows it is culpable and must be stopped but serious problems will arise. Winter is about to set in and there are dangers, which have been mentioned by many hon. Members, in entering into an alliance with the Northern Alliance.

It will require resolve by all our allies. International co-operation is vital and is developing further today, but we must not allow strains on that international alliance, if and when military action starts, to affect our attempts to deal with the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding and the aid that is already arriving in Pakistan and Afghanistan. We must give humanitarian and military objectives equal priority.

We have had difficulty establishing the exact number of victims in New York and Washington and we do not know the number of victims in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is good to see aid beginning to get through. In my constituency, many Pakistani families have friends and relations in Pakistan, particularly in Islamabad. They have contacted me about the crisis. I have received no letters arguing that we and our allies should move forward more quickly, but dozens of letters arguing caution. I agree with a number of points that have been raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) in the House and elsewhere.

On the domestic front, we must give greater consideration to the risks in this country. There has already been an attack on a mosque in Edinburgh, but one of my greatest concerns is the threat that exists to nuclear power stations, among other installations, in this country. The hon. Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Simpson) mentioned the ability of terrorists to acquire nuclear weapons. Since 11 September, things have moved on. Weapons of mass destruction can be domestic airliners. Petrol tankers have been mentioned in connection with a potential attack on the Sears tower. We must look at security at home. We in the House are aware that security measures have increased. I would like security measures outside to increase too.

3.47 pm

Mr. Derek Wyatt (Sittingbourne and Sheppey): I would like us to look beyond what will happen in the next six weeks to six months and examine institutions that we currently call world which may not be global. The globalisation of the financial markets in the 1990s happened without any Government aid. It was a decision by big banks. They went 24 hours a day, seven days a week uncontrolled by us, the elected Members of democratic western states. When we talk about the globalisation of politics, what does it mean? I wonder whether we could reflect on that for a minute or two.

Most of the institutions that we call world—the World Trade Organisation, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank—reside in America. They were born in the early part of the war in 1940, 1941 and 1942. They may not reflect where we are in world politics today. Perhaps the issue among the non-western democratic states is that they have a problem with that culturally, politically, economically and socially. Perhaps one of the things that we will have to give some thought to is whether those institutions can stay in America and whether the way in which they are run, the boards are run and the directors are controlled have to open up.

An early definition of the globalisation of politics may be: one country, one vote. That might mean looking again at the United Nations and a Security Council that has a veto. Could that be the right way to proceed if, out of the terror of the past few weeks, we are to develop new systems of global organisations? I leave that question with the House.

This matter is compounded, too, by that small thing of the 1990s called the internet. I receive daily e-mails from people in Kabul, Islamabad, Bombay and Delhi urging us not to invade or bomb because we have no idea how bad things are. I imagine that that will continue during the next six months. Thus we have an extraordinary ability to communicate with people whom we are trying to destroy, albeit not deliberately. The process is far more complicated socially because of the way in which we are able to interact as global citizens. I do not believe that the world organisations fully comprehend the pace at which the world has moved against the institutions that we currently call "world".

We have had a half discussion about the laundering of money. This House has always been critical of the moving of money by Swiss banks in Geneva and Zurich, but we are just as guilty. London banks have laundered many billions of pounds and we have allowed it. It simply cannot be right that the boards of directors get away with that scot free. We must look again at our banking regulations in the City. If banks such as HSBC and Citibank are global, as they say they are, there must be a global way to regulate, organise or restructure them. Given that we will not get it from the World Bank or the IMF, we as politicians must give a lead.

I want to look at some of the cultural implications. We have two of the most magnificent external organisations in the world: the BBC World Service and the British Council. I was pleased to find in my mail this morning the "open minds" commitment from the British Council.

[Mr. Derek Wyatt]

An additional £1 million is being given from today to establish much greater contact in the Arabic and the Islamic worlds. It is strange that that has not happened already, but we must give much more consideration to the cultural implications of the relationship between, in a crude sense, Christians and Muslims. That is one of the fundamental issues.

The BBC World Service has done a phenomenal job. It is the only trusted service in Afghanistan—indeed, it is the only radio service in Afghanistan, extraordinarily. It has done amazing translations and has broadcast 24 hours a day in the past three weeks, and we should be truly proud of it. Its staff have worked heroically to bring that about.

To build on that, the House must consider whether we could establish something between a Nobel prize and an Oscar. We have awarded achievement scholarships for 100 years or so; is there not a way in which those could work the other way round, so that British young people between the ages of 18 to 30 could study in non-Christian countries and better see the relationship between the west and the middle east? It would be good to work on that idea.

Four weeks ago, I was with three other hon. Members in Tunisia. In a serious discussion with the Tunisian cultural Minister, he explained, "We are Arabic and Muslim, but we were also French. We have two languages, Arabic and French, but the internet is 98 per cent. English. In one generation, written Arabic is disappearing from our culture because of the implications of English." We take it for granted that people will speak English, but we do not understand the cultural power of English and how it is affecting the middle east and the far east. The power of the English language has deep cultural implications, and we should consider them carefully.

3.54 pm

Mr. Andrew Selous (South-West Bedfordshire): I wholeheartedly support the Prime Minister's statement and that of the Leader of the Opposition, and the remarks made by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

We must in due course use our influence with the United States of America to urge them to address the reasons for the hatred of America and the west that is prevalent in the middle east. I think in particular of the several thousand militant madrassas that are training underprivileged children in Pakistan. Last week, one of the students of those madrassas was quoted as saying, "We will come after you. We will come into your schools and your playgrounds. We will get your children."

It will avail us nothing if we manage to dispose of Mr. bin Laden and his network if his place is taken by hundreds of others with similar views. It is extremely important that we urge on the US the extreme importance of a fair and even-handed foreign policy, particularly in relation to Israel and the Palestinians. The US must also pay more attention to the positive promotion of the American image and to showing what good humanitarian and development work the US does in other parts of the world.

To avoid charges of hypocrisy against the US, it is absolutely vital that we urge the US to take all further possible steps to stop the funding of terrorist organisations within the US itself. This country, among others, has been the recipient of funds of terrorist organisations, which have been used to ill effect against our own people. Our constituents are entitled to ask that we urge the Government to stress the importance of that to America.

Several hon. Members have spoken about the importance of civil defence, which needs to be urgently addressed. The Government need urgently to consider issues such as the safety of our food and water supply. Speaking as a former Territorial Army soldier, I hope that the Government will look carefully at using our reserve forces in a much greater civil defence capacity. The US national guard is now mobilised to a huge extent. Our reserve forces are extremely capable and could shoulder a great deal of civil defence responsibility at little cost to the public purse.

Before I came to this House I worked in the London insurance market, and I have friends and colleagues who work in tall, prominent buildings in our financial district. It is perfectly reasonable for any employee working on the upper floors of a tall building to ask their employer what steps they are supposed to take for their own safety, should an aircraft crash into the middle of the building. I urge the Government to speak with employer organisations and City authorities to ensure that some thought is given to the safety of employees who work at the top of tall buildings.

Many of my constituents have told me that they are extremely pleased that Parliament was recalled three days after the events of 11 September and has been recalled again today. We do not know how events will unfold over the next few days. Calls have been made already in this debate for Parliament to return again next week, perhaps on Thursday or Friday. If we are to establish this House as the prime place in which important debates about the international situation take place. I urge that the House be recalled again towards the end of next week.

3.59 pm

Mr. Parmjit Dhanda (Gloucester): When we were recalled to this Chamber three weeks ago, I remember thinking that these were extraordinary times. As news is still coming in today about another possible terrorist atrocity, the memories of three weeks ago are brought back, although the aftershock of those events has yet to subside.

Over the past three weeks I have been moved by the compassion and resolve that I have seen throughout the country, not least among people in my constituency. In the past two weeks the British people have shown their support in many ways. I pay particular tribute to the firefighters in my constituency, who collected more than £8,000 for the families of their heroic colleagues who died in New York.

All over the country we have seen, outside post offices and town halls, queues of people wishing to sign books of condolence. It is important for us to remember that the British people have held prayer services for the victims in churches throughout the land—and not just in churches, but in mosques, Sikh gurdwaras, Hindu temples and other temples.

Our compassion is best defined not only by its strength but by its breadth. Although most of us have stood together against terrorism, a tiny few have added to the horror of 11 September. Since the attacks in New York,

Pennsylvania and Washington, we have seen a spate of reprisals in this country, mostly directed at Asians. If we are determined to root out terrorism, those acts of terror cannot be allowed to escape justice, either. I very much support the measures that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary outlined yesterday in Brighton.

It is easy to categorise people in this day and age, but let us not forget that the turban and the beard are worn by people of more than one religion. They are worn by Muslims, but also by Sikhs; they are not a badge of fanaticism. My own grandfather proudly wears a turban and a beard, and he wore them with great pride for king and country in Burma, in the conflict between 1939 and 1945—and in that conflict many of his colleagues died for king and country wearing turbans and beards.

Last week we saw a leaflet produced by the British National party, showing the World Trade Centre in ruins, and containing the words:

"Islam creates ferocious hatred, spawning psychotic mass murderers . . . and vicious rioters in our towns".

That is a false and ignorant statement. Such intemperate language is disloyal to our nation, and I hope that the new legislation to outlaw discrimination on the basis of religion will help to tackle it.

It is particularly important at the moment to reassure the Muslim communities both at home and abroad that we are not at war with Islam. Muslims are not the enemies of the British people. I commend the actions of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last week in meeting the representatives of the ethnic communities, especially the Muslim groups, in Downing street.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary also deserves to be commended for his handling of the difficult task that he faced last week with his diplomatic trip to Iran and Israel. Our international coalition is strengthened by its breadth. If we ask Islamic countries to stand with us against terrorism, they must be made to feel that they stand with us on even and solid ground, and that is what I believe we are doing. I hope that the recent visit to meet the Israelis and the Palestinians will prove to be one of a number of turning points in the search for an acceptable and lasting peace for both the communities there.

As I said, it is easy to have certain views about one community or another. My mind goes back to when I was at university, when a friend of mine, Nasser Masri, was always late to return to lectures when we came back from the holidays. He always returned a week after the rest of us, and we asked why, what was going on? What was wrong with Nasser? After a while, he overcame his embarrassment and told us. His crime was to have been born a Palestinian, in Ramallah, so every time he returned to his studies in the United Kingdom, he was detained for a week.

Such measures breed anger and create difficult circumstances. We are right to ensure that diplomatic discussions are opened between the Israelis and the Palestinian people. I am pleased to see the Foreign Secretary's measures designed to bring that about.

I had a message earlier today from the two mosques in my constituency of Gloucester. People there were very concerned about the remarks of a former Prime Minster, reported today, about their views on what happened on 11 September. I said that I would be happy to put across their view that what happened on that day was not only a crime but a crime against religion and a crime against all of us. It was a crime against civilisation, and they totally condemn it.

4.6 pm

Mr. Richard Allan (Sheffield, Hallam): I find it ironic that on a day when I am speaking in a debate on the international security situation, the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, is splashed across the front pages of the newspapers. It was Lady Thatcher who inspired me to get involved in party politics in the first place, at a time of similar international crisis towards the end of the 1980s, when the former Soviet Union was breaking up, and I felt less than confident in the ability of the then Prime Minister to keep us all from nuclear destruction. Now here we are at a time of equally significant international crisis in terms of the possible repercussions of our actions.

I speak as someone who counts himself a friend of America and the Americans. It already been acknowledged in the debate that there has been a latent anti-Americanism, particularly on the left, in British politics. I remember a conversation I had some years ago with American friends whom I had made in Latin America, when I had gone through all the things that I disliked about America. My friend said, "Essentially, you're saying we're all like Ronald Reagan." I said, "Yes, that's it; you've got it." She replied, "So can I assume that you're all like Margaret Thatcher, and share her views?" I realised that we had been engaged in the grossest form of stereotyping of the Americans, which we would never accept if we were talking about an ethnic minority or any other grouping, yet somehow it had seemed acceptable.

Since then, and since entering the House, I have made good friends with many American politicians. Last year I visited Representative Dennis Kucinich, who showed me that there was a huge variety in American pluralist politics, which we do not always see from this side of the Atlantic. We have to understand that America is a complex nation, with a very pluralist political system.

Speaking as a friend of the United States and of American citizens in general, I think it is important that we define what our friendship means. The United States faces a difficult situation. It needs to plan for the future and understand how it should respond, and it comes to us, their friends, to ask about that.

My experience is that in such circumstances a casual friend will not bother, will not listen and is not interested. A good friend will listen uncritically and say, "I'll support you wholeheartedly. I'll give you whatever you want." Our very best friends, however, will listen critically to what we say and then tell us what they really think. They will not just assume that what we say is correct. They will put our interests ahead even of their friendship with us—and that is the position that we should take now towards the United States. We should be that country's very best friends, listening to what it has to say but not scared to criticise.

The Opposition, too, should have that relationship with the Government. We do not wish the Government to fail; we wish them to be successful in working with the United States—but we cannot be expected to be entirely uncritical. That would be a derogation of our duty as a friend of the United States.

Two concerns have been raised with me. I had a public meeting in the constituency last week, because I had had a lot of mail on the subject and lot of e-mail urging

[Mr. Richard Allan]

caution. More than 50 people came to the meeting, which was called at very short notice. The notes of caution came through, and two aspects particularly concern me. First, I was told about the impact on community relations, which has rightly been spoken about a great deal today. It was put to me that there is genuine and palpable fear in many communities in the United Kingdom. That fear is likely to increase as and when the prospect of military action arises.

We must also be realistic about how we are making people in our communities feel. Many people properly maintain close cultural and family ties with people in the affected regions. We believe in strong families and consider that it is right for people to maintain such links. They will now feel an immense tug. Norman Tebbit's cricket test is irrelevant. It is a perfectly natural human response, and nothing Islamic, to feel concern for one's friends and relatives in a zone that is threatened by conflict. That anxiety will be magnified if the conflict is to involve troops in the country that one regards as one's home.

For example, in the second world war, Australian Germans were allies of the United Kingdom and would have had no truck with the Nazi regime, but natural human emotion would have meant that they felt very distressed about the bombing raids against Germany. We are facing a testing and difficult time in which we must be not only tolerant but understanding. We must also show political leadership.

The Home Secretary struck a good note when the media dragged in the few voices on the fringe, as they will do in such circumstances, that were giving the anti-American line. He merely said that those people were being silly. It is very important for us, as politicians, to maintain that line. Involvement in terrorism or the incitement of violence is serious, but let us not get on our high horses when people are dragged up to express their opposition. If we disagree, let us say that it is silly but not get on our bandstands and stir things up even more because, as has been pointed out, it is the British National party that will fill the void. I hope that we are responsible and understand the difficulties faced by members of our community as military action becomes increasingly likely.

I want to deal briefly with the implications of the recent events for international justice. We may be moving into a new era in which our opinions and actions will be checked for consistency as never before. The history of the cold war is littered with stories of different countries funding groups that carried out terrorist acts throughout the world. That has been happening since the second world war. We now have a chance to start to understand terrorism for what it is—murder. Whether terrorism is committed by Colombians who think that they are operating against guerrillas on behalf of the state, by the IRA or loyalists, or by anybody else, it involves acts of murder, none of which are so gross as that which was committed on 11 September. We should never fund or support murder. We must consider mechanisms for dealing with murderers as we always have done in this country: primarily by judicial means and not by summary execution or by sending in troops. Troops may be required, as they have been in Northern Ireland, to carry out the requirements of justice. There may be no other means of dealing with the situation, but our primary recourse should be the judicial method.

The formation and building of the International Criminal Court will be crucial if we are to move forward. There are people who deserve to be tried but, because of human rights concerns, cannot be sent back to the countries where the request for trial was made. We cannot sacrifice one aspect for another and say that human rights are no longer important when people are suspected of terrorism. We must satisfy the need for human rights to be upheld and the need to deal with terrorism. I believe that an international justice system will help us to solve that problem, but we must be subject to it just as much as we expect others to be.

I still have an element of hope. I believe that we can achieve our objectives only by sticking with our principles of international law. I sincerely hope that the Prime Minister achieves success in being the best friend of America by guiding it towards the most appropriate response to the awful murders of 11 September.

4.14 pm

Mr. John Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me an opportunity, albeit a brief one, to speak in this very important debate. I have been sitting in the Chamber for most of the day. The standard of most contributions was first class and the debate has helped us to develop a number of ideas.

In the short time that I have, I want to concentrate on one matter: the implications of 11 September for NATO. Along with other hon. Members, I am a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, which has an important summit this weekend in Ottawa. It will be the biggest gathering of transatlantic parliamentarians since the horrors of 11 September, in respect of which there are a number of issues that we must address as Members of the House and as delegates.

I have heard hon. Members refer time after time to the scale of what happened, but I sometimes think that it cannot sink in. I had the misfortune of seeing the events of 11 September unfold live on television, as I am sure many other people did. A television was switched on in the office at the time, and what we saw resembled the outtakes of a disaster movie. It did not look real. For many people, even after reading about what happened in the papers day after day, I do not think that the reality, implications and scale of what happened have sunk in.

As time has passed, the situation has, in some respects, got worse. After a few days, people are saying that it all happened over there in America and that they are glad that no action has been taken and that the Americans have sat back. However, the House must be absolutely clear that the implications of what occurred are enormous and unprecedented. A threshold was crossed on that day which will affect the security environment in which we live and the security threats that we face. Most importantly, its effect will be felt in the way in which we react and reconfigure our defences to confront the problem.

In 20 minutes, more innocent civilians were killed in New York than have been killed during 30 years of the horror of terrorism in Northern Ireland. Without the heroism of the emergency services and the courage of New Yorkers, more people would have been killed in that

single event than have been killed through acts of terrorism—within the terms that are generally used to define it—in the history of mankind.

The implications are enormous. As a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I played a tiny role in discussing the strategic defence review with Back Benchers on both sides of the House. We considered the terrorist threat, just as NATO did, but it was nothing like what we confronted on 11 September. In the SDR and the foreign policy document that guided it, terrorism was seen as an asymmetric threat, alongside organised crime, drug dealing, environmental disasters and displacement of populations. After 11 September, however, it will have to be considered in a very different light.

NATO will also have to be considered differently. Under article 24 of the NATO strategic concept, we addressed in Washington in 1999 the fear of terrorist attacks and asymmetric warfare. Again, however, the scale and unexpectedness of what happened on 11 September was never once contemplated. It was never dreamed that a number of passenger jets, laden with fuel, would be used as weapons of mass destruction. We could forget missiles and the nuclear bomb; the scale of the destruction that occurred was the equivalent of that which would be produced by a small nuclear device. What took place was beyond human reason, which is what makes it so difficult for us to deal with it.

First, I ask Ministers seriously to consider formally revising article 24 so that it includes military actions as a legitimate response to terrorist threats from a body out of area. That must be written into the charter to make it absolutely clear for the future. Secondly, there has been much talk about the number of NATO allies that will participate in whatever action is taken, and about the inclusion of some countries and the exclusion of others. The truth is that most NATO allies were incapable of contributing to any sort of action because they do not have the necessary defence capabilities.

I believe that NATO will now have to review and redouble its efforts to ensure that member states achieve the defence capability goals that it set in Washington in 1999. It must ensure that, if future terrorist threats arise, we are in a proper position to respond in military terms. I do not believe for one second that military means alone will provide any sort of solution to such a threat, but we must consider the flexibility and mobility of forces, as well as their sustainability in distant fields of action. Most important, we must consider interoperability. Our forces must be able to communicate with each other. NATO must bear in mind that we could not send a force consisting of all those different member forces to Uzbekistan or the Persian gulf to mount a combined operation at such a distance.

We must also consider whether NATO now needs a specific anti-terrorist arm or unit within the alliance that can be called on, not in the event of something like this happening again but to prevent it from ever happening. Everyone suspects that we will not see the same atrocity and outrage again and that another asymmetric attack will take place—a completely unexpected attack, of an entirely different nature. That is the threat that we face, and I think we must consider the implications in our own review and our own foreign policy.

This is not a war on Islam. In Wales, we have the oldest Muslim community in the United Kingdom, and the oldest continuously existing mosque. When I met members of our Muslim community, they were unanimous in condemning what had taken place. One local leader, Mansour Ahmed, made it absolutely clear—we should bear this in mind—that he was a Welsh Muslim first and, by definition, a British Muslim first. The overwhelming majority of Muslims in this country are in absolute agreement with that.

Let us be careful, however. I want to touch on one final issue. I may be stating the obvious, but we should be aware—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord): Order. Time is up.

4.22 pm

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Woking): Many may imagine my Surrey constituency to be a prosperous, middle-class area. In some respects it is, but many will not know that Woking contains the oldest mosque in the country and that a large number of people with a Pakistani Muslim background have been settled in Woking, contributing enormously to the community and its welfare, for some years.

I echo what was said by the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) when I say that all my experience of conversing with dozens of Muslims in the Woking area suggests that we are talking not about a clash with Islam but about something entirely different. We are talking about a clash between those of good will from all religions and those of bad will, wherever they may be. I have spoken to the leaders of the Woking community in the past few days. They are very responsible—there is a seriously responsible imam. My Labour opponent in the last general election was a member of the mosque, and a more decent person one would never find, however far one travelled. He was a very good man indeed.

All those Muslims in Woking are united in their condemnation of what happened on 11 September. Never let us in this House feel that a wedge can be driven between us and those outside who are of good will. It is a united front that we must all show—and I speak on behalf of Woking when I say that the message from that constituency could not be stronger in support of what this Government are trying to do, with the rest of the free world.

About eight years ago, I formed the Immigration Advisory Service. It replaced the United Kingdom Immigration Advisory Service, and it exists in eight, 10 or 12 offices around the United Kingdom, giving free legal help and advice to those with rights of appeal under immigration law and those with asylum problems. It strikes me as odd, but we must realise that we in this country have probably the best voluntary sector in Europe—or the best Government-supported organisation, in terms of money—giving help to those with rights of appeal under immigration law. I do not just congratulate the Conservative Government on increasing IAS funding until 1997; I congratulate the last Labour Government on continuing to do so.

The organisation now employs hundreds of qualified lawyers around the country, giving the best possible advice to those with rights of appeal under immigration and asylum law. Many Members on both sides of the House will have had cause to send to the organisation

[Mr. Humfrey Malins]

constituents who were worried and upset. Long may it and what it stands for flourish: I believe that it will be called on particularly over the next few months.

Partly because of my connection with the IAS and, of course, my Woking interests, I travelled to Pakistan and Azad Kashmir not long ago. I visited a town called Mirpur. Some know Mirpur. It is a tough town. Many of my constituents originate from it and many return to it for holidays. While I was there, three people came up to me and said, "Mr. Malins, I am from Woking. What is happening about the position in so-and-so road?"

Two or three things struck me about Mirpur. We should never forget that it is a very troubled area. The nuclear experiments carried out by India and Pakistan not so long ago caused a great deal of worry to many people and illustrate the fragility of the situation there. The same can be said of Kashmir, where there is an on-going problem.

I was also struck by the sheer inhospitability of the climate. When I was there, the temperature was well over 40 deg centigrade. It is mercilessly hot at times, and the mountains were mercilessly difficult to climb up and down. It is a very bleak terrain, and Afghanistan must be the same as it is next door. Within a few weeks, the weather in Afghanistan will become much worse. It will be awful, and there will be a huge humanitarian need in that part of the world. I applaud anything that the Government do—I am sure that they will be supported throughout the House—in relation to humanitarian needs over the next few months.

I remark in passing that one of the scourges of our country—I say this with my judicial hat on—is heroin, which has such a terrible effect on so many of our youngsters who appear before me in court. Heroin is one of the nastiest things ever to have hit this country of ours, and one of the most destructive for young people. It is sad, is it not, that Afghanistan is, as far as I can see, the source of the heroin that comes to this country. We will have to watch out for that.

The area is troubled generally, however. All of us in the House must focus on the need, over the next few months, to ensure that we do what we can to help the people—an awful lot of them—who will be displaced by a combination of terribly sad events.

I have been in the House for a long time, and I know that we spend much of our time involved in party politics. I suppose that is the nature of our lives in this place. I believe that over the next few months the spotlight will be on the House as it has never been before and may not be again in our lifetime. We shall have to consider some of the most critical issues relating to asylum, terrorism and immigration. These are issues that cause high feelings and emotions.

The House must pass the test over the next few months. The best thoughts among us all must be allowed to coalesce to help us form a policy that will help to take us ahead. I have never felt—I am sure that I speak for many Members—such a heavy duty upon me as a parliamentarian to get things right over the next few months. We may have but one chance. We must all contribute as best we can in a spirit of utter co-operation.

4.30 pm

Mr. Barry Gardiner (Brent, North): To be under attack is to be under a microscope. The response an individual makes defines clearly who they are. Faced with criticism and hatred, a person can show either courage or cowardice, calm resolve or reckless retaliation. Perhaps no response is as fitting as that of self-examination—that is to look at one's life, to examine it and to face its failings, but also to rediscover what is good. I believe that a nation is no different.

If the attack of 11 September was an attack on more than people and buildings—and it was—we must use it to re-examine our way of life. If there be any virtue in the way that we live, we should proclaim it as a memorial to those who died and as a covenant with those who share our values throughout the world in which we shall continue to live governed by the principles of tolerance, democracy, freedom and the rule of law. Those are principles that we hold precious.

Our tolerance gives us the humility to recognise that ours is not the only way of living. Our democracy establishes rights for those who oppose and seek to change our way of life. Our freedom means that no human being is forced to subject himself to another's will. However, the rule of law binds together each one of those principles under a supreme authority, which is the principle of equality.

In our way of life no individual is above the law. The rights and freedoms that our democracy establishes are the equal rights and freedoms of equal citizens. The rule of law stands in judgment against the thief who would take these privileges for himself only to use them to steal the same rights and freedoms from his neighbour.

To those who seek to turn our tolerance into their tyranny and terror we say, "You do not understand us. Our freedom does not arise because we care not what our neighbours do. Our freedom is born out of the dignity and respect in which we hold them, believing them to enjoy that same right to choose their way of life and determine their own actions as we claim for ourselves."

Freedom is a virtue of double worth. It ennobles the one who receives it. It gives autonomy, turning a human being into a person. However, freedom also blesses the one who bestows it by turning resentful subjects into equal friends. That was the lesson that gave birth to the Commonwealth. Indeed, it is a lesson that some Commonwealth states still have to learn.

How, then, do freedom, democracy, tolerance and the rule of law respond to those who would attack them? Do we meet terror with terror, barbarity with barbarity? That would be to cast aside the very values that we claim to be defending.

I welcome the restraint and thoughtfulness with which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the United States President have worked during the past three weeks. However, let those who would attack our way of life know that our tolerance is not weakness—it is what gives us our dignity and strength. Let the terrorists know that our freedom is not licence and that we shall defend our freedom. Let them know that the rule of law is not impotent. We shall not seek blind vengeance but we will exact justice, for we believe that there is virtue in the way we live. We believe that there is value in the principles we hold. We believe that the dignity of each human soul comes not from enforced enslavement to another's ideal, but from the liberty to choose a life that is one's own.

In Srinagar this week, another 38 people had that liberty taken from them by a terrorist bomb. Although I welcome the Pakistan Government's co-operation with the coalition, I ask the Minister to assure the House that no matter how desirable that co-operation may be in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, we will not overlook the complicity of General Musharraf and Pakistan in the cross-border attacks and terrorist insurgency across the line of control. Let the House be clear that our choice of friends in any coalition against terror must not include states that still actively promote terror in neighbouring countries. The price of their friendship is too high if it means being selective in the application of our principles.

Let us also be clear that we do not confuse terrorism with human rights abuses. That both are vile and wrong does not mean that both are the same. They are not, and we do no one any service by speaking as if they were. They are different evils requiring different remedies. In precisely the same way, we must distinguish genuine civil war where freedom fighters are engaged in a military campaign of secession that is fought against a state and its legitimate military and economic targets. America, too, won her freedom from tyrannical rule, and George Washington was not a terrorist.

Yet countries and dictators throughout the world try to brand as terrorists those who use violence to oppose them. We do liberty a disservice if, for expediency's sake, we accept that partisan interpretation. I know that it cannot have escaped the notice of at least one Foreign Office Minister that the definition of terror in currency today would have bracketed the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela together with al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.

The Prime Minister is absolutely correct to insist that we use this tragedy as a wake-up call to the world community to rededicate itself to global justice—justice in world trade and justice for the developing world. If we are to deliver that promise, let us now raise our aid budget to the 0.7 per cent. of gross domestic product that has for far too long been only a target. Injustice and poverty allow fanaticism to breed and do its work. It is no justification, but it is a precondition of terrorism.

Finally, when the terrorists stand before their God to account for the evil that they have done, I pray that He may look at the response that their evil has engendered in us: the courage of the firefighters; the compassion of the paramedics; the solidarity and support of whole communities; the sympathy, the kindness and the acts of generosity. Let their God count all our acts of love to the terrorists benefit, so that He can indeed judge them as "The Compassionate and The Merciful".

4.37 pm

Mr. Bill Rammell (Harlow): I speak in the debate in support of the Government's position. I do that not out of habit or a sense of duty, but as a father of two children who feels that he is living through the most frightening period that he has ever lived through. However, what we are doing seems to be the most credible way of dealing with the situation. It is not without risks, but whatever we do entails a degree of risk, and anyone who pretends otherwise is deluding himself. The Government are proposing the least worst set of options.

What happened in New York and Washington was simply a crime against humanity. In those circumstances, the British Government were right to stand side by side with the American people and their Government—right not only because one of our major allies had experienced an enormous atrocity committed upon its innocent civilians, but because it was only through strong support that we had any hope of influencing American actions.

I believe that our influence has been felt. How many of us on 11 September feared that there would be a disproportionate, untargeted, knee-jerk response by the American Government? That has not happened, partly because of the influence and the advice of the British Government. We need, and we are getting, a cautious, reasoned response that will involve various elements—increased international dialogue and understanding, internal security measures, a huge and genuine expansion of humanitarian aid, but also, regrettably, a proportionate military response designed explicitly to reduce terrorist capability.

I am not naive. I know that however determined we are to avoid civilian casualties, that may not be possible in all circumstances. That leads to enormous soul searching to judge whether we should still go ahead with military action. On balance, I believe that we should. I would simply ask those who argue that we should not go ahead with any form of military action, what are the alternative means to deal with and prevent further attacks on the scale of those in New York and Washington?

In that regard, it was instructive to read the article in *New Statesman* last Friday, which laid down a challenge to 10 or 12 critics of military action who are on the left. Effectively, *New Statesman* asked, "If not military action, what is your alternative response?" I read the responses carefully. They were long in their critique of the historical development of American foreign policy—I agreed with much of that critique—but sadly they were short, if not non-existent, on how else we may proceed and protect ourselves.

That is the nub of the situation. We must understand that however much we increase international aid—that needs to happen—or we desire, and should see, a different and more even-handed American stance in the middle east, or we reduce international poverty, bin Laden and al-Qaeda will still try to commit terrorist mayhem and kill tens if not hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Next time they will try to do it with chemical, biological and nuclear capability. That is the scale of the threat that we are facing and we must stand up to it.

We also need to understand clearly what drives bin Laden and his followers. It is a hatred of the values that America and the rest of the west stand for as much as opposition to American foreign policy. Sexual equality, religious tolerance and the use of culture, entertainment and recreation as a means to personal self-fulfilment are decadence and depravity as far as bin Laden is concerned. The problem for people on the left, who have instinctively adopted an anti-American stance in the past, is that those are the very values that we hold dear. They are our values every bit as much as those of the American people and nation. That is the crisis that we face.

I also address my remarks to some of the zealots on the right who are trying to use the present circumstances to their own political ends. I address them to the British National party and to some of the right-wing commentators who attack and question the right of anyone to question and challenge military action in the present circumstances. I have made clear my view—people who

[Mr. Bill Rammell]

oppose military action are both naive and wrong in the present circumstances, but I passionately defend their right to say what they think. That is what we are fighting for.

Some of the articles that I have read in our national newspapers do not fit with the sort of debate that we should be having. This is a serious situation and everyone has a right to put forward his or her view. That right should be respected, but it is being lost at present.

I visited the Muslim community in my constituency of Harlow last Friday. Members of that community made it clear to me that they oppose what has happened as much as I do. In that regard, the comments of Lady Thatcher this morning should be treated with silent contempt. They were insulting and that is the way that we should deal with them. When I met the Muslim community I was also struck by the fact that many of them feel that Muslims throughout the world are always under attack. I came away from the discussion convinced that, whatever else happens in the coming weeks and months, we desperately need greater dialogue and understanding between the Muslim world and the rest of the world. We must proceed with conviction.

Therefore, we need proportionate military action, humanitarian aid and dialogue and understanding, but also greater internal security. We have not yet faced up to the way in which all our lives will be changed by what happened on 11 September. If I needed any convincing of that I got it when I arrived in Brighton on Sunday to see British police officers with sub-machine guns standing on the street corner. We need to consider all our internal security measures and that should include identity cards.

We are in a hugely dangerous situation in which there are no easy solutions. I have one final plea. We are not going to eradicate international terrorism—that will never be possible—but we are trying to diminish its capability. In that sense, we should proceed as we are doing and support the Government's actions.

4.44 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I speak from the left and this is my first opportunity to express publicly in the House my heartfelt sympathy with the American people, among whom I have personal friends, for the barbaric attack that took place on 11 September. It was probably the worst act of terrorism in world history and it deserves a very firm response from us all.

I am pleased that the Prime Minister and President Bush have embarked on attempts to develop diplomatic contacts with many different countries to combat terrorism. Economic and financial actions have been taken, and I happen to believe that we cannot exclude military action. However, I would support military action only on the condition that it is very carefully targeted. I do not want to return to the House in two or three weeks time and find that we are debating whether it was right for the international community, in taking military action, to have used depleted uranium or cluster bombs, as were so disgracefully used against the people of Yugoslavia.

The greatest danger that confronts us is the use of biological weapons. Thousands of people lost their lives in New York and Washington DC, but the use of a very small quantity of germs—that is what they are—could kill not thousands but millions. That is the perspective from which I speak. I see that as a considerable danger. The people who were willing to do what they did in New York and Washington would be willing to use any means to wipe out whole populations.

Apart from the war against terrorism, we have to consider the problem of poverty, and I am glad that the Prime Minister addressed that issue at the Labour party conference. Poverty is the lubricant that oils the wheels of terrorism. I have no doubt about that. Many of the problems in Northern Ireland, for example, would disappear if there were a more equal distribution of wealth among the people in the Province. That is true of the world as well, and I say to the Prime Minister that poverty cannot be eradicated by the existing economic world order.

The real cause of poverty is, in fact, the dependence on a economic system worldwide in which a relatively few people have wealth and the vast majority are poor. It is a difficult problem to solve, because many people have been won over to the idea of market economics and free trade. It is not free trade but planned trade that we want if we are to help the people of Afghanistan and other parts of the world. That will not be easy to provide, but we must do it.

Arms have been used in Afghanistan, Rwanda and in the Congo—the Prime Minister referred to such places in Brighton—but there is no arms industry in Afghanistan, Rwanda or the Congo. We know where the arms come from: we sell them ourselves. On the very day that the disaster happened in the United States, there was the obscenity of a London international arms fair. There should be no more arms fairs in this country and we should work for a convention that will ensure that the arms trade is very tightly controlled.

An opportunity can arise from all this. I am glad that the Prime Minister is visiting President Putin this afternoon. The Russians have suffered, but they have received scant sympathy. We have tended to see only one side of the argument over Chechnya. The Russians have suffered the bombing of apartment blocks killing hundreds of people in Moscow, a blast in a shopping arcade and a bomb in a subway. They have had terrorism on their doorstep. I am pleased that Russia and the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are involved with us in getting at the core of the terrorist threat that is facing us.

Let us not be hypocritical. I am opposed to terrorism, all terrorism. I was opposed to the KLA terrorists in Kosovo—Madeleine Albright said that they were terrorists. I understand that it is possible to find information on the internet which suggests that bin Laden was helping the KLA terrorists for whom we provided air cover. The KLA bought their arms from the proceeds of the drugs trade, and I will guarantee that a considerable quantity of those drugs came from Afghanistan. Bin Laden was an agent of the CIA during its fight with the Soviet forces and has now come back to hit the people who fed him.

If we are to be opposed to terrorism, it must be all terrorism. America has involved itself elsewhere. It has supported terrorists in trying to overthrow the Government of Cuba as well as the use of terror to subvert the democratically elected Government in Chile. Since the

second world war, no country in the world has bombed as many other countries as the United States. We must address the foreign policies of the United States and Britain. Thank God it was a Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, in the 1960s and 1970s who kept us out of the Vietnam war.

We must fight terrorism and embark on a military expedition in Afghanistan. My thoughts will go out to the people who have to fight that war and their relatives in this country. When it is over, let us have no more talk of expanding NATO without including Russia and let us have no more talk of a national missile defence capability. That is for the past—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Time is up.

4.53 pm

Mr. Paul Goodman (Wycombe): I wish to declare an interest of a kind. According to the Muslim Council of Great Britain at the time of the general election, my constituency has the highest proportion of ethnic minority members of any Conservative-held seat. According to the 1991 census, which is now 10 years out of date, up to 7,000 people of Pakistani and Kashmiri descent were living in High Wycombe, and I hope that the House will indulge me if I refer to them.

Traditionally, compared with some other parts of the country, race relations in High Wycombe have been good. It is worth noting that they have remained good since 11 September, as they have in most of the country. I have been up and down my constituency, speaking to members of the ethnic community. Their perception of the situation is rather different from that of others. As soon as the atrocities occurred in America, the Mosque committee declared to the local media its horror at the loss of so many lives, including the lives of about 600 Muslims. Those on the committee are as horrified at what happened as any other constituent of any other colour. They have made that point forcefully to me and to other people locally. However, they are bound to consider the situation in a way that is perhaps rather different from those who live in the more prosperous, countryside parts of the constituency that surround the town.

To a very few members of what I shall call the majority community in my constituency and elsewhere, Islam seems like a great threat. When some members of the majority community saw the television pictures of the atrocities in America, as other hon. Members and I did, they would have viewed Islam as a great, murderous, monstrous, armed, irrational threat to what has, I note, been called western civilisation. To members of the Asian community in my constituency and to me, Islam does not seem like that at all.

I would in no sense want to stereotype my constituents, and it should be noted that many of my Asian constituents are proceeding at great speed through schools to good jobs, but it is the case that that community tends to form one of the poorer parts of the whole community in the constituency generally. Rather than being part of a powerful group that perceives itself as having great strength, they see themselves as a vulnerable, threatened minority, and they consider events differently. Again, I emphasise that local race relations have been good.

Whereas the white majority in the country naturally feels itself emotionally bound up with the United States because of our long historical and cultural involvement with it, my Asian constituents tend to consider things rather differently. They have forcefully told me that they believe that much of American foreign policy is mistaken. In relation to Kashmir especially, they believe that the world has not behaved with the urgency that it has sometimes shown in other cases, such as in the middle east and Northern Ireland. Of course, they are especially concerned about the current situation in Pakistan. I do not agree with every part of that point of view. I like to think of myself as a staunch supporter of the United States.

I merely point out all that to show that, although there have been some despicable verbal and physical racist attacks throughout the country, race relations are good at the moment and the situation has been relatively peaceful. None the less, I am slightly concerned that in the longer term we could end up with two communities who consider things rather differently. I hope and believe that the majority community in High Wycombe is striving mightily to understand that people who come here, or even those who were born here with origins elsewhere, will not always look at the world in the way that they do.

I certainly think that it is worth taking a lot of trouble to understand how the Asian community in my constituency feels, and that is true of many people locally and of those in my Conservative association. It is also worth those in the Asian community trying to understand—again, I believe that they are making a great effort to do so—why those cultural links with the United States are so strong and why many people here who saw the atrocious events of 11 September felt such outrage, horror and shock. After all, at this time, when so much of our attention lies elsewhere and as the threat of conflict lies before us, it is worth remembering that we in modern Britain, with all the diverse communities that it contains, are all in this together—or perhaps that we should be—and I hope that communities of all kinds will work together to bring about that happy conclusion.

5 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): Three weeks after New York, I do not believe that there has been any change in the feeling of horror at what happened and the feeling that the people who carried out the attacks were absolutely despicable. However, there have been some changes since the last debate when many hon. Members were concerned that there would be an over-hasty reaction and a lashing out. That has not happened and everyone should be thankful. The actions of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister certainly contributed to that not happening and to that fear diminishing, but many fears remain about innocent people being killed and the longer-term consequences of any military action.

Although I accept and believe that there would be public support for military action against bin Laden, many people would not support sustained bombing. They would certainly not support indiscriminate bombing. Support is fragile and could very easily melt away if the wrong action were taken.

It seems that there will be military action and I am concerned about what will happen if the first strikes do not lead to bin Laden being captured or killed or to the Taliban handing him over or changing their views, so I would still urge caution on military action.

My constituency has the largest Pakistani community of any London constituency and I would echo much of what has been said today about the fears of Pakistani and

[Mr. Neil Gerrard]

other Muslim communities in Britain. They are concerned about what could happen here, and I have heard stories and seen people who have been abused, threatened or even attacked. We should also recognise that many of them have fears about their country of origin. They are telling me and, I am sure, other hon. Members of their fear that the conflict could spill over into Pakistan. Let us be under no illusion: many people in Pakistan support the Taliban and have had associations with them. There is a real danger that the conflict could spill over the border into Pakistan. We must be extremely careful and try to ensure that it does not happen.

We now have a broad and unusual coalition of states all saying that they will co-operate to deal not just with bin Laden but with international terrorism. We should try to ensure that any action that we take—even if it appears on the surface to be successful—does not lead to that coalition disintegrating, as if it does it will be impossible in the long term to deal with international terrorism.

Everyone accepts that it will be a long haul and a long process and that we will need a variety of tactics dealing with money laundering, improving intelligence services, sharing intelligence and so on.

Like other hon. Members, I believe that one of the most important features of that long-term strategy has to be cutting off the sources of support for the terrorists. That means looking at our foreign policy and the effects of British and American foreign policy. I do not believe that it is remotely possible to change the minds or win the hearts of the bin Ladens of this world. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that there is no common agenda possible with such people, and that is absolutely right. What we have to do is to win other hearts and minds. Our actions must not be focused solely on the recruitment of hijackers and bombers; we must consider also what conditions allow terrorists to operate successfully for a long time.

Terrorists are able to count on a variety of support: some provide tacit support—they are not prepared to give up terrorists; some provide papers or safe houses; and some give active support. Active support is merely the tip of an immense iceberg, and it is on melting the base of that iceberg that we should concentrate our efforts. That is where changes in foreign policy really matter.

The middle east has been mentioned by several Members, and I shall not repeat things that have already been said, but my experience of visiting the middle east and talking to refugees in the camps of the west bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria is that everyone can tell visitors about the United Nations resolutions and what they say. Everyone knows what their rights are and what their rights should be.

Such people also want to talk to visitors from other countries about the double standards of their country. If a visitor says, "Of course we are in favour of the UN resolutions. We support them. Of course we want a Palestinian state," he will be asked in return, "What have you done about it? What action have you taken to put pressure on the likes of Ariel Sharon? What have you done to tell him, not just that settlements should not be expanded, but that every single settlement that currently stands in the occupied territories is illegal under international law and UN resolutions say that they should not be there? What have you done to deal with that?" The people point to the fact that we have taken action in other cases to enforce UN resolutions.

We have to answer such questions; otherwise, individuals will continue to have the gut feelings that generate both tacit and active support for terrorists, and states that might have helped to deal with terrorists will feel unable to do so because they fear the reaction of their own population.

My final point is that the issue is an international one, and it should remain so. Other Members have mentioned the role of the United Nations. We must not reach a position where the perception is that the United States and the United Kingdom are the sole arbiters of what is right or wrong and of what can or cannot be done in the conflict. It is tremendously important that the international coalition is kept in being.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): Order.

5.8 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (West Ham): I thank the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Goodman) for speaking on behalf of the Muslims in his constituency. The fears that he articulated on their behalf are echoed among my constituents in the east end of London.

No cause on earth can justify the outrages of 11 September, but matters were made worse—if such a thing is possible—by hearing claims that those who carried them out would go to heaven. That struck me as larding terrorism with religious obscenity—it was a perversion of religion to make such a claim. What sort of heaven would welcome mass murderers—killers of innocent men, women and children? If such a grotesque place exists, Hitler, Pol Pot and Vlad the Impaler must already be there. I am one of those who believe that religious fundamentalism, be it Jewish, Christian or Islamic, is a curse. History reveals that religious fanaticism ranks with poverty and disease as one of the biggest killers of human beings.

I add my voice to those who have congratulated the Prime Minister and the Government on the stand that they have taken thus far, and I welcome the stand taken by President Bush, who has surprised and amazed people in this country and in the United States of America, but I feel compelled to echo some of the caveats. I was a Member of Parliament when we were busy arming Saddam Hussein in the war against Iran. We said that he was a despot who killed his own people, but we still supplied him with arms.

We have already heard about the western support that was given to bin Laden. We know that the Taliban were heavily supported by the CIA. I say that not to be recriminatory, but to remind people that all of this is based on the bankrupt, dangerous policy of saying that my enemy's enemy is my friend. We should remember that before we jump into bed with the Northern Alliance.

Like the hon. Member for Wycombe, I wish to say a few words on behalf of my thousands of Muslim constituents in West Ham and tens of thousands of Muslims in Newham, as well as the hundreds of Afghan refugees in my constituency. I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) when I say that all those people are apprehensive and many are frightened about what will happen next. Many have family and friends in Afghanistan and the bordering areas

of Pakistan. Action, which I agree must be taken, must be proportionate and, at all costs, avoid loss of innocent civilian lives. It is pointless to bomb the rubble of Afghanistan or to cause the destabilisation of Pakistan. Yes, action should be taken but we do not want to import a conflict in Afghanistan to the streets of the east end or to our towns and cities. I trust that Ministers are aware of these dangers. They cannot repeat often enough assurances to our Muslim constituencies that they are aware of those concerns and will act accordingly.

In that context, I must join others in deploring the reported words of Baroness Thatcher, who spoke of Muslim terrorism as though somehow the sins of bin Laden belong to Islam and all the different groups in the Islamic world. It is insulting to law-abiding Muslims. We do not refer to terrorism in Northern Ireland as Christian terrorism although there are underlying religious currents in the actions of the nationalist and loyalist groups there. A period of silence from Baroness Thatcher can only help the situation; so far, none of her words has helped.

On a light-hearted and personal note, speaking as Chairman of the Works of Art Committee, I have just taken delivery of an 8 ft tall marble statue of the Baroness that weighs just under two tonnes. I am looking for a location for it. Already, I am having difficulties, and clearly I must now cross off all the mosques as possible locations.

I am looking forward to the Home Secretary's proposals to tighten laws against terrorism. People who use the language of terrorism to incite hatred and murder should be treated as terrorists. I am also looking forward to proposals to allow refugees and economic migrants to work. It is scandalous how we treat these people. They want to work but are told that they cannot. We are forcing them into areas of uncertain employment and we are inflicting poverty on them. It is unacceptable. I look forward to a proper immigration policy. We are lucky to live in a democratic, free society, but we need always to protect our freedoms against those who exploit and abuse them, and I am not talking just about terrorism.

I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) make points about identity cards. I have opposed them in the past and still need to receive assurances on how they might be used, if we are to introduce them. We need that debate, but if identity cards can be used in France, I see no reason why we should fear them here.

There is a justifiable case for a mandatory national DNA data bank. It would be helpful not only against terrorism but against crime and in identification following cataclysmic accidents. Most of those who died in the twin towers will never be identified because there is no way to do so. A compulsory DNA record is essential in this country, as it could be elsewhere.

We rightly cherish our personal freedoms in this country, but the world has changed and we should not shrink from taking action that balances our personal freedom with the safety of all our people.

5.15 pm

Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I add my condolences to those already given in the House.

On 11 September, I was in South Africa and along with so many millions watched in shock and disbelief as the horror unfolded on television. My greatest fear was that there would be immediate and brutal retaliation. It did not happen. I too pay tribute to Ministers, to the Prime Minister in particular and indeed to the United States Administration for their wisdom in creating the international coalition and the climate in which a considered response has become possible.

Many of my constituents, while condemning the atrocities, have urged me to speak out against military action and in favour of peace. They are right in believing that I am a peacemaker, though never a pacifist. I have always believed that the international community should have as many people trained in conflict resolution as in military strategy. Indeed there are countless examples of prolonged terrorist wars ending only by concerted peacemaking, and of past terrorists holding political power in modern democracies. However, the events of 11 September are wholly different. The unspeakable horror of the attacks on innocent civilians could reflect no justification. For me, it is not a choice between war and peace. It is a matter of justice—justice that can and should be universal.

International law requires us to bring the suspected perpetrators of terrorism to trial. I accept with a heavy heart that that is no longer an option. The Taliban regime not only failed to hand over Osama bin Laden but have offered him their military protection. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has reiterated, the military response must be proportionate and targeted. Its aim must be the destruction of the military base from which the terrorist acts of 11 September were organised. That is a limited military objective. It should remain limited.

"The world will never be the same" has already become a cliché in respect of 11 September, but I hope that it might prove to be the case because our world has rarely been united in pursuit of justice. Too often, nations subscribing to the thesis "My enemy's enemy is my friend" have colluded in the narcotics trade, in money laundering and in illegal arms dealing. Too often, powerful nations have fuelled regional conflicts to preserve economic interests and turned a blind eye to terrible human suffering in countries where they have no similar economic interest.

On Tuesday, the Prime Minister spoke of reordering the world. The international coalition is charged with the task of rooting out and destroying support for terrorism in all its forms. We can all subscribe to that, but it will be self-defeating if it does not embrace a wider justice. Justice for the Palestinians must be one of its priorities not only because, as many have said, it is right of itself, but because continuing injustice in the heart of the Arab world inevitably provides a recruiting ground for fanatics.

Our challenges lie not just in the mistakes of the past, but with our current behaviour. The world community, primarily under the auspices of the United Nations, has sought to conclude international treaties that would make our world a safer place. A reordered world would require the United States to adhere to the anti-ballistic missile treaty, to support an international criminal court and to ratify the convention on anti-personnel land mines and the Kyoto protocol on climate change.

Global warming poses a security threat as great as any international terrorist organisation. Food and water supplies for millions are already jeopardised, whole land masses are already threatened with submersion, and freak storms already wreak havoc throughout the globe

[Joan Ruddock]

with incredible economic consequences. A new, global, energy-security paradigm is urgently needed. A rapid shift to renewable energy by the west would pave the way to oil independence and the removal of nuclear power plants as terrorist targets. Most significantly, cutting our output of global greenhouse gases and developing benign forms of energy would be a powerful signal to the developing world.

We in the west are right to be proud of our shared democracy, openness and freedoms, but they depend on the exercise of justice and the rule of law, and those must determine our way ahead. We may need to work with the Northern Alliance now, but we must ensure that we do not help it to impose another terrible regime on the people—particularly the women—of Afghanistan. We must commit ourselves not just to massive humanitarian relief now, but to UN protection and the future rebuilding of Afghanistan, as we have done in the Balkans.

I represent a multi-ethnic community with constituents with roots in every part of the globe. A minority are Muslims, a minority refugees and a few are from Afghanistan. Many have appreciated the reassurances of respect for Islam given by my right hon. Friends, and the Home Secretary's announcement of new laws on incitement. However, many are also concerned lest new security measures fall disproportionately on people of colour. I know that my right hon. Friends will understand that.

On 11 September, the peoples of the most powerful state on earth experienced a profound and unique vulnerability that no military defence can overcome. As we seek to end the threat from the perpetrators of those acts, we shall need to remember that we all share that vulnerability. In Afghanistan, we shall need to use the minimum force necessary and to take every possible step to protect innocent civilians. We shall need to look again at the desperate plight of the world's poorest people and not allow the economic consequences of 11 September to fall on them through reduced aid and development funding.

We shall need to look again at the World Trade Organisation and listen more carefully to the leaders of the developing world about fairness in our dealings, particularly with their agricultural produce. In truth, we shall need to exercise the greatest caution and wisdom if we are not to destabilise whole areas of Asia and the middle east, giving rise to more odious and dangerous regimes.

As ever, the greatest task ahead of the international coalition will be not the waging of the war but the winning of a lasting peace in the re-ordered world of which the Prime Minister so eloquently spoke.

5.23 pm

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House on what is undoubtedly a crucial moment in the history of the civilised world.

We have all suspected for a number of years that we live in a dangerous and, perhaps, increasingly unpredictable world. The events of 11 September proved clearly that the worst really can happen, perhaps in a way that none of us had imagined. If there is one lesson that I hope our Government and other Governments in the western world will learn from 11 September it is that we need to be prepared for the worst. What happened in New York was terrible; what could happen if weapons of mass destruction were to be used against our cities and our people is frightening beyond measure.

In recent days we have seen that events such as those that took place on 11 September are not limited to the United States, Europe or the NATO area. A horrendous attack has taken place in Kashmir and only this afternoon we learned that an airliner has been shot down out of the skies over the middle east, with many people killed. We must find a way to remove the hatred and terror from this planet and to create a more law-abiding, peaceful and potentially beneficial environment for all mankind.

Clearly, we should express our support not just for the victims of the events in New York but for those who have suffered in Kashmir and in today's attack over the middle east.

We should send our thanks to all those who have responded so nobly and selflessly to help the victims of the recent terror attacks. I pay particular tribute to those from this country who went out to counsel the families of the victims and provide support in their hour of bereavement. Many of those who gave up their time to do that are volunteers from our best known voluntary organisations in this country. They deserve our praise, and I hope that the Government will ensure that the process of support and counselling is not limited to the time when those families are in New York, but will continue afterwards.

I also pay tribute to those in this country who have done so much to raise money for the New York disaster fund. For example, the local fire service in my constituency held a fundraising morning last week at Epsom fire station to raise funds for their colleagues in New York.

I have a small Islamic community in my constituency, but I did not turn to them to seek their opinion, looking for condemnation of what happened in New York. I did not need to. I know them well as friends, as well as residents of the local community, and there is no need to ask about their attitude to what happened. They would condemn it, as would any right-minded citizen of this country.

However, like many Islamic communities in this country, they fear what might happen to them in the aftermath. It is undoubtedly our duty, as leaders in our respective communities, to set an example to all the people whom we represent, and to show that we need to support the Islamic community in this country. It is not they who carried out that horrendous act.

I ask our broadcasters to think about the groups to which they give air time. There is a danger that they may look to publicise the views of a minority at the expense of the views of the majority, and that does no favours to the majority of the Muslim community.

We need to focus on three issues in the aftermath of the events of recent weeks. First, there is the need for a balanced response. I share the pleasure of other Members of the House that the United States has taken time to think about its response, and has not responded in an abrupt, hasty and potentially damaging manner.

None the less, we need to take tough action; we have no option. The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Rammell)—I see that he has now left the Chamber—was correct to

say that when dealing with an enemy who is willing to attack without thought, concern or consideration for civilian life, we have no choice but to respond in a way that tries to stamp out that threat properly once and for all.

We need to balance our response by providing the aid that is needed for the millions who have been removed from their homes in Afghanistan and who today are wandering the deserts looking for food.

Undoubtedly, we have a political responsibility to do what this country has always done, and try to find solutions for the world's trouble spots. The western world has played an active role over many years in trying to solve the problems in the trouble spots of the middle east, and to support a peace process between Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab world. As in other areas that threaten to create the environment that provides a recruiting ground for the terrorists, those efforts need to be redoubled.

The second challenge is that we need a pragmatic approach to civil liberties in this country. We must ensure that the rights of the individual do not take priority over the rights of society as a whole. While protecting the rights of the individual, we also have to protect our people collectively. That means that we should keep the possibility of identity cards under consideration, if our security forces and police advise us that that is the right step to take.

Last week a senior police officer said to me that there are people in this country—they may come here as asylum seekers or refugees, or perhaps through conventional channels—who are a genuine threat to our society. If we need a more regulated society to ensure that such people cannot take action that undermines our society, so be it. We should expect anyone who seeks to live here to respect the security of our society, and in my view, if there are people who do not do that, we should not be afraid to withdraw from them the welcome that we first offered them.

We clearly need to focus on our defences. During the past 10 years, we have run down aspects of our armed forces for a variety of reasons. In the wake of the cold war, in our belief in a peace dividend and our feeling that the world might be a safer place, we risked taking our eyes of the ball regarding our defences. We now have clear evidence to show that we must think again. I am glad to hear that the Government have decided to review force structures in this country and to consider whether we have the right capabilities to protect our people. One or two hon. Members mentioned the need to focus on civil defence. I have spoken to people in our security forces during the past couple of weeks and I know that many of them have serious concerns about the nation's ability to withstand a major attack. We need to be certain that we have the best possible civil defence structures.

What happened on 11 September brought to life a challenge. I suspect that it has been building for years. The terrifying thing—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

5.31 pm

Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): We have reached the stage of the debate where everything that can be said has been said, but not everyone has said it. I shall now add my piece.

There is general consensus on the view that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has given very distinguished national leadership in this crisis. In his statement, he sought to clarify some of our objectives. Yes, they include the destruction of bin Laden and his network, and possibly also of the Taliban, as it is very difficult to disentangle bin Laden from them. It is worrying, however, to hear some people in or close to the United States Administration use phrases such as "attacking every snake in the swamp". One can imagine the roll call of countries that they have in mind.

We must make it absolutely clear that we have very limited military objectives. If we want to put countries such as Iraq into the frame, we must remember that there are more effective weapons such as the smarter sanctions and the sort of draft Security Council resolution that was being discussed in early July, but which the Russian Federation blocked for its own commercial reasons. Such measures are far more effective than military action. Seeking to deal with "other snakes in the swamp" could not only destroy the coalition that has been painstakingly built up, but lead to a wider and horrific war.

I want briefly to examine some of the motives of the terrorists, some of the effects of their actions and the lessons that we may seek to learn. On motives, it has been properly said that there is no way in which we can do deals with bin Laden or find a consensus. Usually, hijackers ask to be taken to a particular country or request the release of some of their co-religionists. The agenda of bin Laden and his associates is so much wider than that; even if, by some miracle, the Palestinian conflict were resolved tomorrow, it would not be satisfied. They want to go much further in acting against western civilisation and all the moderate Arab states that work with the west in general. There is no way in which we can seek to compromise with such people.

Some people, such as Huntington, talk of the great clash of civilisations that is to come. I reject that view. Far more productive is the sort of slogan that President Khatami used when he spoke of a dialogue of civilisations. I hope that, among our religious leaders and more widely, there will be such a dialogue of civilisations and that it can be productive.

I welcome what the Government have said about new laws on incitement, which will help to reassure a number of Britain's Muslim communities. Those communities will be feeling beleaguered. I also welcome what has been said by many of their leaders in expressing outrage about the atrocities in the United States. I hope that they will go further. I hope that they and others who have the respect of Muslims overseas will say that suicide bombing is a perversion of the Koran and that there is no way in which those who use themselves to destroy the lives of innocent people can hope to obtain an accelerated passage to paradise for themselves and their families. That is one of the great problems. How do we convey the message to people in, no doubt, deprived communities abroad that it is not, in fact, a grand thing to die in such a way? It is a problem for us, but it is a particular problem for religious leaders in those communities.

The terrorist seeks—obviously—to instil terror. He hopes to ensure that people lose confidence in their own institutions. There are lessons for us to learn in what the terrorists are doing. Have they succeeded? Certainly, in some ways, they have instilled terror, and they have had the most awful effects. Certainly, there have been effects

[Donald Anderson]

on our economies. We have seen what has happened to the airlines; we have seen a loss of jobs around the world, partly attributable to the events of 11 September. But our economies—the western economies—are much stronger than that, and of course we shall recover. We must ensure that we do not overreact to those awful events, and we must seek to ensure that the civil liberties we enjoy in the west are maintained.

Let us consider some of the lessons that we can learn, both at home and abroad. Some of the effects may be positive. In the past, the coalition against terrorism has been ineffective; now, the world appears to have woken up to the dangers posed by terrorism. It has been shown that we are all vulnerable. Indeed, the United States may experience a sea change in its own policies, away from the unilateralism that characterised the first months of the Bush Administration and the negative policies of the biological weapons convention, Kyoto and so on. There may well now be a recognition that engagement is very much in the Americans' own national interest.

What, then, are the lessons for us? First, we need radical improvement in the way in which we tackle the problems of terrorism. There must be no surrender to the terrorists. Abroad, we seek the widest possible co-operation in terms of sharing intelligence, and in terms of the police and judicial authorities, dealing with money laundering and so forth. That is absolutely vital. We must seize the opportunity that has come to us with the aftershocks of the events of 11 September.

We also need to defeat the enemy at the political level. Tribute has been paid to the work of not only the British Council but the BBC World Service. The World Service has expanded its services in Pashto, Persian and Urdu, and is enhancing its medium-wave and short-wave transmissions to Afghanistan and the surrounding region. It can play a crucial role in countries such as Afghanistan, where, with no television or credible national newspapers, radio is the main form of communication. The World Service has responded speedily, and I hope that the Government will pick up the bill that will no doubt follow.

At home, issues such as that of identity cards have been raised. What disturbs me is that we in Parliament are spectators in that debate. We hear noises off from the debate in Government. Are they for the scheme or not? Do they want it to be voluntary or compulsory? I hope that the decision will be made by Parliament, and after due debate. I am distressed—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Time is up.

5.39 pm

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): We should pay tribute to three enormously important contributions that the Prime Minister has made to the way in which the world has dealt with events following the awesome and tragic destruction of life in America on 11 September. He should be given credit for the restraint that has been built into how we now identify both the scale and nature of the threat, and the way in which we are beginning to talk about it. He needs to be congratulated on the sense of solidarity to which he has contributed in pulling together in the international coalition that the world has formed. He needs also to be congratulated on ensuring the first stages of legitimacy of international action in the two resolutions that the UN Security Council has passed. Those are the bedrocks or founding stones upon which we should base our judgment as to how and where we proceed from here.

I am one of those who has urged a large degree of caution. I have raised some serious reservations about the nature of military intervention. It is important to address the challenges that have been set out. I am not opposed to intervention. What happened in New York was an appalling act of terrorism, not an act of war. The difference between the two is extremely important.

In an act of war, there is an opposition, which is usually another country. The battles involve ownership of land or the right to rule. At the end of the day a peace process has to be agreed, as a surrender or a brokered peace. There are identifiable parties between whom that peace has to be brokered. What happened in New York had nothing to do with that process.

That is the basis on which it is said that it is impossible to negotiate with bin Laden. His actions are not based on the occupation of particular land but are in pursuit of a distorted version of an ideology. That poses a challenge to the way we meet that threat. It cannot sit comfortably behind a bland endorsement that there is a conventional military solution.

Those who have examined specifically the landscape of Afghanistan would warn us that there is precious little to be gained by bombing a country that already sits on the edge of the stone age to somewhere before or beyond it. The strategy of intervention that I advocate is one that is driven by our notion of justice and by international law and legitimacy. On that basis, we must have the courage to return to the Security Council to ensure that we have even more specific mandates for the defined actions that follow. It is important that we have that endorsement of legitimacy and the definition of constraints that go hand in hand with it.

I want to see a specific mandate for action that will authorise the international community's sanction of special forces being involved in the pursuit of bin Laden. I want to see that pursuit defined at least by an opening intention, which is that we are seeking to get hold of bin Laden to subject him to trial under international criminal rules in an international criminal court.

I want us to affirm the importance internationally of proceeding on the basis of evidence. We should proceed through the UN because I know there must be a mandate for Afghanistan of the sort that related to Cambodia. If we are to honour any of our international obligations to Afghanistan and the poverty that exists there, such a mandate will be essential.

I have forewarned in various articles about the lack of precision in what we are saying that we are doing. There must be a balance. The pursuit of bin Laden will have to be painstaking and relentless. He will not offer himself up easily and it will not be entirely clear what part of anyone's terrain he will be occupying. That is my reservation when it comes to bombardment and what it might do. If Afghanistan needs to be bombarded with anything, it should be bread, grain and medicines. It is imperative that they are delivered in the next several weeks.

Bin Laden must be pursued with relentless determination so that he can be brought before the international courts of justice. If that is to be done, we will probably have to remove him forcibly. Constraints are important to us because they will send out a different message to current allies in the coalition. I am worried that without a definition we may send out the most unfortunate green-light messages to some of our partners, which would be interpreted as approval to act in whatever way they like.

None of us can doubt that there are people in Russia who would consider the flattening of Chechnya to be a proportionate response, in their terms. In China, the obliteration of Falun Gong practitioners might be seen as a proportionate response. In Israel, I see no charge by Sharon to find new common ground with the PLO. Instead, the charge is to obliterate every symbol that may represent Palestinian independence, in order to say that that is part of the destruction of the al-Qaeda network. Even in Ireland, a hardening of the divides would allow some to say that it is proportionate to define eight-year-old schoolgirls armed only with a fully laden lunch box as the legitimate targets of pipe bombs.

We must define not proportionate response but appropriate response in more specific terms, if the international coalition is to be held together on the basis of just and humanitarian causes and international equity.

Pursuing bin Laden to trial obliges us to consider how and where we set out the evidence. The Leader of the Opposition said this morning that bin Laden was guilty as charged, but none of us has seen any charges, and none of us has seen the evidence. I do not want to see it. It is not appropriate to present it in the House or to the public, but it ought to be presented to the UN Security Council or to an international panel of judges, as demanded by Pakistan and, according to the news today, as required by Saudi Arabia as the basis for action not just to pursue America's enemies but to pursue a broader attack on terrorism.

In doing that domestically, we can do several things. We ought to reduce risk, rather than making citizens feel insecure. As a Government, we should reconsider the decision to approve a MOX reprocessing plant. Hitting one nuclear power station would result in the unleashing of 200 Chernobyls. That would be the scale of the disaster if an airliner was flown into a nuclear power station. We should not get distracted by the debate about ID cards. The equivalent of the cost of such cards would provide 4,000 or more officers on the beat or involved in intelligence-based policing—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

5.47 pm

Ms Oona King (Bethnal Green and Bow): Since the appalling atrocities on 11 September, we have heard that our civilisation is under threat. We have even heard that the attack represents a clash of civilisations. In the short time available to me, I begin by rejecting that claim outright.

To speak of a clash of civilisations is to imply that one fanatic and his network, supported by another bunch of fanatics—the Taliban—represent a civilisation. Given their track record, the opposite is true. They represent the antithesis of civilisation. They represent destruction and degradation in all spheres—political, social and economic. It is true, however, that owing to the extreme nature of their barbarity, those fanatics might in the long run quicken the international community's determination to create and to police a world order based on the rule of law.

We achieved the rule of law and democracy in Britain only towards the end of the second millennium. The beginning of the third millennium marks the infancy of global democracy. The United Nations is only 52 years old—imagine when the UN is 300 years old, in 2249. Whether we reach that year will depend on the future success of the UN. British people looking back on us in that age will view us as being at the mediaeval stage of global governance and development. Whatever those British people survey in 2249, some small part—or possibly a large part—will have been shaped by our response to the events of 11 September 2001.

What will that response be? It must be a rules-based approach to international relations. That means strengthening our global institutions, nurturing global institutions that are rules-based and democratic, and reforming those that are not.

Incidentally, the World Trade Organisation is one of the most democratic and rules-based global institutions. Given the link that has been made by the symbolic attack on the World Trade Centre and the debate around globalisation, we would do well to remember that we must ensure that the economic rights of people in developing countries are tied into the response we put together.

I have been delighted to hear what our Prime Minister has had to say on that matter. Indeed, only a few days ago at the Labour party conference he spoke of the need to find security and justice within institutions and a global response that looks to and speaks to people in the developing world. He even mentioned conflicts that I have heard no one else mention recently, such as those in the Congo and Rwanda. He did so because until we start to look into some of the root causes of instability and insecurity around the world, we will not be able to deal with the threat of terrorism, which is cowardly and uses those problems as an excuse for its own appalling deeds.

If we are to create a rules-based response and to improve rules-based institutions, we must first look to the United Nations. I welcomed the Foreign Secretary's remarks when he said that a UN mandate for governing Afghanistan was an option that would be considered. We certainly need a UN peacekeeping force with a mandate to establish a transitional administration that is able to facilitate democratic elections at some point—the same type of force as that used in Cambodia and East Timor.

Again, if we are to strengthen a rules-based approach, Britain needs more influence over the global institutions that shape our world. I was pleased to hear this morning that the Security Council has invited Britain to chair a committee that will study the use of sanctions against members who do not uphold resolution 1373, which legally binds UN member states to

"seek out, prosecute or extradite terrorists on their soil."

If we are talking about strengthening those international institutions, we cannot help but recognise that sub-international institutions—that is, regional institutions—have also grown in importance, which leads us inexorably towards the European Union. I certainly hope that there too, Britain will continue to increase and exercise its influence. Clearly, we can have more influence over those institutions

[Ms Oona King]

only through participation not isolation. I hope that is one thing that the American Government will also consider in their response, which until this point has been extremely measured.

Everyone has said that everything has changed since 11 September. For me, it certainly has. Before 11 September, no one could have convinced me that I would ever have a shred of respect for President Bush, but today I do respect the response of the American Administration.

We also need to consider some of the reasons why so many people dislike and even distrust America—I speak as an American citizen who holds an American passport. One obvious reason that it is important to single out America is because it is the most powerful country on the planet. Perceived hypocrisy massively compounds the usual antagonisms that face a world superpower. Some people despise America because it is a superpower. Some people despise it because of its values—free speech, liberty and democracy; and some people despise it because they feel that much of its foreign policy since the second world war has made a mockery of those values—a mockery of free speech, liberty and democracy. There are many examples: Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, the Congo in 1960, Cuba in 1961, Chile in 1973 and Nicaragua between 1981 and 1986. There is no need to labour the sense of injustice that many people have felt about the perceived use of double standards in American foreign policy. As many speakers have said, nowhere is that more obvious than in Israel and Palestine.

My grandfather was in the British Army, and one Member spoke of how his Sikh grandfather wore a turban and beard and went to battle for king and country during the second world war—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

5.55 pm

Mr. Andrew Turner (Isle of Wight): I begin by relating something of which I am a bit ashamed. On the afternoon of Tuesday 11 September, I saw on the internet what had happened in New York and my thought immediately was "Israel". That was a small victory for Osama bin Laden. He had succeeded in part of what he had set out to do by bringing to my attention a situation that he believed was unjust. We must not delude ourselves that there is no reason behind the action that he has taken. That is not to say that we should yield or should negotiate even if it is clear that he has presented us with something to negotiate about. I am sure that something more than the problems in Israel lie behind his activities, and the hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Ms King) mentioned an example.

Over the next couple of days, like many hon. Members I developed an increased regard for President Bush. He had the uniquely difficult task of representing the view of a nation that had been attacked at home when it had never been attacked at home before. He had to bring together the feelings and demands for retribution, revenge and retaliation and turn them into something sensible, measured and concrete, and that, with the support of the international community, he could deliver. He has done just that. He has turned the immediate demand for revenge into a much more measured demand for justice and prevention. He has done so—I am sure in part—because he has surrounded himself with wise counsellors and has taken note of the views of the international community represented not least by the Prime Minister.

We need to address a couple of issues—I am sure that the Prime Minister and others may already have done so—in our reaction, but they have not, as far as I know, been mentioned in the debate. When I did a phone-in on Isle of Wight Radio recently, the most difficult questions I was asked were: "Why, given that you support the action whatever it is, are you not talking about introducing freedom and democracy to the Arab world? You say that the action is in defence of democracy, freedom and civilisation, so why are you not talking of introducing those virtues to the whole of the middle east, which is pretty short on freedom and democracy?"

I hope that I gave the right answer. I said that we have to respect other civilisations as well as our own. Liberal democracy is the best way to rule any country, but it is not within our power to impose liberal democracy out of the barrel of a gun on a nation or on a culture that believes in a different system of government. Whether it is a theocracy, autocracy or whatever kind of government, we must have respect, in delivering internationally agreed objectives, for the people of civilisations different from our own.

When we talk of defending "civilisation", I believe that we use that word in its widest possible sense. We are talking not just about the defence of western civilisation as represented by capitalism and liberal democracy, but about the civilisations of the Arab world and of the east, and we have perhaps done too much, insensitively, to undermine them in the past.

I believe that over the last century, indeed the last millennium, the United Kingdom, as a western european country, has brought untold benefits to other parts of the world. However, other parts of the world think differently now and we do not have the power that we used to have to impose our values on others. Therefore, I address, with just a little concern, the Prime Minister's aspirations expressed at his party conference on Tuesday. Of course, to reshape the world is a wonderful aspiration, but I wonder whether we have the right to do so.

I believe that we have the right to defend our values and to defend our civilisation when it is under attack. We also have the responsibility to defend other civilisations when they are under attack. Arab countries take a different view from us about the role of women in society and about the role of democracy. I believe that our responsibility, indeed our right, is limited to defending ourselves when under attack. We do not have the right to intervene in countries that rule themselves effectively, even though we may disagree to a considerable extent. Of course, it is a grey distinction. It is the distinction between the appalling atrocities of the Taliban, not least towards women, and the different approach to the role of women adopted by western civilisations.

Let us be unlimited in our ambitions but limited in our objectives to that which is achievable and legitimate. That far, we will support the Prime Minister and the United States in defending our interests and protecting our civilisation.

6.3 pm

Mr. Eric Joyce (Falkirk, West): In peacetime, during the latter part of the last century, people in this country gave less thought to national and international security than to the contents of their weekly shopping. In wartime, during the first half of the last century, the reverse tended to be the case. That pattern always seemed not only understandable but as it should be, as freedom from fear and insecurity were two of the immediate aims of the two great wars of that century.

While no one in their right mind ever desired either of those great wars, both brought unquestionable benefits which extended well beyond the defeat of fascism. Those benefits, which included universal suffrage and the national health service, came as post-war expressions of the collective endeavour and sense of higher national and international purpose engendered by those terrible wars. In wartime 20th century Britain, there was most certainly such a place as society.

Those who came through one of those wars—we are still blessed in our constituencies with many who came through both—are perhaps the only people who truly know what national wartime spirit really felt like. Others can empathise, through endeavour or conflict in their own lives or through studying war and society in the 20th century. I believe that in the years following 11 September 2001, our nation, alongside our allies, needs to rediscover important aspects of what has in the past been called wartime spirit.

Certainly, times have changed, and that spirit may manifest itself in new ways. Society is far richer and more diverse, and old-fashioned jingoism is most certainly not the order of the day, but it is fair to say that today many people recognise the need for a renewed collective spirit. That will be reflected in their attitudes to a host of issues, from military deployment to national investment in public services and international partnerships within and outwith the European Union. In that respect, ordinary citizens need to understand something that those who have written the doctrine of the British armed services have known for some years: in the 21st century, it no longer makes sense to speak of war and peace as though there is a clear delineation between them.

Through our televisions, many of us will have begun to learn the early language that goes with casting aside those old certainties. Each day we hear the term "asymmetrical warfare"—we have heard it several times today—and we know that, if nothing else, it means that the conflict that we face is entirely unlike the symmetrical conflict of the similarly configured armies, navies and air forces that faced each other during most 20th century wars.

We have long lived with the reality of low-intensity conflict, such as that in Northern Ireland, as opposed to the high-intensity conflict of what used to be called total war. The reality is that terms such as low-intensity and high-intensity warfare and asymmetrical and symmetrical warfare now have the main public purpose of indicating that a spectrum of violence and military action exists and that during the 21st century our armed forces, and more generally we as a society, must be prepared to act and live along that entire spectrum. In turn, therefore, the very language of peacetime and wartime will need to change. For example, considering whether or not we as a nation are at war will become more a matter of language and perception than one of Governments making a categorical decision about whether or not we are at war.

A most important thing is that the people of this country adopt permanently a number of assumptions and attitudes that have been associated until now with periods of armed conflict, one of which is that the fundamental right to life will, from time to time, require all of us to accept temporary constraints, or perhaps more permanent ones, on certain personal freedoms and higher standards of security than those that we may have been used to recently. Such measures will, of course, be balanced against the need to maintain an open, democratic society, but other assumptions will include the need to make personal sacrifices from time to time, the need to show resolve when others, including those in the armed services, make such sacrifices, and the need to grasp the importance of information flows towards and away from our enemies.

Perhaps above all, the British people must continuously look beyond the day-to-day events of the coming months and years to see the greater democratic and humanitarian significance of our efforts across the world. Of course, the imperative now lies with reducing the risk of terrorist attack wherever possible. That will naturally focus our attention on particular geographical areas in the short term, but it is impossible to understate the potential effect of the emerging new world consensus on regions that need our help more than ever before.

We know that humanitarian aid of a high order will need to accompany any military action in Afghanistan, for example, and I hope that wherever a specific threat of worldwide-reach terrorism rears its head, a combination of incisive military action and comprehensive humanitarian relief will yield the results that we all seek. However, we will need to keep our eye on those areas where conflict is endemic, yet where the immediate risk to us is perhaps lower, and I am thinking of Africa in particular.

I was privileged to spend a short while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo recently as part of the all-party group on the African Great Lakes region, led by my hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Ms King). My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has noted elsewhere that the developed nations could have responded far better to the Rwandan genocide of 1993 and 1994. Although the current situation in the Congo is in some ways quite different, we should be in no doubt about the misery caused there by years of civil, and rather less than civil, war. We have a responsibility to act there, too, in whatever way we can, and the people of the region must not become invisible casualties of our own struggle against terrorism for our own security.

As has already been mentioned, it is also time for us to consider the relationship between sound governance and democracy. It seems to me that our aim must always be to drive democracy forward in those parts of the world where it is not currently practised. At the same time, however, it is impossible for democracy to operate in a collapsed state. In such situations it is essential for us to encourage administrations to adopt high standards of governance, to invest in infrastructure and to encourage civil society and human rights without demanding impossibly short time horizons for our standards of democracy before, for example, even the most rudimentary internal communications are in place. In short, we must recognise that there are leaders in non-democratic societies who strive for better for their people while at the same time driving home to them in unambiguous terms that democratic structures must be the eventual aim everywhere.

[Mr. Eric Joyce]

September 11 was a cataclysm and a tragedy from which, I hope, good will eventually come—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

6.11 pm

Linda Gilroy (Plymouth, Sutton): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

"Britain's national security is based on the mutual support that comes from membership of NATO. That will not change . . . there are new threats to our people from crime and terrorism. Instability around the world can affect us directly and we have global responsibility to play . . . "

The person who drafted those words at the beginning of the defence section of our manifesto can scarcely have known how meaningful they would become within months of the June 2001 election.

Just days after the grim events of Tuesday 11 September, Plymouth was set to be the venue for the ceremony marking the change of command for the NATO Standing Naval Force Mediterranean. The passing of the command from the Italian flag officer to the United Kingdom was scheduled to take place at the same time as our previous debate. As things turned out, the service personnel involved had more pressing matters than the planned ceremony and the social celebration attached to it. In the wake of the attack on New York it would have been quite unthinkable.

Plymouth's links with America go wider than its role as a key defence city through the 50-year-old alliance of NATO. The vast majority of the 46 places in the world named after Plymouth, England, are in the United States. Many American firms have operations in Plymouth. Some of them recently joined other firms through the chamber of commerce to make something more of our historic Mayflower steps, which for far too long were a disappointing commemoration of the departure of the pilgrims on the Mayflower in 1620 to establish a new home in what has become Plymouth, Massachusetts, ironically to escape religious intolerance in this country.

Searching for some tangible means of expressing their shared grief, many Plymothians and tourists have made their way to the steps with flowers and candles. Samantha Ravell, a 12-year-old student at Lipson college, summed it up rather well when lighting her candle. She is quoted by the local evening paper as saying:

"It just seemed the right thing to do."

A simple bunch of yellow carnations was accompanied by the message:

"For all the victims of New York city and Washington DC and throughout the USA, and all others that have died at the hands of terrorists.

This has to stop.

Luv

Brendan & other children of the 21st century."

To be young should be to be optimistic. The appalling events of 11 September undoubtedly represent a sea change. Out of adversity it is sometimes possible to derive not only strength, but an advance in civilisation. Because words are capable of so many sensitive meanings at times of heightened tension, I should explain that I mean civilisation in the most generic sense—as the opposite of barbarism in all its many forms and not just as the prevailing culture of western democracies. Never has it been more difficult—and yet easier—for us to move in a more civil direction and for Governments to establish frameworks which encourage the best rather than the worst in people.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to follow through in respect of the role of drugs in financing international terrorism. Earlier this year he undertook to make Britain the hardest country in the western world for drug dealers to operate in. No doubt he did not imagine that we would need to address the issue in quite such a context.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will assure us that a key goal in removing the tools of terrorism will be to destroy the fields of death where the drugs cycle starts. If they are a key part of funding a network that can commit such heinous acts as those of 11 September, that is justification enough for their destruction, but drugs do far more than that, as hundreds of my constituents know to their cost having witnessed the lives of children and people close to them ruined by drugs. There are more than 1,000 addicts in Plymouth alone, but they are not the only victims: it is estimated that in Plymouth goods worth £1 million are stolen each week to feed drug habits. Those who are the victims of the vicious cycle that starts in the poppy fields of Afghanistan extend far beyond those who died on 11 September.

The Royal Navy has been building up experience working alongside international agencies: earlier this year, drugs worth £70 million were seized off South America. I hope that as part of our long-term determination to tackle the roots of terrorism, that experience will be built on and deployed with even greater effect. Our armed services are among the finest. As we speak, 14,000 are on exercise in Oman, together with a similar number of Omani troops. We hope that our service personnel will return home by Christmas.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon (Ms Drown) who asked the Prime Minister not to allow under-18s to be deployed. I believe that that should be their choice. It is a choice that 17-year-old Heather Woolger, a west country Wren serving on HMS Cornwall, a type 22 frigate, wants to be able to make for herself. Her mother is proud of what she has achieved, but is understandably concerned: if it were left to her mother, Heather would, no doubt, be home by now. However, like her family, I feel that at 17 she is capable of making her own choices in such matters.

At the beginning of the 21st century, we have the tools to find creative solutions to the world's great challenges—not only the terrible events of last month, but the many other problems that scar the planet. We have a tremendous responsibility to the children of the 21st century to use those tools well.

6.17 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (North Essex): I begin by commending the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Turner), who movingly summed up the mood of the House and of the public as we face the terrorist threat. He made it clear that we should not allow the terrorists to mould our opinions or to dictate the agenda.

It is pointing out the obvious to say that the issues raised in response to the Prime Minister's statement this morning and during today's debate are by no means

confined to foreign affairs and defence matters; they take in home affairs and international development as well. I intend no criticism of the Government when I say that Ministers have done a great deal of thinking aloud about the need to improve our national security and the effectiveness of the campaign to combat terrorism—indeed, we applaud the Home Secretary and his colleagues for doing so—but they have opened up many more questions than they are able to resolve.

I echo the words of the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Foreign Secretary: such questions should be fully debated by Parliament. We, like many other Members of Parliament, are asking when Parliament will see the Home Secretary or the Secretary of State for International Development at the Dispatch Box. Part of the purpose of recalling Parliament is to give the Government the opportunity to face proper scrutiny of their proposals and to respond to the questions raised. Next Thursday or Friday appear to us to be appropriate dates for such a debate.

The key message that emerges from today's debate is that the whole of the civilised world desires a response to the crisis that is far more comprehensive and effective than the sort of simplistic military reaction that some feared would be the response. The Government clearly understand the need to address a wide range of internal security issues, especially those that relate to the means of arrest, prosecution and extradition of suspected terrorists, their helpers and their financiers—a point raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Aldershot (Mr. Howarth) and for North-West Norfolk (Mr. Bellingham). Today, I can inform the House that we have tabled amendments to the Export Control Bill precisely to address the question of people from the United Kingdom providing military assistance to terrorists overseas.

I also commend the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier). His points deserve to be addressed directly by the Home Secretary. My hon. and learned Friend rightly demonstrated to terrorists why Parliament matters.

Many hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Woking (Mr. Malins) and for Wycombe (Mr. Goodman), raised the whole question of race relations and spoke of the need to amend the law of incitement to racial hatred. Almost every speaker in the debate would have liked to hear from a Minister with direct responsibility for policy on those matters.

On the definition of terrorism, do the Government agree with the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) that there is to be a distinction between international terrorism and domestic terrorism? I have to agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (Mr. MacKay) and the Ulster Unionists who expressed considerable unease on that point. Are the Government proposing an international definition of terrorism for use by the European Union and other international bodies?

International development was widely debated. Clearly, there is widespread concern in the House about the need to supply aid to Afghanistan and the other countries in the region affected. My right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) asked about the standards of refugee camps and what action the Government may be taking. We welcome the Government's commitments of £25 million directly for Afghanistan and £11 million for the refugee camps in Pakistan, but we need to hear from the Secretary of State for International Development how the aid will get through and how we will prevent it from getting into the wrong hands.

Let there be no illusion that our words in Parliament, legal reforms, resolute action at home and a generous international aid programme abroad on their own can resolve the immediate threat that is posed by Osama bin Laden and his allies who comprise the network of international terrorism. That is why we commend the resolute action that the Government have taken in preparation for the military action that we fear may be necessary.

The House as a whole appears at ease with the way in which the United States has led the international response so far. There has been less fear of a so-called blank cheque for United States military action—a false image that did nothing but raise fears of an intemperate response, which have clearly proved to be false. The foundation of this confidence is the extraordinary international coalition that the United States, the United Kingdom and NATO have assembled in support of a truly comprehensive response. On behalf of the Opposition, I should like to express my appreciation for the work of the NATO Secretary-General, Lord Robertson.

On Tuesday, NATO formally invoked article 5 of the Washington treaty. Lord Robertson announced that since it had been determined that the attacks had been directed from abroad, they were regarded as an action covered by article 5. I now understand that the United States has formally called on NATO to mobilise its resources for possible military action. Today, NATO has outlined eight measures to support the US military effort, including unrestricted access to European airspace, ports and airports.

No one can doubt that the Atlantic alliance has the central and crucial role in the current international coalition against terrorism. In recent years NATO has had its many doubters and many have, sadly, questioned its role and value. The Prime Minister himself has even referred to those who would wish to destroy NATO. I trust that its crucial role in the current crisis will dispel for ever such doubts about the alliance's future. We must, however, always be ready to adapt its role to meet new challenges.

The same applies to our armed forces, so I invite the Secretary of State for Defence to enlarge on his announcement in Brighton on Tuesday. What precisely did he mean by "rebalance"? He said:

> "As a result of the attacks on the United States, we will be looking again at how we organise our defence.
>
> This will not be a new Strategic Defence Review, but an opportunity, if necessary, to rebalance our existing efforts."

I welcome the Government's readiness and flexibility of mind to revisit SDR so soon after its implementation. We have always said that SDR would not be the end of the process. However, I am concerned about the word "rebalance" because it implies that what may be added to one capability may be cut from another in order to balance the books. I can imagine the Treasury urging the word "rebalance" into the text of the Secretary of State's speeches and that he is not altogether happy with it.

We have consistently warned of how defence commitments must be matched by defence capabilities. The Prime Minister's ambitions to police more of the

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

world make that warning all the more relevant, so I commend the Secretary of State's comments on "The World at One" on Tuesday:

"I think we need to look very carefully at the level of financial commitment that we require".

I agree. He will have our support in advancing his case with the Treasury.

I ask the Secretary of State to clarify whether there is to be some special forces review, as reported in the press. I know that he is aware of how difficult it would be to expand the Special Air Service or the Special Boat Squadron without losing what makes them so special. Will there be a consultation paper? Is there a time scale for the review? Will there be cross-departmental consultation, as with SDR? Many people, including my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Simpson), have expressed concern about the resourcing of the security services. Will the review be based on a formal reassessment of asymmetric threats, which is clearly already under way informally, reflecting the inter-relationship between terrorism and the illegal trade in drugs, international racketeering and financial fraud?

Earlier this week, I had the privilege of visiting our forces on exercise in Oman. Exercise Saif Sareea 2 involves the deployment of huge quantities of equipment, including tanks, aircraft and ships, along with 23,000 service personnel in hostile desert conditions over an area that stretches for hundreds of miles. It is a fantastic achievement for those involved, from the chiefs of staff to every one of those carrying out their duties in theatre. The exercise tests to the limit our ability to project real military strength to the most distant corners of the world. Everyone I met showed their sheer professionalism, guts and good humour, despite considerable physical hardship. I hope that the House will join me in commending all those involved.

There will be many lessons to learn from Saif Sareea 2. Many of the lessons were touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Patrick Mercer), but now is not the occasion to embark on that debate wholesale. However, there is one important message to which the Secretary of State should immediately and publicly respond, and I have given him notice of the concern. Forces personnel on Saif Sareea 2 were promised a "welfare package" that included the opportunity of regular telephone and internet contact with their families at home. In the aftermath of 11 September, that regular contact is hugely important for service men and women who wish to reassure their folks back home. In the case of certain deployments, it has proved impossible to fulfil that promise.

Will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will give his attention to that small but acute problem? There can be little worse than waiting for an expected call that never comes. We owe it to our service men and women and their families to provide every means of reassurance that we can at this worrying time.

It is the first duty of any Government to provide for the safety and security of their citizens. On 11 September, our citizens were subject to a terrible and evil attack. They were murdered by an enemy who remains free, able and motivated to strike again. The news this afternoon is that he may already have done so.

The Government would be failing in their duty if they did not use every means at their disposal to deal with that threat. The House would be failing in its duty if it did not support the Government at this time. That is why we support the Government's determination to stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States and her other allies as the whole civilised world comes to terms with what has happened.

The Foreign Secretary said that on 11 September the world changed, and of course he is right in terms of our perception of our own security and of our need to change our attitude towards it. In substance, however, the world did not change; it merely revealed itself. As the horrible freshness of the 11 September tragedy begins to fade in our minds, we must never again drop our guard.

I commend the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Soames), who apologises for being unable to be in his place. He said that it will be the job of Her Majesty's Opposition to urge the Government to press on with the plans and strategy that they are currently formulating to protect the world from the terrorist threat. I assure my hon. Friend that that is what we shall do.

Our armed forces are prepared and ready to do whatever they are called upon to do. That is their job and they are devoted to it. Nevertheless, our thoughts and prayers will be with them and their families every hour of every day until their task is done.

6.33 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Geoffrey Hoon): First, I apologise to the House for my absence from the Chamber during the middle of the debate. I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will understand why, in these very particular circumstances, I have not been present in the Chamber for as long as I would normally have been, and for as long as I should have liked.

The question of the tragic crash in the Black sea has been raised. A Russian TU154 travelling from Tel Aviv to Russia crashed into the Black sea. We understand that 66 passengers and 10 to 12 crew were on board; sadly, all are believed to have died. It is too soon to say what was the cause of that unfortunate crash. A number of theories are doing the rounds, but it is better for the moment that we do not rush to any early conclusions. It is important, though, that the House should express its concern for the victims and their families, and the Government will certainly be writing to both the Russian and Israeli Governments to express our condolences.

The scale of the terror that faced the world on 11 September went beyond anything that we had seen before. The exact numbers of those killed are still not known and may not be known for many days, or even weeks, more, but it is clear that some 6,000 people lost their lives in those appalling attacks.

We have seen suicide attacks before, but never causing death on such a scale. As the Prime Minister said, it was a turning point in our history. Our world now looks a very different place. We now face new challenges—from the terrorists responsible for the attacks on the United States and from others using similar tactics.

Two tasks lie ahead: we must bring those responsible for the events of 11 September to account, along with all those who support, harbour and protect them; and we must deal with the wider threat of the evil of international terrorism.

Our message to Osama bin Laden has been absolutely clear. We know that he is guilty. Information that the Prime Minister has placed in the Library of the House makes that quite clear. We will bring him to account. Our message to the Taliban has also been clear. The world is watching them. Their chance to surrender the terrorists and end their support for terrorism is fast running out. In answer to the question from the shadow Foreign Secretary, that is our aim: to remove the support for terrorism in Afghanistan, and to show that such support will not be tolerated elsewhere.

As a number of right hon. and hon. Members have said, the United States has shown great dignity and restraint since 11 September. We commend its refusal to lash out in instant revenge. Whatever action is taken, in self-defence and within the UN charter, must be proportionate and carefully targeted—compatible with legitimate self-defence in accordance with international law. It will therefore be rules-based, as was requested and required by my hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Ms King). We recognise that it must target the guilty, and wherever possible, avoid harming the innocent. We recognise that it may take time, and may risk lives, but we recognise, too, that the time for forceful military action against Osama bin Laden, his associates, and—if they do not act—those who support them, is undoubtedly coming.

A shadow of evil and death fell across New York, Washington and Pennsylvania on 11 September. It fell across the United States. It fell across the whole free world—but from that shadow some good must emerge. We face a choice. We could cower in the face of this threat, or we can destroy it. With our allies, we are determined to eliminate terrorism as a force in international affairs.

The United Kingdom will play a full and active role in working to achieve those objectives. To do otherwise would be to ignore our responsibilities as a close ally of the United States and as a member of the United Nations, the G8, NATO and the European Union.

My answer to the points raised by a number of right hon. and hon. Members is that it is because we recognise the range of responsibilities that we are working to build a humanitarian coalition to deal with the growing crisis faced by Afghan refugees, and to offer those innocent and helpless people—victims themselves, with whom we have no quarrel—the assistance that they need. The United Kingdom was the first country to pledge money for refugees. The sum now stands at some £36 million, in addition to the £35 million that we have given to Afghan refugees since 1997.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the humanitarian aid be provided before the winter snows come, and the passes become impassable?

Mr. Hoon: It is already being provided. The Department for International Development's first shipment of 400 tents arrived in Iran yesterday. A further flight with more supplies is due to depart for Iran at the end of this week. We do recognise the effects of the onset of winter, and the difficult conditions in Afghanistan, but much determined effort is being made throughout the world to ensure that aid reaches the country quickly. There is, of course, a great deal more that we need to do, and I assure my hon. Friend that we are thinking urgently about what further help we and the rest of the world can give. I know that many right hon. and hon. Members were concerned about that, especially my hon. Friend the Member for City of York (Hugh Bayley), and I hope that I have been able to satisfy them that we are making determined efforts.

In addition to the building of a humanitarian coalition, a range of further measures are being taken by the international community. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been in regular contact with President Bush. I have been in close contact with Donald Rumsfeld, the United States Defence Secretary. This close contact has been matched at all levels within the Ministry of Defence, and right across Government. We have consulted carefully on the appropriate response to the attacks on 11 September, and have made it clear to our United States ally that we will offer it every assistance in whatever action it takes.

As the Prime Minister announced this morning, we have received an initial request from the United States for a range of military capabilities. We have already responded positively to that, and we shall consider further requests as and when they are received.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: The Secretary of State has said that Britain is prepared to respond positively. Will he say what impact that will have on the heavy commitments in which our armed forces are already engaged in various parts of the world, not least in the Balkans?

Mr. Hoon: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, which he has raised with me before. Clearly it is my responsibility, on behalf of the Government, to ensure that our armed forces are not asked to do more than they can reasonably sustain, and we shall have careful regard to that consideration in the weeks and months ahead.

Ms Oona King: On the point of funding the military, and in the wake of the attacks of 11 September, does my right hon. Friend share my hope that both the left and right will learn some lessons? Should not the left accept that we need to prioritise military spending so that peacekeeping roles, among others, can be fulfilled and the right accept that we must prioritise humanitarian aid and that it must be paid for?

Mr. Hoon: The lesson of events in the Balkans and elsewhere—indeed, this is one of the lessons of the modern world—is that we need to recognise that humanitarian crises go hand in hand with military ones and that there must be a co-ordinated response across government. I think that that point was made from the Opposition Benches. It is important for us to join together those responses, as this Government in particular have done.

Harry Cohen (Leyton and Wanstead): If military action is taken, when does my right hon. Friend expect to be in a position to announce the rules of engagement and the war aims? If those aims do not include removing the Taliban, on what basis will they be engaged?

Mr. Hoon: I had thought that my hon. Friend might have noticed that I dealt with that point earlier. The purpose of any military action would be to create a

[Mr. Hoon]

condition in Afghanistan whereby it had a Government who did not support international terrorism, took appropriate steps to remove terrorists from within its borders and ensured that no further help was given to terrorism.

I was dealing with contacts between allies. I want to make it clear that there have been a range of such contacts, not only with the United States, but with other allies. NATO defence Ministers met in Brussels last week to discuss how we can work together in our response to the threat of international terrorism. NATO has taken the unprecedented step of invoking article 5 for the first time in its history, in recognition that the attack on the United States was an attack on all of us. Other allies, therefore, also stand by to assist the United States.

The discussions in Brussels included a meeting with the new Russian Defence Minister—the first civilian to be made a Defence Minister in that country. The response to the attacks on the United States has been remarkable for the degree of unity shown by nations across the world. The Russian support for the United States has been invaluable. The Prime Minister's visit to Russia today is a sign of that developing closeness, on which I hope to build when I visit Russia for talks with its new Defence Minister next week.

The United Kingdom's armed forces have continued to serve our country with very great distinction. They have consistently excelled recently in a number of difficult situations in the Balkans, East Timor and Africa. Only last month, I went to see Britain's contribution to Task Force Harvest in Macedonia. Their professionalism, skill and determination to play their part in restoring stability to that country were all that we have come to expect. I have no doubt that, if and when they are called on to play their part in the action against Osama bin Laden and his associates, against the Taliban, and against others who support terrorism, they will do so with the same distinction.

Many of our service personnel have already deployed to Oman to take part in Exercise Saif Sareea with the Omani armed forces. Planning for the exercise began some four years ago. It has been designed to test and prove the success of key elements of our joint rapid reaction forces. It also demonstrates the closeness of our friendship with Oman and will develop our wide-ranging defence relationship.

Before this debate, the hon. Member for North Essex (Mr. Jenkin) raised with me the issue of the welfare package. I was grateful to him for relating to me the experiences that he gained when visiting the exercise in Oman. We were aware of certain difficulties with the welfare package. Efforts are being made to put that right. I am grateful for the thoughtful way in which he raised the matter and the balanced manner in which he dealt with it today.

The United Kingdom's contribution to the exercise is immense. It is the largest overseas deployment by British forces since the Gulf conflict. As the House will have heard, some 20,000 service personnel are taking part. We have deployed the Illustrious Carrier Group, 3 Commando Brigade, five squadrons of Challenger 2 tanks, some 50 fast jet aircraft and many other force elements. I must emphasise to the House that they are there to take part in the exercise. Obviously, however, in the light of the attacks on the United States and given that we know where they originated, it is a fortunate coincidence that our forces can by their presence contribute to the trap that we are closing around Osama bin Laden. We are prepared and ready to draw on those deployed forces if that is required, but, as a number of Members have said, the war on international terrorism will not be won by military force alone. It must be fought on other fronts too—through diplomacy, new legislation and new economic measures. That point was made by a number of right hon. and hon. Members, including, in particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith).

The enemy that we face is sophisticated. It has close links with transnational organised crime, illegal arms trafficking, the movement of illicit drugs, and money laundering. It threatens us in many ways. Our response must be sophisticated too, and organised on a national, regional and international basis. That was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Linda Gilroy). I emphasise that we have already made our first moves. We have acted to increase the security of the United Kingdom in the face of these threats.

As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear, we have no evidence of any specific threat of terrorist action against the United Kingdom. It is, perhaps, one thing to describe a doomsday scenario in a Sunday newspaper; it is quite another to deploy a functioning, effective weapon of mass destruction. Of course, that does not mean that we should not be vigilant—as we all must be.

Laura Moffatt (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking those who work in international airports, especially Gatwick and Heathrow? They have performed an enormous task in coming out of their offices and assisting the security operation. Theirs has clearly been a difficult job for too long, but is it not remarkable that they are prepared to continue that mammoth task in the circumstances that airlines now face?

Mr. Hoon: Absolutely. Their task is difficult not least because, until 11 September, training for those close to airports and airlines was based on the assumption that they would be dealing with a rational threat—that they would be dealing with people who, in effect, wanted to exchange the safety and security of potential hostages for the fulfilling of some demand which, however irrational, could be dealt with in a sensible way. That training, and that approach, will now have to be adjusted to take account of those who no longer have a rational approach, but are essentially determined to bring about their own deaths and the deaths of as many other people as possible. That requires very different training and a very different approach. I commend all those in airports and airlines who have had to adjust to a very different and extraordinarily dangerous reality.

When I addressed the House two weeks ago, I talked about the valuable work of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat in pulling together contingency plans to deal with any incident that might occur. The plans involve a wide range of Government Departments and agencies, as well as bodies and institutions in the private sector. Many of the plans were drawn up long before 11 September; where necessary, they are being reviewed in the light of what happened.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has already spoken about what we are doing in the diplomatic sphere. As the House is aware, the Prime Minister is playing a leading role in drawing together a global coalition, united in its determination to rid the world of this terrorist threat.

Lynne Jones: Does my right hon. Friend intend to deal with the points made by several Members about the need to bolster and extend the capability of international organisations such as the United Nations, and to set up an international criminal court? In particular, does he intend to address the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Mr. Wyatt) about the need to question the role of the veto within the Security Council? Finally, has he considered whether we should use resources that it is proposed should be deployed in national missile defence for purposes that would be more effective in resolving conflicts and combating global threats?

Mr. Hoon: I had not intended to deal with all those points specifically. However, the Government have been strongly committed to the international institutions. The UN is showing its very great strength in these particular difficulties. Certainly the Government have supported a process of reform within the UN. I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises that that process can proceed only by way of consensus within the UN. That approach has not always been the one that all Governments have been willing to take.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has indicated what we intend to do on the legislative front. The new Terrorism Act 2000 came into force in February, and extended the proscription regime to include 21 international organisations. As for the point made by the hon. Member for North Essex, the Act includes a definition of terrorism. Perhaps that is a useful starting point for examining terrorism both nationally and internationally. We are determined that the United Kingdom will not become a place where terrorists and their supporters can take refuge.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has set in hand an urgent review of the case for new powers, policies and other action that may be necessary in the light of what happened on 11 September. New legislation will be brought forward during this Session.

As I have mentioned, the existing legal powers to tackle terrorism have been updated very recently. They are among the toughest in the world. Even so, as a measure of our determination, these powers will still be reviewed. Consideration is being given to providing the courts with new powers, improving the appeals process and cutting off terrorists' access to the money that they use to finance their operations. The Home Office is also considering proposals for tightening the asylum system to deal with those who seek to abuse it. Against this background, it is considering the means by which transport companies obtain a wide range of information on arriving passengers and then provide it to law enforcement agencies. All these measures are expected to have benefits to law enforcement agencies that are fighting related threats to our society such as drugs and organised crime, a point well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton.

The Home Office is also considering tightening the laws on incitement to cover religious as well as racial hatred, a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for North Warwickshire (Mr. O'Brien) and other hon. Members.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether the Home Office has plans to deal with people such as Omar Bakri Muhammad and Abu Hamza, who are operating freely in our country and inciting people against our liberal traditions? They are inciting the wholesale murder of people with whom they disagree. What action will be taken against them? The people of Britain are offended that no action has been taken under the plethora of terrorist legislation that we already have.

Mr. Hoon: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point in his usual style. The matter is being considered with some urgency in the Home Office. I understand that the shadow Home Office team has been briefed on the efforts that are being made.

On the economic front, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out earlier in the week the new measures that we intend to take to ensure that no bank or financial institution, national or international, will be able to offer a hiding place for terrorist funds without fear of prosecution. These measures include police monitoring of accounts that may be used for terrorism, police powers to seize cash throughout the country, police powers to freeze funds at the outset of an investigation. tougher obligations on banks and financial institutions to report transactions that they suspect may be related to terrorism, supervising the implementation of the money laundering regulations by bureaux de change and money transmitters and allowing the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise to exchange relevant information with law enforcement authorities.

Geraint Davies: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hoon: I need now to make some progress.

These actions will be replicated across the world as nations respond to the obligations of the UN Security Council resolution 1373, taking the necessary measures to suppress the financing of terrorists and denying them a safe haven from which to operate.

We recognise the powerful points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Tony Worthington) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Donald Anderson). *[Interruption.]* I shall eventually get the pronunciation right of the constituency of Clydebank and Milngavie.

The cold war ended 12 years ago. We knew what it meant when the Berlin wall came down. We knew that we were watching events that would reshape our lives, as we did when the twin towers of the World Trade Centre collapsed. The end of the cold war meant that threats to international stability were no longer likely to come from superpower rivalries, but instead from ethnic and religious conflict; population and environmental pressures; competition for scarce resources; drugs, crime and, of course, terrorism.

Events over the past decade have, sadly, proved that we were right. There has been ethnic conflict in the Balkans, vicious internal conflict in Sierra Leone to gain control

[Mr. Hoon]

of the diamond fields, and elsewhere endemic warfare in Africa. We knew that the world had changed, so we had to change to face the new challenges. The strategic defence review ensured that our armed forces were structured and equipped to operate and succeed in this new environment.

The process of implementing the review is still under way, but already we are seeing the results. Our armed forces have deployed to Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone and Macedonia, in each case acting with skill and determination and, only where necessary, with lethal force. They have, again and again, been a force for good in the world.

The strategic defence review leaves us well placed to take on and defeat international terrorism. We have significantly improved capabilities, reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, precision strike, rapid deployment, and sophisticated command and control, all of which will play their part in the campaign against international terrorism.

The attacks on the United States have shown us that we must build on this success and go further. We must look harder at the kind of asymmetric threat that we saw on 11 September. We must ensure that our concepts, force structures and capabilities are exactly those that we need. That deals with the point made by the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Howarth).

As I have already made clear, this will not be a new strategic defence review, but we need to add a new chapter to it and to look hard at our priorities in our plans and programmes, so that we can add capability where it counts—where it makes a difference. Just as the strategic defence review itself benefited from an open and inclusive approach, so will this further work draw fully on wider opinion and expertise. I hope that, in the light of his extremely thoughtful remarks, my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Joyce) will contribute to that process. I invite the Opposition defence team to do the same. I am determined that the work will be as open and inclusive as it can be.

The United Kingdom will respond to the challenge of meeting the new threats, but achieving our objectives—bringing Osama bin Laden to account, along with others who support him, and tackling the wider threat of international terrorism wherever it operates in our world—will not be easy. We are embarking on a new mission, requiring a multifaceted approach on a number of different fronts. It will involve a series of deliberate, co-ordinated steps. Can I appeal to Members of the House to judge the success of the overall strategy not by individual actions, but only by the results of the whole?

Staying the course will be hard. It will be long. It may well be painful. We will have to show the patience and the resilience that we have shown in facing other threats in our history. Continuing the patient, careful strategy that we have begun is the way to achieve our goal. I know that the House will share our determination to see this through. At the very least, it is what we owe to those who died three weeks ago.

Mr. Nick Ainger (West Carmarthen and South Pembrokeshire): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved,

That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ainger.]*

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Seven o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 8 October 2001

The House met at Six o'clock, notice having been given by MR. SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 13 (Earlier meeting of House in certain circumstances).*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Coalition against International Terrorism

6 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. Tony Blair): Mr. Speaker, thank you for agreeing to the third recall of Parliament since 11 September.

At 5.30 pm British time yesterday, a series of air and cruise missile attacks began on the terrorist camps of Osama bin Laden and the military installations of the Taliban regime. These were carried out by American and British armed forces with the support of other allies. There were 30 targets. Twenty-three were outside the main cities, three were in Kabul and four were in the vicinity of other large settlements. In all cases, the utmost care was taken to avoid civilian casualties. British forces were engaged in this action through the use of submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles fired against terrorist training facilities.

It is too early to report back fully on the effect of last night's action. However, we can say that initial indications are that the coalition operations were successful in achieving their objective of destroying and degrading elements of the al-Qaeda terrorist facilities and the Taliban military apparatus that protects them. These operations will continue, and I can tell the House that a second wave of attacks is now under way. In time, they will be supported by other actions, again carefully targeted on the military network of the enemy.

We took almost four weeks after 11 September to act. I pay tribute to President Bush's statesmanship in having the patience to wait. That was for three reasons. First, we had to establish who was responsible. Once it was clear that the al-Qaeda network planned and perpetrated the attacks, we then wanted to give the Taliban regime time to decide their own position: would they shield bin Laden or yield him up? It was only fair to give them an ultimatum and time to respond. But it is now clear that they have chosen to side with terrorism.

But thirdly, we wanted time to make sure that the targets for any action minimised the possibility of civilian casualties. Our argument is not with the Afghan people. They are victims of the Taliban regime. They live in poverty, repressed viciously, women denied even the most basic human rights, and subject to a crude form of theocratic dictatorship that is as cruel as it is arbitrary.

We are doing all we can to limit the effect of our action on ordinary Afghans. I repeat: we will not walk away from them once the conflict ends, as has happened in the past. We will stand by them and help them to a better, more stable future under a broad-based Government involving all the different ethnic groupings. That is our commitment to the people of Afghanistan.

The strength of the coalition remains. In addition to Britain, France, Germany, Australia and Canada have all pledged military support. We should also remember the contribution that Germany is already making, under Chancellor Schröder, by taking over the leadership of the NATO mission in Macedonia, and thus freeing up other allied resources for use in Afghanistan. I spoke to Prime Minister Aznar of Spain last night. He pledged his full commitment and indicated his readiness to provide military support. We greatly value and welcome the Spanish support, as we do that of Italy. And of course NATO is giving its full support. Today the North Atlantic Council agreed the redeployment of five AWACS aircraft to free up United States assets so that they can participate in this operation. We anticipate that NATO will shortly agree the redeployment of standing naval forces on the same basis.

The European Union is fully supportive. Russia has issued a strong statement calling for decisive action against the evil of terrorism. China has encouraged efforts to combat terrorism, calling for military strikes to be targeted at specific objectives. The Japanese Prime Minister and Government have given their full support.

President Musharraf of Pakistan has described the military strikes as

"an action against terrorists, terrorism and their sanctuaries and supporters".

Pakistan is providing help in terms of intelligence, logistic support and airspace.

On Saturday, I met Prime Minister Vajpayee of India, who assured me of the Indian Government's robust support for efforts to combat international terrorism.

In the Arab world there has been widespread condemnation of the 11 September atrocities and acceptance of the need to take action against the al-Qaeda network.

Of course, al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime will be eager to spread false propaganda. Already, their lie machine is putting out false claims about the US planes being shot down. There will be much more of that kind of thing. And of course they lie about our motivation. We know their aim. It is to foment conflict between Islam and the west; it is to present themselves as champions of the Muslim world against the United States of America. It is to say that we are anti-Islam. That is a lie. Let us expose it once and for all. We are in conflict with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban regime because the terrorists killed thousands of innocent people, including hundreds of Muslims and women and children; and because the Taliban regime, in return for financial and other support, give them succour.

Forgive me for repeating this, but my visit to Pakistan convinced me that these sentiments cannot be repeated too often. To kill as those terrorists did is utterly foreign to all the teachings of the Koran, and to justify it by saying that such murder of the innocent is doing the will of God is to defame the good name of Islam. That is why Muslims the world over have been appalled by this act. That was made clear to me once more at my meeting earlier today with leaders of all the religious faiths, including Muslims, in Britain.

[The Prime Minister]

As for those who doubted bin Laden's wickedness or his murderous intent, I ask them to listen to his television broadcast yesterday. He said:

"God Almighty hit the US at its most vulnerable spot. He destroyed its greatest buildings and filled the country with terror. Praise be to God."

Sitting next to him was Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, who themselves were involved in al-Qaeda's attacks, in 1998, on the US embassies in east Africa.

I also remind people of this. In 1999, when hundreds of thousands of Muslims were subject to ethnic cleansing by the hated Milosevic regime in Kosovo, we took military action in Serbia against Milosevic. We were not acting then against Milosevic because Serbia is an Orthodox Christian country, or in favour of the Kosovars because so many of them are Muslims. We acted against Milosevic because what he was doing—the humanitarian catastrophe that he was inflicting on them—was unjust. We helped the Kosovars because they were victims of his injustice.

It is justice too that makes our coalition as important on the humanitarian side as on the military side. We have established an effective coalition to deal with the humanitarian crisis in the region, which of course existed before 11 September. Our priority has been to re-establish food supply routes into Afghanistan. Some 5,000 tonnes of food went in during the last fortnight, thanks to the efforts of the United Nations and other international agencies. At the UN meeting in Geneva over the weekend, donors pledged $600 million, including the United Kingdom's own commitment of $55 million. We will do all that we can to help refugees from the Taliban regime. All we ask them to do is not to stop that help getting through to those refugees.

We must safeguard our country too. Our first responsibility is the safety of the public. Since 11 September, every one of our arrangements has been under scrutiny. We have extensive contingency planning in place in Britain. We are doing all that we reasonably can to anticipate the nature of, and thwart, any potential retaliation. As yet there is no specific credible threat that we know of against Britain. However, we would be foolish to be anything other than highly vigilant, although as the experience of the United States shows, that is not an easy task. Contacts between the United Kingdom, United States and other Governments and agencies are good, and expertise and planning are being shared.

I am aware too of the anguish of the families of the aid workers held in Afghanistan, and of the family of the journalist Yvonne Ridley. I can report to the House that Yvonne Ridley has been handed over to Pakistani officials with whom we have been liaising closely since her detention. She has been met by consular staff from the high commission, and she will be taken to Islamabad this evening and accommodated with the high commission. I pay tribute to the tireless work of the British high commission in Islamabad, the Foreign Office and the Pakistani Government in securing her release.

We are in this for the long haul. Even when al-Qaeda is dealt with, the job will not be over. The network of international terrorism is not confined to it. It is essential therefore that we reflect on why it is so necessary that we stand with the US and other allies in this fight. The attack was an attack not on the west or the United States alone. It was an attack on civilised values everywhere. It was an attempt to change by terror what the terrorists knew they could not do by reasoned argument. It was an attempt to substitute terrorist atrocity for deliberative policy; to see the world run by the chaos consequent on terrorist outrage, rather than by disciplined and calm debate.

We in Britain have the most direct interest in defeating such terror. It strikes at the heart of what we believe in. We know that, if not stopped, the terrorists will do it again, possibly this time in Britain. We know that it was an attack also on economic confidence, trying to destroy the strength of our economies, and that eradicating this threat is crucial to global economic confidence.

We know that the Taliban regime are largely funded by the drugs trade and that 90 per cent. of the heroin on British streets originates in Afghanistan. We know that the refugee crisis—4.5 million on the move even before 11 September—directly impacts us here.

So this military action we are undertaking is not for a just cause alone, though this cause is just. It is to protect our country, our people, our economy, our way of life. It is not a struggle remote from our everyday British concerns; it touches them intimately.

We did not choose this conflict. We do not go lightly to fight. We are all of us—the nations involved in this action—peaceful peoples who prefer to live in peace, but a desire to live in peace should never be interpreted as weakness by those who attack us. If attacked, we will respond. We will defend ourselves and our very reluctance to use force means that, when we do, we do so with complete determination that we shall prevail.

That is why we were there last night, in action, and why we will be there again, with our allies. It is why we will continue to act with steadfast resolve to see this struggle through to the end and to the victory that would mark the victory not of revenge but of justice over the evil of terrorism.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green): Mr. Speaker, may I join the Prime Minister in thanking you for agreeing to recall Parliament and may I say to the Prime Minister how grateful we are for his coming to the House to make his statement today?

I fully agree with the Prime Minister on the importance of recalling Parliament at the earliest opportunity. It is vital on such momentous occasions that the House of Commons is kept informed so that it can debate developments as it will today.

Yet again, as the Prime Minister announced today, it is clear how important NATO is to our overall security, and I hope that he will outline later whether there are further assets that NATO may have to deploy to the theatre. But our first thoughts are with our armed forces. They have been entrusted with an enormous task. Our hopes and prayers are with them in all that they do. We in this House, who so often take for granted their skill and their bravery, which guarantee our peace and security, must take this opportunity to thank them for their dedication.

We know that, in playing their part, our armed forces will carry out their duties with the utmost bravery, determination and professionalism, yet we must not forget the families of our service men and women. Theirs is

perhaps the hardest task—waiting without knowing, hoping that any news is good news. The prayers of the House should be, and I hope are, with them all. They are not alone in their anxieties, as the Prime Minister pointed out. We here must also recognise that there are legitimate concerns among the British people about the consequences for Britain of this action.

The Prime Minister is right to consider new ways of protecting British citizens and I hope that, over the next few days, he will be able to tell us more about some of those measures. I also say to the people of this country that the consequences of inaction are far, far greater. This is not a conflict of our own making, but it is a conflict that we must win.

During this time, we should continue to go about our normal daily lives. To do anything else would be to reward terrorists with a victory that they must never have. That is why my party is continuing with its conference in Blackpool. Democracy must go on.

The Prime Minister reiterated that this is not a war against Islam. He is right. No teaching of the Koran has ever taught that kind of foul action. Like the Prime Minister, I was angered to hear bin Laden seek to excuse those horrific acts of terrorism by reference to the conflict in the middle east. Before anyone is taken in by such propaganda it is worth pointing out that bin Laden was planning his strike against New York and Washington two years ago. That was at a time when hopes were very high for the peace process in the middle east. He planned to tear down that process, not to uphold it.

Bin Laden claims to speak for Islam, but he does not. His is a cynical and suicidal cult, dedicated to the destruction of civilisations and lives, irrespective of their faith. That is why Muslim leaders whom I have met have been unequivocal in their condemnation. That is why countries such as Pakistan have united with us despite the severe difficulties that they face.

I join the Prime Minister in paying tribute to the Government of Pakistan. Over the years our ties between our peoples have been strong. We should all understand the genuine predicament of those families with relations in Afghanistan and Pakistan divided by a common border. I reiterate that our quarrel is not with them. This is not a war against the Afghan people, who have suffered enough under a monstrous regime that terrorises its own people, as the Prime Minister rightly said.

All of us in the House support the efforts outlined by the Prime Minister to bring humanitarian aid to the region. We must do everything in our power to ensure that once the conflict is over, the people of Afghanistan can return to a homeland that is able to sustain them. Will the Prime Minister now confirm that air drops, while welcome, can provide only a very small amount of aid? Will he confirm that he will be looking at logistical means to get aid to the people of Afghanistan? Will he outline some of the further difficulties in doing so?

I join the Prime Minister in welcoming the reports that Yvonne Ridley is free. Our best hopes go with the aid workers, whose position and whereabouts is unknown.

Last night, following weeks of careful preparation and planning, the alliance struck back. This was no knee-jerk reaction, but has been, as the Prime Minister said, a measured response. He was right to pay tribute to President Bush. On 11 September, the appalling atrocities of bin Laden and al-Qaeda horrified the civilised world. These acts were a wake-up call to us all. No longer can we ignore the terrorists and those who nurture them, harbour them and sustain them. The Taliban regime have become an accessory to international mass murder. Their actions have dictated our actions.

This will be, as President Bush said, a war like no other. It will not be resolved in a matter of days. It could take many months, even years. We are, as the Prime Minister rightly said, in for the long haul. No one should doubt the determination of the British people to see this through to a successful conclusion. Our future security and well-being require no less.

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his support, which is greatly appreciated.

In respect of NATO and further NATO assets, I have nothing to add to what I said earlier, but obviously that point will be kept under review. As for our armed forces, as I said last night, it is an incalculable strength for any Prime Minister and any country in this situation to have armed forces that are generally admired throughout the world for their courage, professionalism and extraordinary ability to get on with the job and get it done. We can be truly proud of them. Of course, our thoughts and prayers are with them and their families at this moment.

We keep very closely under review all the different ways of protecting our citizens against any potential attack, but it is of course extremely difficult to guess where the terrorists may try to strike. We are working urgently on that, not only within this country but in discussions with other Governments.

The right hon. Gentleman was right about the middle east peace process. It cannot be said too often that these extremists and fanatics are opposed to the peace process because they are opposed to the very existence of the state of Israel. They therefore do not want the peace process to succeed; they want it to fail. That is one reason why it is so important that we get the peace process back on track and moving forward again. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is a measure of the terrorists' extremism that they were planning the attack long before the peace process entered its current difficult stage.

In relation to Afghanistan, I can tell the House that the money is available, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development will say more about that in the debate. The biggest difficulty will concern logistics and organisation. We will probably manage in areas around Afghanistan, but the operation will be difficult inside that country unless there is some minimum co-operation from the Taliban regime.

Finally, this is going to be a long haul. It will be difficult, but one of the things that was very clear from what I thought was a pretty chilling broadcast by Osama bin Laden yesterday was the necessity of acting. This is not a man or a network who will hesitate to act again. They will act again and they will do worse if they can. For those who doubted that we faced a necessity to act, reading a transcript of that interview, or watching it, is a pretty good antidote.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Skye and Inverness, West): In thanking the Prime Minister for his statement on this sombre parliamentary occasion, may I fully associate Liberal Democrat Members with the expressions of

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

support and concern for our armed forces that have been so properly expressed at this most difficult and dangerous of times? I also welcome the good news, just recently announced and confirmed, of the safe return of Yvonne Ridley.

The military strikes of the past 24 hours are sad. Indeed, we all consider them tragic, but they are none the less inevitable. If anyone doubted, even last week, the veracity of the case against bin Laden, the chilling nature of the words that he used in last night's broadcast said it all, and mean that one does not have to see evidence. Bin Laden said:

"There is America, full of fear, from its north to its south, from its west to its east. Thank God for that."

That is what we are up against. Very properly, members of all political parties have made it clear—but the point cannot be made often enough—that we are up against evil, not Islam, either at home or abroad.

There is also no doubt about the sheer complicity of the Taliban regime. The regime harbours bin Laden, in defiance of world opinion, and he fosters terrorism in the face of global decency. That is why the actions taken so far are both just and proportionate.

I wish to make two brief inquiries of the Prime Minister, on matters that I have raised previously. The first inquiry has to do with the military aims and the political objectives. Is the long-term aim to help establish a more stable, sane and representative administration from within Afghanistan itself, or is it to try and secure, for example, a United Nations protectorate after the military phase is over? Which is the preferred option at this point? On the wider political objective, can further political effort be devoted to implementing United Nations Security Council resolution 1373, which deals with the international suppression of terrorism?

My second inquiry follows on from the first. As the Prime Minister said, aid is, thankfully, reaching Afghanistan. That is a good thing, but if some degree of stability and sanity is not achieved as a consequence of our action in the area, that aid cannot adequately reach the people who need it. Can more be done to help ensure that food reaches those who are hungry, not least those thousands of people who are amassing on Afghanistan's borders with neighbouring states? The problem has been highlighted by the leading domestic and international aid agencies.

No one in this country has any quarrel whatsoever with the people of Afghanistan, who now find themselves at the mercy of world events. They have a regime whom they did not elect, and they are at the mercy of events because of an individual whom they did not invite.

We are correct to pursue military action, but unlike the terrorists, we will continue to display mercy.

The Prime Minister: Again, I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his support for the action that is being undertaken. I shall deal directly with his two questions.

Our military aims are to shut down the al-Qaeda network and all the terrorist camps that operate out of Afghanistan, and, in so far as the Taliban regime are an obstacle to that, to disable or remove them. People often ask whether getting rid of the Taliban regime is a specific objective. As time goes on, it is increasingly difficult to understand how the terrorists and the Taliban can be distinguished. My visit to Pakistan brought home to me the interconnection between them; they are linked at every level. However, our aim is to shut down the terrorist network. If the Taliban had acted in accordance with the ultimatum, yielded up bin Laden and started to shut down the camps, action could have been avoided.

Should the regime fall, it is important, and certainly a political aim, to establish a more representative Government who are based on all ethnic groupings and have broad support in the country. That is not necessarily inconsistent with a role for the United Nations. The two may go together, but the matter is at an early stage of consideration. It was impressed strongly upon me on my travels that it is important for the impetus to come from the Afghan people rather than being imposed by outside Governments, however well intentioned. We can play a facilitating role, but the impetus must come from the Afghanis.

On food reaching those who are hungry, we have shown in the past couple of weeks that it is possible to get food convoys through to people in Afghanistan. We must now ensure that, notwithstanding the action and the attitude of the Taliban, we contrive the right way of doing that. I believe that the problem will be largely organisational, but the fact that we now have a UN representative of proven capability who will take charge in the region at this early stage gives us the best chance of realising our humanitarian as well as our military aims.

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): From the beginning, the Prime Minister has rightly emphasised the importance of humanitarian aid. As he knows, up to 7 million people were in danger of suffering a famine even before 11 September. It is therefore crucial that the food aid continues to flow. Will my right hon. Friend also ensure that borders are kept open? If people flee in panic, as they undoubtedly will, it is crucial that they are able to cross the borders to safety.

I ask my right hon. Friend to pay particular attention to the women of Afghanistan, who have been humiliated and degraded by the Taliban regime. Many of them are already war widows; they will need special help in the current circumstances and after the war is over.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. The question of keeping borders open is strongly connected to that of whether we can offer help of sufficient credibility to the surrounding countries so that they feel able to keep the borders open. That is one of the reasons for our putting the money together for the humanitarian effort so quickly, and for the UN's appointment of a special representative to co-ordinate the effort. We are keeping the borders open with Pakistan, but continuing to do that depends crucially on our providing the necessary support.

My hon. Friend's comments about the women of Afghanistan are absolutely right. The oppression visited upon them is almost extraordinary. I know that she has read of and talked to victims of the oppression; there is no doubt that relief from the Taliban regime will be most welcome to the people of Afghanistan, especially the women.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Mid-Sussex): In view of the words this morning of President Musharraf about the

Northern Alliance, will the Prime Minister clarify the policy of the allies towards that organisation? What exactly will he do to help them or, indeed, to arm them?

The Prime Minister: The position of the allies in this respect is clear. It is important that whatever successor regime there is to the Taliban is as broad based as possible. The Northern Alliance has certain of the ethnic groupings necessary for such a broad base, but there is also a genuine desire to ensure that it is not simply limited to those organisations that are part of the Northern Alliance. Of course it is important, because they are assisting us by the actions that they are taking against the Taliban regime, to recognise their contribution, but it was impressed strongly upon me in Pakistan—and by President Musharraf personally—that if a successor regime comes out of this conflict, it must be sufficiently broadly based and must take into account the legitimate interests of Pakistan.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): As the Prime Minister said, this is a grave moment for the world. He has our support in these actions. Will he accept that just as important as the prosecution of war is the subsequent campaign for justice and peace? There can be no lasting peace without justice. To that extent, will he reflect on the humanitarian aspects and ensure, as the aid agencies have requested, clear corridors for refugees and food? He knows that in the past two decades Pakistan has had to accommodate more than 3 million refugees while having crippling debt, with this year one third of its exports consumed by debt. Will he do something for the refugees and particularly do something about Pakistan's debt?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend's points. Since the tragedy of 11 September the issue of humanitarian help has been right up there alongside the issue of military action. That has been the position not just of Britain but of the United States. President Bush has made it clear that he is absolutely committed to the humanitarian coalition. There is a feeling in Pakistan—the intensity of this feeling is clear only when one talks to the people concerned—that at the end of the 1980s when the Russians left Afghanistan, the west did not stand by Pakistan or help it with the problems that it had to deal with. It is important now to send the message that we will not see the successful achievement of our military aims as an end. That should be the beginning of a political process that heals some of the wounds in the region and offers a Government of stability, not just for the Afghan people but for their neighbours.

Mr. Keith Simpson (Mid-Norfolk): Both the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition have emphasised that this is going to be a long haul. Given the Prime Minister's praise for the British armed forces, is he satisfied that they have the necessary resources in place for such a long haul? If not, will he give them those extra resources to achieve the political objective that we all desire?

The Prime Minister: We have already made it clear—the Chancellor of the Exchequer did so the other day—that the armed forces should have the resources necessary to do the job. It would not be fair or right to ask them to do it without being properly resourced, and they will be.

Mr. Harry Barnes (North-East Derbyshire): Can we be sure that the bombing will not be over the top, as it was in Iraq and Serbia? That is particularly important if we are seeking a result in Afghanistan that involves the Afghan people and a fair and balanced constitution.

On humanitarian matters, are we sure that we have the economic backing required? If we are planning to tackle terrorism throughout the world and not just in Afghanistan, we have to tackle global poverty. We need the resources to do that. Will the Government re-examine their position on the Tobin tax on currency speculation? That would be a ready source of funding to tackle this matter in the long run.

The Prime Minister: First, in relation to any military action, I think that we have shown, both by the time we have taken and by the targets we have chosen, that we are well aware of the need to do everything that we humanly can to avoid civilian casualties, and that has been clear from the very outset. Of course, conflict is conflict, and it is never easy to do it or to ensure that any potential civilian casualties are minimised, but we are doing all we possibly can to do that.

In relation to the economic backing for humanitarian aid, I think that the $600 million—the initial programme for six months that the United Nations considers necessary—has been effectively agreed in principle by the main countries, including a very generous contribution from the United States of America; so that money is there. I personally believe that, on the humanitarian side, the issue will not be money; it will be organisation and logistics.

In relation to what we can do about global poverty, I am proud of the work that has been done by the Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development and the Government to try to deal with issues such as debt and increasing aid and development money, and we have done that. I regret to say that I am not entirely with my hon. Friend on the Tobin tax idea.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Rochford and Southend, East): As the Prime Minister has kindly given us all a paper that shows in detail the appalling involvement of Mr. bin Laden not only in the activities of the 11 September, but on many similar occasions which obviously justify trial and justice, is it the case that, in the event of Mr. bin Laden falling into the hands of British troops, it would not legally be possible for us to hand him over to the United States for trial because it has the death penalty? Does not the Prime Minister genuinely feel that this is an issue on which the law the should be changed, because it would be unthinkable for bin Laden to be tried in any country other than the USA, where the terrible killings took place?

The Prime Minister: There are issues connected with extradition and the death penalty, which the hon. Gentleman knows that we are examining as part of the laws in relation to this, but in respect of bin Laden himself, I suspect that that is not a very serious consideration in this particular case.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North and Sefton, East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of people who voted in my constituency and elsewhere agree with the Leader of the Opposition's sentiments that

[Mr. George Howarth]

the way in which matters have been conducted so far by our own Government, the United States Administration and our other allies has been indeed measured, and appropriately so? Does he further agree that as events unfold, whatever regime or whatever supervisory arrangements emerge in Afghanistan, it will have to be impressed on those involved that the pivotal role that Afghanistan has played for some decades now in the production and distribution of heroin right across the world will simply be unacceptable?

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend has said: It is very important that we ensure that Afghanistan ceases to be the source of a significant amount of the heroin in the world and, not least, the 90 per cent. of heroin in this country that originates in Afghanistan. What is interesting is that if we look, for example, at Pakistan, there was a programme some years ago to change out of the production of heroin, which was successful, so it is not impossible for countries to engage in a process that frees them from dependence on this, and there are other, better and more productive uses to which the land can be put, but I agree with him entirely: that should be a principal objective of the supervisory arrangements afterwards.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Prime Minister referred to the United Nations twice in his statement, both times in connection with humanitarian aid, which is, of course, most welcome, but may I respectfully remind him that, by invoking the self-defence provisions under article 51, there is a prerequisite that the matter should be referred immediately to the Security Council? I understand that the United States has already done so. May I ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have done so, and if so, is such action limited to action in one country alone?

The Prime Minister: We believe that such action is entirely justified under article 51 in self-defence. As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, the UN Security Council has agreed that it is right that action should be taken, and Britain, the United States of America and the other allies are acting in accordance with the UN resolution and international law.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On that very point, is it the Law Officers' advice that the action is in line with the provisions of the United Nations charter?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Derek Conway (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Does the Prime Minister accept that his personal conduct and praise for the patience of the American people will find widespread support both inside and outside the House? As, sadly, bin Laden is neither the first nor likely to be the last of his type, will the Prime Minister assure the House that we have learned the lessons of Saddam Hussein that evil does not understand the meaning of the word "probation" and that the war against terrorism does not stop at the caves of Afghanistan but has to be finished once and for all?

The Prime Minister: As I said in my statement, it is important that we realise that international terrorism and terrorism operating in this way are not confined to the al-Qaeda network. As I said at the outset, there are really two phases. The first is dealing with the al-Qaeda network and the Taliban regime who shield it in Afghanistan, and then we have to consider the other measures that are necessary to deal with terrorism throughout the world.

Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): In meeting the objectives that the Prime Minister has laid down, the decision is not between action and inaction but between action that will be effective and that which could do more harm. Members last week called for the action to be measured, proportionate, targeted and in accordance with international law. Will the Prime Minister report back regularly to the House on compliance with those requirements?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course we will. We want that action to be effective and it has, of course, got to be measured as well. We believe that the way that we have acted is measured and we believe that it will be effective. Of course I will report back to the House regularly.

Angela Watkinson (Upminster): I was one of the members of the British-American parliamentary group who were in Washington on 11 September. That visit has been well reported by other members of the group, but one aspect has not been mentioned. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack, people gathered, much as they did in this country, wherever a television screen could be found, to watch events unfolding and it was very evident to me that it did not matter what the origin of those American people was. They were many and varied and it did not matter whether they were Irish, Hispanic, Afro-American or Italian. They all considered themselves to be American first, and that is a very important lesson for us to learn.

I have been very heartened by the letters that I have received from Asian and Muslim organisations in my constituency—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but she must ask a question. However, I think that the Prime Minister will be able to answer her point.

The Prime Minister: I think that the sentiments that the hon. Lady expresses are the right sentiments, not just for America but for Britain also.

Linda Gilroy (Plymouth, Sutton): I thank the Prime Minister for the reason and resolve with which he is approaching these matters. Can he say anything more of the assessment that he has made of the number of terrorists who have been trained in the al-Qaeda network and about their capacity for atrocities comparable to the terrible events of 11 September?

The Prime Minister: What we know is that thousands have passed through the al-Qaeda network of terrorist training camps. The camps controlled by al-Qaeda are not the only terrorist camps in Afghanistan. Essentially, all over Afghanistan for the past decade people have been trained in acts of terrorism to export to various parts of the world. That is why our demand of the Taliban right from the very outset was that they not merely yielded up bin Laden and his associates and those people responsible

for al-Qaeda, but that they closed down all those camps in Afghanistan and did so verifiably. I think it is important that we keep that in the forefront of our minds because some of these people have gone to different parts of the world committing acts of terrorism. They have been trained there, and the Taliban regime have used the self-same people as well in doing what they are doing. That is part of the interconnection between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. However, the answer is that literally thousands of people have passed through the camps, which is why it is important that we shut them down.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (North-West Norfolk): Will the Prime Minister join me in paying tribute to the professionalism of all those RAF men and women from Norfolk bases who have been deployed to the region? Further to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Simpson), will he look specifically at the concerns of the RAF regarding funding for equipment and training in peace time?

The Prime Minister: Of course I pay tribute to the RAF for the work that it does, which is magnificent. We shall certainly look at any issues raised in respect of funding, but I am assured by both the Defence Secretary and the Chancellor that the necessary resources are available.

Mr. Paul Marsden (Shrewsbury and Atcham): In my right hon. Friend's excellent speech last week at the Labour party conference he referred to the inalienable US citizens' rights enshrined in the US constitution. When will British citizens be given a written constitution so that Parliament, not a Prime Minister, authorises a declaration of war?

Hon. Members: Answer.

The Prime Minister: It may be better if I just thank my hon. Friend for his comments about the conference speech. His question is a topic for another day. However, we do have inalienable rights in this country, through both our legislation and our ordinary common law, and I personally greatly welcome them.

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): Will the Prime Minister, whose leadership has been exemplary so far, agree that it is absolutely crucial that the people of Muslim countries understand the aims and policies of the coalition? Will he see what can be done to encourage both the BBC World Service and the British Council to use all their resources to that end, and will he ensure that they are adequately resourced for that purpose?

The Prime Minister: We are increasing support to them, but the hon. Gentleman's point is very important indeed. It is important that we use every possible outlet—the BBC World Service is a very important outlet—to get across this message because huge disinformation goes on in certain parts of the Arab and Muslim world. People like bin Laden and apologists for terrorism do precisely that. I have noticed in the past few weeks, which is why I repeated those sentiments again today—we have repeated them time and again every time we have had this debate—when I was out in the region, people talking about western leaders all saying that this was about a fight for western values versus Islam, whereas that is not the case. We cannot repeat that often enough. All Members of Parliament have the ability to give interviews to make that point. It is extremely important. This is not unusual in modern conflicts—certainly not of this type—but correctness of information is a vital part of achieving the aims that we set ourselves.

Mr. Robert Marshall-Andrews (Medway): Will the Prime Minister consider using our influence to move the Security Council to set up now an international criminal court comparable to that in The Hague and in Arusha, charged with drawing the indictment and assembling the evidence, and ultimately trying Osama bin Laden and his accomplices? In so doing, a clear message would be sent to the international community that we both desire and expect a judicial end to this conflict.

The Prime Minister: We have obviously played a substantial part in the movement towards an international criminal court. Of course it is important that we act in accordance with the rule of law throughout, but we are doing that. The difficulty is not so much what type of justice bin Laden could face but bringing him to justice, particularly as he is shielded by the Taliban regime.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): In his answer to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North and Sefton, East (Mr. Howarth) a moment ago, the Prime Minister used the expression "supervisory arrangements" in relation to what I shall loosely describe as post-war Afghanistan. I assume that he used those words deliberately. Will he explain what he meant by them?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I was answering a point made by my hon. Friend, who used the term. What I mean by that is the arrangements for the post-Taliban successor regime.

Mr. Stephen McCabe (Birmingham, Hall Green): The Prime Minister has rightly been applauded for trying to build a humanitarian as well as a diplomatic and military coalition. Will any effort be made to screen those arriving at the camps and centres to make sure that they are all genuine refugees and that that does not become an escape route for some of bin Laden's people? Secondly, what will be done to avoid replicating the appalling conditions in the camps of the early 1990s, which did so much to give rise to the emergence of the Taliban?

The Prime Minister: Those are both good points. I know that the UN is considering actively how we can make sure that the people coming into the camps are genuine refugees. The UN is familiar with that problem from Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda and elsewhere and will be putting in place the mechanisms to deal with it. In relation to my hon. Friend's point about ensuring that the camps are properly run, the very best thing that we can do is to make sure that the money and the organisational capability are there, but as I said a moment or two ago, we need to be most concerned with organisation. The importance of that organisation is not merely to treat the people well, but to make sure that they can return in safety to their own homeland, Afghanistan.

Mr. Roy Beggs (East Antrim): May I first apologise for the absence of the leader of the Ulster Unionist party

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

who has commitments at the Northern Ireland Assembly this evening? I also thank the Prime Minister for his statement, for the commitment that he has shown and for his continuing methodical approach in partnership with President Bush and others as they seek to deal with Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda network and its evil allies in the middle east and throughout the world. Bearing in mind that there is a sense of apprehension and fear that there may be retaliatory action, does the Prime Minister agree that people who feel unease at this time should take an example from the people of Northern Ireland who for 30 years stood up against terrorism? Finally, does he agree that although life may be difficult for our nation in the days and months ahead, we must stand together defiantly against terrorism if this evil is to be removed internationally?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. On his point about retaliation, of course it is correct that the Taliban may well attempt that, but we should be under no illusion: if we were not taking action they would consider us a target in any event. No act provoked the World Trade Centre bombings as a retaliation. We can be very clear about that, so our only option, given the statements that they have made and what they intend to do, is to remove the threat.

Mr. Harold Best (Leeds, North-West): Does the Prime Minister agree that no one in the modern world could not have been aware of the events in September that cause us to be here today, but it seems that some people do not live in the modern world? I hope that the Prime Minister understands that we need to develop our ideas about democracy, fairness and justice to the extent that they can be transmitted to those who are not part of our modern world and that we should fight that battle with equal fervour as we are now fighting the hard battle in Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister: I agree that it is important that we make sure that at the same time as we take the necessary military action we advance the cause of justice and the eradication of poverty wherever we can in the world. That is an important part of the action and there is a general sense of that being our objective, not just in Britain, but in the United States of America.

Hugh Robertson (Faversham and Mid-Kent): Does the Prime Minister agree that there is a clear danger that after a period of heavy shelling the Taliban may simply drift away into the hills? What plans does the alliance have to exercise influence on the ground after they have done that and to protect the civilians from reprisals from advancing armies?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, we are aware of the potential difficulties in tracing and tracking down the Taliban, and indeed Osama bin Laden, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not enter into details of that potential military operation.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the role of Russia and the former Soviet republics in central Asia has been and will be crucial in the fight against international terrorism? Does he agree that it has perhaps not been sufficiently appreciated in the west that there have been more Russian lives lost as a result of extremist terrorism than there were British lives lost in New York a few weeks ago? Does not this provide a real opportunity for a better alliance and future with our Russian comrades— *[Laughter.]* I am addressing my comrade now. Does not this provide a real opportunity for a better alliance with Russia as a result of its full participation in the coalition which my right hon. Friend has done so much to promote?

The Prime Minister: I hope this does not shock my hon. Friend too much, but I agree with him entirely. One of the most important aspects of what has happened since 11 September has been the position of Russia. I congratulate President Putin and the Russian Government on the support they have given. It has not been easy for them to support the United States, but they have done so, and that support has been very substantial. It has been substantial logistic support, using forces not for military action but in support of the military action that is being undertaken. That is important.

When we discuss what might change after 11 September, in an attempt to see what good might come out of such a terrible event, it might be that one of those things will be a different and better relationship between Russia and the United States and Russia and the west. Those things are potentially changing now, and it is important that it is made more solid in the days and weeks ahead. When I was in Moscow on Thursday night, I found that the strength of support from President Putin and the Russian Government was remarkable. As my hon. Friend pointed out, it is right to remember that Russia lost hundreds of people in 1999 through terrorist attacks and it has a clear interest in suppressing such networks of terror.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Aldershot): Further to the points made by my comrade, the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack), may I suggest that one practical step that could be taken to win the hearts and minds of the Islamic world would be if some of our Muslim leaders were to go to the various Muslim capitals where there appear to be problems and explain to the Muslim fraternity why they are supporting the United Kingdom Government in their action against the perpetrators of these atrocities? In that way, they would be explaining to the Muslim world that this is not an attack on Islam and reinforcing the contribution that they could make in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but of course it is also the case that there are many Muslim clerics in those Muslim countries who strongly condemn the atrocities of 11 September and support the taking of action. The difficulty is that they will receive less publicity than those who are condemning the action we are taking. It is important that their voices are heard. With very few exceptions, British Muslims have been united in their condemnation of what has happened, and that is an important message to send to the rest of the world.

Miss Anne Begg (Aberdeen, South): No one will know better than my right hon. Friend how anxious a time it is when a country embarks on military action. There are

anxieties for the future, for our troops who will be involved and, in this case, for the people of Afghanistan and the potential innocent victims caught up in any repercussions. I am seeking my right hon. Friend's assurance that he will put as much energy as he has undoubtedly put into military action into ensuring that the humanitarian action is effective and targeted, so that at least some good will come out of these terrible events.

The Prime Minister: I will do so. One of the reasons why I will do so is for the sake of the victims of 11 September and their families. The families I have met who lost people on 11 September have, to a person, not wanted us to act out of revenge or to visit increased suffering upon others. They want us to make sure that, while we bring those responsible to justice, we do so in a way that minimises the suffering of innocent people and helps those in Afghanistan who are suffering under the Taliban regime. There are substantial reasons. The humanitarian action that we take is vitally important. There are huge difficulties involved in it, but it is important and, at the conclusion of the conflict, it will also be important that we stand by the commitments that we have given the Afghan people and that I have repeated today.

Mr. Richard Allan (Sheffield, Hallam): The Prime Minister has already acknowledged that some of the people who have been most terrorised by the actions of Osama bin Laden are members of the British Muslim community, who are naturally fearful about the impact on community relations. Many of them must now be concerned about the impact of the military action that bin Laden has brought down upon their friends and relatives in the affected region. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether he has plans to improve the advice and support facilities for British citizens and those resident in Britain who are of Afghan or Pakistani origin, who must naturally be very worried today and will be worried in the weeks ahead?

The Prime Minister: We understand their concern and worry. The Foreign Office and other relevant Government Departments are doing what they can to reassure people and to advise them. It is a difficult situation for people who are caught up in it, but we are doing what we can. We recognised early on after 11 September that this would be a problem and we will carry on doing what we can.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): How concerned is the Prime Minister that so far practical support given by various Arab countries and, indeed, our NATO ally Turkey is considerably less than that given in the Gulf war? In that regard, how important is it to convince those Governments that when the pieces of the kaleidoscope stop turning the patterns and colours in the middle east will be somewhat different than they are today?

The Prime Minister: Those countries are giving us support, of course, but it is important that we carry on convincing people in the Muslim and Arab world about the nature of this struggle, why we are undertaking it and how it is important to see that alongside our commitment on the humanitarian front and ensuring that the middle east peace process is restarted and works. There is a clearer understanding of that now than there was a few weeks ago. As I said a moment ago, it is extremely important that we carry on making that case.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cotswold): Does the Prime Minister agree that it is of paramount importance to maintain the present broadly based alliance of countries throughout the world against terrorism and, therefore, it is essential to maintain diplomatic initiatives to explain to all our alliance partners—in particular, the front-line Islamic states—that the specific military actions that we are taking are set against specific objectives? Does he agree that it will be even more important to maintain that diplomatic initiative if we consider that action against any country other than Afghanistan is necessary?

The Prime Minister: We should act only on evidence, but the hon. Gentleman's general point is right. It is important that we continue to persuade people in the Arab and Muslim world as to the nature of the conflict and why we are undertaking it. There is an understanding. For America or any of the other allies to stand aside after the slaughter of more than 6,000 people in such a terrorist atrocity as the attack of 11 September would be unthinkable. People in the Arab and Muslim world understand that. What they then need to understand clearly is that the action that we are taking is based on our genuine conviction and belief—soundly based—that bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network were responsible and that the Taliban regime is shielding them. I like to think that the way in which we have acted since 11 September should give them confidence.

We did not send out missiles on the first night just for effect. We considered carefully, although it was obvious that bin Laden was the prime suspect from the very beginning. We have assembled more and more evidence and given the time to try to ensure that the military targets are properly chosen. We have given the Taliban time to comply. They have had every opportunity—it is not as if they could have been in any doubt as to the situation and what we were demanding. By the nature of our response we have been able to convince people, but I agree that we have to keep on doing that the entire time. We do it against the background of massive disinformation from the al-Qaeda network and those who want to provoke conflict between Islam and other countries.

Mr. Stephen Pound (Ealing, North): The Prime Minister has rightly given praise to our men and women in the front line, and I think that he speaks for the nation in doing so. Does he agree that there are also heroes on the home front preparing this nation for the most awful eventualities and that those heroes include those who guard us here tonight? Is he aware that this afternoon David Shelmerdine, the chief executive of the Scout Association, contacted my right hon. Friend the Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs, to offer all the 3,000-plus scout headquarters in this country should they be needed? Does he agree that that spirit of community is one of the reasons why we will never be defeated and why this civilisation is worth fighting for?

The Prime Minister: First, I pay tribute to the offer made on behalf of the Scout Association of its headquarters. Secondly, I echo my hon. Friend's sentiments, in this sense particularly. There are many

[The Prime Minister]

people working in our public services, not least the police and others, who are having to work extremely hard and spend an awful lot of time guarding us at the moment. They are cancelling their leave. I know that they will have the gratitude of the whole House.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the main business.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 25 (Periodic adjournments).

That this House, at its rising this day, do adjourn till Monday 15 October.—*[Mrs. McGuire.]*

Mr. Paul Marsden (Shrewsbury and Atcham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is growing disquiet that for the third time Parliament has been recalled yet hon. Members have been denied a vote on this war. Can you confirm to me that there will be no vote? Is it in order for hon. Members to vote on an Adjournment debate if similar occasions arise, when we are denied a substantive motion by the Government? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: It seems as though the hon. Gentleman is getting advice already. Procedural advice is best given privately at the Chair. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to come to the Chair, I will give him some private advice.

Coalition against International Terrorism

Motion made, and Question proposed, that this House do now adjourn.—[Mrs. McGuire.]

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Mid-Bedfordshire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You rightly suggested that there should be an eight-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches because a large number of hon. Members wish to speak. Will you confirm that if short interventions are taken by speakers, time will be added on to their eight minutes?

Mr. Speaker: I will certainly allow adequate injury time.

7.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Geoffrey Hoon): As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear, last night British forces, acting alongside the United States armed forces, took part in the first phase of the military response to the attacks on the United States on 11 September. Firing submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles, they took part in a carefully targeted strike against Osama bin Laden, his terrorist network and military installations of the Taliban regime that is supporting him. He told the House earlier that we also assisted the United States by agreeing to its use of facilities on Diego Garcia. Indeed, we are assisting them in that same way tonight.

I am sure that the whole House will join me in paying tribute to our armed forces. In recent months, they have demonstrated time and again that they are among the very best in the world. We ask them to serve in difficult and demanding situations. We ask them to carry out dangerous missions and they do, without fail and always with great skill and ability.

Our armed forces' recent success in leading NATO's weapons collection operation in Macedonia exemplified everything that we have come to expect from them. I was privileged to meet the men and women of the Headquarters Task Force Harvest and the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment when I visited them in Macedonia last month. This is yet another example of British service men and women acting as a force for good in the world. We are rightly proud of their courage, their sense of duty, and their professionalism. They are rightly held in high esteem throughout the world.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough): It was a privilege for me, as a member of the armed forces parliamentary scheme, to be with the fleet last week and see that dedication. The Prime Minister mentioned that air assets might be used. It is a matter of public knowledge that our air assets in that region are the eight GR7 Harriers on HMS Illustrious. Of course, the assets available to the Americans are hugely greater. They can fly with minimal risk. Will the Secretary of State confirm that while our RAF pilots are totally dedicated, brave and will do what they are asked to do, they will be sent into action only on clear military advice that their effort is needed, not just to provide political support to the Americans, important as that is? Of course, such support has been provided by the use of cruise missiles.

Mr. Hoon: I will deal with the relevant air assets in more detail in a moment. First, I thank the Leader of the

Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Democrats for expressing their thoughts about the families of service men and women. This is an anxious time for them and, indeed, for us all. Just as we rely on them to defend us, so we must also ensure their safety and that of their families. Our military bases throughout the world are on a high state of alert. We are vigilant. We will not be intimidated by the threats of terrorists. Last night's action and, indeed, the further action now under way should have made that very clear.

The strikes conducted last night were aimed at damaging, disrupting and destroying al-Qaeda's terrorist network camps and elements of the military infrastructure of its Taliban supporters that have allowed Afghanistan to be used as a base for international terrorism. Clearly, the attacks supported our immediate objectives: to bring those responsible for the attacks of 11 September to account; to prevent them from posing a continuing terrorist threat; and to ensure that Afghanistan ceases to harbour and sustain international terrorism.

The 30 targets included four terrorist training camps and a range of Taliban military facilities, including airfields and air defence sites capable of threatening our operations in the future. Action against such varied targets requires a wide range of forces. Most of these came from the United States. Obviously, it took the lead. But, as the House will want to know, the United Kingdom has three nuclear submarines—HMS Superb, HMS Trafalgar and HMS Triumph—in the region. We were fortunate that exercise Saif Sareea meant that so many UK military assets were available. Tomahawk land attack missiles were fired at one of the targets, a terrorist site.

I recognise that the House will also want to know about the effectiveness of last night's strikes. Detailed battle damage assessment is still under way. The House would not expect me to announce specific details while the initial phase of the operation continues. However, we can say that initial indications are that coalition operations were successful in achieving their objective of destroying and degrading elements of the al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorist and military facilities. There is more to be done. Last night was the first strike. A second night of attacks is under way. There will be further attacks.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I know that the Secretary of State, along with the Prime Minister, will have given enormous thought to the risk that in a country as fractured, complex and poor as Afghanistan, bombing will simply produce more terrorists than it kills. If the purpose of our bombing strategy is either to remove the Taliban or so to weaken the infrastructure of the al-Qaeda network as to allow subsequent troop involvements to dismantle it, will the Secretary of State say whether Britain intends to go to the United Nations to seek a mandate that, rather than defining the precise military purposes of the involvement, sets the parameters, aims and limitations of such on-going international involvement in Afghanistan?

Mr. Hoon: I will deal with the role of the United Nations in due course, but I assure my hon. Friend that the attacks have been against legitimate military targets and that those attacks are wholly and entirely consistent with international law and the United Nations charter.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The vast majority of Members have concluded—I hope, reluctantly—that military action had become inevitable. However, under article 51 of the United Nations charter—the right of self-defence—any military action by member states must be reported immediately to the Security Council. My understanding is that the United States Government have done so and published the letter. The question that the Prime Minister did not answer is the obvious one: have the United Kingdom Government reported under article 51, and will that letter be published?

Mr. Hoon: This is a coalition operation and I have no doubt that, for technical legal purposes, we are covered by the notification that the United States has given, but I will certainly investigate whether that legal advice is right and whether we need to make a formal notification ourselves as a country.

In dealing with media reports of bombs and missiles, I am confident that the reports so far of attacks on civilian areas are unnecessarily alarmist. Our targeting selection processes are demanding and we have taken very considerable care to minimise any risk to the people of Afghanistan. Detonations at nearby targets and anti-aircraft fire can easily give the impression, particularly at night, that civilian areas are under attack. I can assure the House that that was not the case.

I want to emphasise that neither the Afghan civilian population nor their homes and property have been targeted. All 30 sites that were attacked were terrorist camps or military installations. Three, as the Prime Minister said, were in Kabul and four were close to other large settlements, but 23 were in remote areas of Afghanistan. Claims by the Afghan media should be treated as what they are—claims by a media network that is no more than a mouthpiece of the Taliban regime. We can expect plenty of propaganda in the days ahead, so I ask the House to remember that no independent journalists are given permission to be inside Afghanistan.

Mr. Andrew Turner (Isle of Wight): I am grateful to the Secretary of State because although we in the House have willed the ends and—without dissent, I think—the means, many honest and decent people across the country, including the leaders of the Muslim community, may have been taken in by claims of collateral damage affecting civilians. I hope that the Secretary of State will make it clear to people, as far as possible, that those claims have no substance, and furthermore, do his best to bring the Muslim leaders and those many decent people who support them on board in the action that is being taken.

Mr. Hoon: The latter suggestion is sensible. Clearly, as regards the former, the situation will depend on the detailed battle damage assessment that is under way. The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not make further observations about that at this stage.

I want to say something about future operations.

Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hoon: In a second.

In addition to the Tomahawk missile-equipped submarines, we have made available Royal Air Force reconnaissance and other support aircraft. Those began to deploy to the region today and will be available to support further operations during the coming days.

[Mr. Hoon]

Military action is never taken lightly. But in this case our justification is plain. The attacks on the United States involved the murder of more than 6,000 innocent people, including scores of our fellow citizens. Tens of thousands are now grieving the loss of friends and family.

We know, without doubt, who was responsible for what happened in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network planned and carried out those attacks. The Prime Minister has already released evidence that makes that clear. But bin Laden's guilt goes back far beyond 11 September. Hundreds of innocent civilians were murdered and more than 4,500 injured when al-Qaeda bombed the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam in August 1998. Seventeen United States service men were killed and many more injured when the USS Cole was attacked last October.

The evidence reveals that bin Laden and his network were able to carry out those attacks on the United States because the Taliban regime knowingly gave them shelter and support. Osama bin Laden and the Taliban support and feed off each other. In return for the support that they give him, he trains their forces and fights alongside them in Afghanistan's civil war. Both bin Laden and the Taliban profit from the drugs trade.

That evidence has been accepted now by Governments and international organisations throughout the world—including Pakistan, Russia, NATO and all our European partners.

Mr. Mark Francois (Rayleigh): The Secretary of State mentioned Pakistan. I am sure that he and the whole House agree that General Musharraf's Government in Pakistan have been particularly robust in their support for the coalition's action against international terrorism. He will also be well aware that Pakistan itself is a nuclear-armed state. Can he reassure the House that the British Government and their allies in the coalition will do all that they can to bolster General Musharraf from any attempts by extremist elements in his country to undermine his Government because of their support for the fight against terrorism?

Mr. Hoon: As the hon. Gentleman says, Pakistan is playing an important role in the present situation. It is important that Pakistan remains stable. It is equally important, as General Musharraf has said, that Pakistan moves towards the re-establishment of democracy. That is something that the Government there have accepted, and that, perhaps more than anything, is the key to the stability of Pakistan's future.

Osama bin Laden has consistently shown a total disregard for the lives of civilians, whatever their faith, race or nationality. He and all who support and protect him must be brought to account for their crimes. We must also work to prevent them from inflicting more suffering on innocent people.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (North-East Fife): The Secretary of State knows that he and the Prime Minister have carried almost the whole House with them, because the indication of military action has been clear and specific as to its objectives. Is he aware that there is now some loose talk that that military action should be extended to other countries, including, for example, Iraq? Is he aware of any evidence that would justify the extension of the military action in that direction?

Mr. Hoon: It is important that we emphasise that our priority target has always been to bring Osama bin Laden, his associates and those who would support him to justice. What is important about that is that the action that we are taking will send a clear signal to all those countries around the world that might be tempted to continue support for international terrorism, that this is the fate that befalls them. So what we are doing in Afghanistan sends a very clear signal around the world.

Lynne Jones: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hoon: I certainly will; my apologies.

Lynne Jones: I thank my right hon. Friend.

Returning to propaganda, can my right hon. Friend give assurances that the Government played no role in the BBC's decision to switch its "Panorama" programme from the advertised discussion on prospects for peace to the programme on the background to the Afghanistan conflict, which may have given some justification for the bombings that later took place?

Mr. Hoon: I am as confident as I can be that the Government played no role in that, although I must say that, short of sleep last night, I did watch the programme and I thought that it was a very interesting contribution to the debate.

Neither the United States nor any of her partners wanted to take military action. The United States sought a peaceful solution. We gave it our full support in its tireless diplomatic efforts. The Taliban had every chance to avoid what happened last night. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is entitled to be heard. There is too much conversation going on in the House.

Mr. Hoon: We gave the Taliban the chance to surrender bin Laden and his associates for trial and to offer proof that they no longer supported terrorism. They had more than two weeks to comply, but they continued to prevaricate and to lie. We warned the Taliban regime that they were running out of time. We warned them that they faced powerful military action. They did not believe us. Enough was enough. Last night, the United States acted in legitimate self-defence, in accordance with international law and, specifically, with article 51 of the United Nations charter. So did we.

Mr. Robert Marshall-Andrews (Medway): Accepting, as I certainly do, that the United States and the international community have legitimacy to enter Afghanistan, if necessary by force—certainly by force—in order to arrest and apprehend Osama bin Laden, will the Secretary of State tell us how the present bombing campaign will assist in that very precise task?

Mr. Hoon: Under article 51, any state is entitled to act in self-defence to protect its citizens and entitled to use proportionate force to achieve that. That is precisely the

basis on which I have cited article 51, and precisely the basis on which the United States and the United Kingdom have acted.

It would be wrong to think that the United States and the United Kingdom are acting alone. Many other nations have offered military support. Last night, my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and I called leaders around the world to brief them on the military action that had begun. I spoke to my counterparts in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Belgium. They were united in their support for the action that we have taken. They have all offered a military contribution to future action.

We are grateful for the support for the strikes that is coming from around the world. On that note, I must ask the House to excuse my early departure from this debate as I have to fly to Russia for further talks with my Russian colleague in the light of the present situation. As the Prime Minister said yesterday:

"this coalition has strengthened—not weakened—in the 26 days since the atrocity occurred."

Last week, NATO announced the action that it is taking to support the United States, following the determination that the attack on the United States had come from abroad and could, therefore, be handled under article 5 of the North Atlantic treaty.

Today, the alliance announced that the North Atlantic Council had approved the deployment of five airborne early warning aircraft to the United States to backfill American assets and free them up for operations in the east. NATO is also preparing to deploy the standing naval force Mediterranean—a multinational force, currently under British command—to the eastern Mediterranean. Those are clear demonstrations of the alliance's support for the United States.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Mid-Sussex): When the right hon. Gentleman visits the Russian Ministry of Defence, is it his intention to try to persuade the Russians to play a greater role in the alliance? Is he aware that there is a Russian infantry division in Tajikistan? Is it the intention that, in extremis, the Russians should be invited to use those troops?

Mr. Hoon: It would be better for the hon. Gentleman to await the outcome of those conversations than for me to anticipate their result.

Dr. Nick Palmer (Broxtowe): I fully support everything that my right hon. Friend has said so far, but ask for clarification on one point. Have we given any thought to what will happen if the alliance is successful in apprehending some members of the network but some of them are suspected of, or confess to, activities in Russia, Chechnya or elsewhere? Will they be handed over to the countries where they have committed atrocities?

Mr. Hoon: Certainly that would seem to be the most sensible outcome of such a situation.

It is not simply the alliance that is giving support; the work against international terrorism continues in a number of international organisations. United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 is the first resolution to impose obligations on all states to respond to a global threat to peace and international security. It focuses on two key areas: suppressing the financing of terrorism and denying terrorists a safe haven from which to operate. All states owe it to the victims of terrorist atrocities to implement its provisions as soon as possible.

Military action against terrorism has only just begun. We and all our allies and partners are determined to root out terrorism wherever we find it. As the Prime Minister has made clear, we will mount a relentless, deliberate and sustained campaign aimed at securing our objectives. Our armed forces will play their full part in that, alongside their allies from the United States, France, Germany, Australia and Canada and from other countries such as Spain, which has offered to contribute to military operations.

Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): When my right hon. Friend meets his Russian counterparts, and in his discussions with his Cabinet colleagues, will he consider how the Security Council can advance the process of establishing in Afghanistan a United Nations transitional administration or a situation similar to that which existed for 10 years in Cambodia?

Mr. Hoon: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, we are just at the start of military operations and I do not think that it is appropriate yet to speculate on how they will conclude. However, I am sure that that is one of the options that will be considered.

Military action is only one part of our wider response, which also includes important diplomatic, legal, economic and humanitarian measures. This broad campaign will be a long one. It will be hard and it may demand a high price. However, we have no option other than to act.

In conclusion, I should like to deal with two further points. First, we have no quarrel with the people of Afghanistan. They are as much the victims of the terrorists as anyone else. They face poverty, drought and hunger while the Taliban regime connives with terrorists. Our commitment to the Afghan people is simple and sincere. We want to help them build a stable, peaceful and prosperous country.

The United Kingdom is playing its full part in the international relief efforts to stave off famine in Afghanistan this winter and among the 4.5 million refugees who have fled the Taliban regime. We were the first country to pledge aid money for the refugees—£36 million—on top of the £35 million that we have given to Afghanistan since 1997. We are ready to give more help if that is required.

Secondly, we have no quarrel with Islam. The United Kingdom is a multicultural and multi-faith society. We share many common beliefs, including a respect for the life of innocent people. Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda and their Taliban supporters do not share those values. They are not "Islamic terrorists"; they are terrorists and nothing more. Far, far too many Muslims have suffered and died because of bin Laden, as so many people and Governments across the Islamic world recognise. Their help and support in defeating terrorism is vital.

We know that defeating international terrorism and its supporters can be neither easy nor quick. It will be a long and sometimes painful process. The armed forces are ready for that challenge. They are well trained and well equipped. They are resolved to make their full contribution to that victory. I am confident that they will succeed.

7.36 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (North Essex): On behalf of the Opposition, I express my thanks to the Secretary of State for the way in which he has informed us as fully as he can of the continuing developments. The international situation is clearly fragile. As the right hon. Gentleman's imminent journey to Russia is obviously extremely important, we understand that he cannot remain for the whole debate. I am sure that the whole House joins me in wishing him well on the task that he is undertaking on behalf of his country.

It is of course fear and uncertainty that have preoccupied everyone since 11 September and during the events that have followed. At this time, however, it is the men and women of our armed forces who have to face particular danger and uncertainty. I was pleased to hear the Prime Minister assure the House that they will be properly resourced in their tasks. They are the ones upon whom we call in times of crisis. They are the ones who are always ready to face whatever challenge we ask them to meet. They always act with guts, good humour and supreme professionalism. They and their families are in our thoughts and prayers. They have our fullest admiration and respect.

The events of 11 September so shocked the world not only because we could see the sheer horror on our television screens and in haunting still images in our newspaper, and not only because of the sheer scale of the attack: the real shock was what those events meant for the security of everyone in our own country, living in our towns and cities. The events of 11 September changed the world because they shattered the illusion of a safe and comfortable world, which we had taken for granted.

I fully support the Government's intentions to step up emergency planning in our country. Every time we go to a restaurant or step on to a train or aeroplane; every time we see our children off to school, or a loved one off to work; and every time each of us steps into this building, at the back of our minds is the thought, "What will they do next?" That is of course the aim of the terrorists.

That is why it is so important that we meet here, in this building and on this day, to show the terrorists that democracy will not be cowed. That is why it is so important that the House should continue to give the Government its full and unequivocal support for the action that they have taken. Indeed, that is why we commend the Prime Minister for the way in which he has responded to the crisis. He has ensured that Britain has played the fullest role in helping the United States to forge a truly extraordinary international alliance, in support of a comprehensive and restrained response that is proportionate to the threat that we face.

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan have remained defiant and brought the consequences upon their own heads. The unequivocal evidence published by the Government last week clearly implicates Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network. They can operate only because they are sustained by the Taliban Government. The Taliban could have chosen to hand over bin Laden and to cease their sponsorship of terrorism, but instead they have chosen to continue their support for bin Laden—the most notorious mass murderer of our age.

Bin Laden now taunts us from his hideaway, rejoicing in the death he has wrought. This is no Muslim hero, but the twisted leader of an evil cult. On behalf of the Opposition, I join the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State in reiterating that this is not a war against Islam. Indeed, we join Muslims who want to defeat terrorism everywhere. The enemies of civilisation remain free, able and motivated to strike again. The United States and its allies have a clear obligation to confront the threat we all face.

Last night's military action is not only justifiable in international law—I know that the Government have taken pains to ensure that that is so—but morally justified, because to baulk or to hesitate would be to let the terrorists once again set the agenda. The risks of taking action are far outweighed by the risks of taking no action.

Of course it is right that Britain should be first in support of the United States in this action. Time and again over the past century, Britain and America have combined their military might in defence of freedom. This is not the pretext for one country blindly giving a blank cheque to another. This alliance is a genuine partnership based on mutual understanding, openness and trust.

Britain possesses some unique military capabilities that complement those of the United States. Not only can we play a crucial military role, but the Anglo-American alliance in NATO is the most important political and diplomatic alliance for the free world. NATO has had its many doubters, but now is the time to reaffirm its primacy. The Prime Minister described how so many countries are ready to contribute, but NATO is the linchpin of this action. Britain must be ready to make whatever further military commitments are necessary to sustain the effectiveness of the campaign.

We share the Government's high hopes for the outcome of this action. We have confidence that it has been well targeted to minimise civilian casualties. The targets selected are Taliban and al-Qaeda military assets and terrorist bases. We hope that the action succeeds in changing the Taliban regime and that the Government of Afghanistan hand over bin Laden and his accomplices to face the proper course of justice. We hope that it will give the aid agencies the earliest opportunity to resume the aid effort, which is so desperately needed to rescue millions of Afghan people from the risk of starvation this winter.

I join many in the House in commenting on the importance of the aid programme. Alongside the war against terrorism, we regard the aid effort as an equally essential task. It is not for show or propaganda. Britain needs to demonstrate that it is not just a gesture to salve our conscience. It is fundamental to the values that we hold—the values that bin Laden would destroy. Our best interests will be served only if we have the best interests of the Afghan people at heart as well.

Hugh Bayley (City of York): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees with the Prime Minister and others that the struggle in which we are engaged will be long term and that we need to build a better future over the long term for the people of Afghanistan. Will his party make a commitment to match the growth in international development spending that the Government have introduced? That is an important means by which to provide the humanitarian support that he describes.

Mr. Jenkin: This is hardly the moment at which to extract spending commitments from Her Majesty's official Opposition, but I shall be interested in the answer

if the hon. Gentleman puts that question to the Secretary of State for International Development when she replies to the debate.

Beside our hopes, let us have no illusions. The British people have long and bitter experience of terrorism. The Government can be assured that the British public do not expect victory in one battle, nor do they want revenge. They want their elected leaders to smash the machinery of terrorism. They know that there are no easy solutions. That is why it is timely for the Government to warn that last night's action was but the first phase of possibly a long war against international terrorism.

Indeed, from now on, this must be a war of eternal vigilance, not against one terrorist or one terrorist state, but against all terrorism and all states that nurture it, for this is not a war with frontiers or territories. Our enemies are not soldiers who face us openly but evil criminals who steal away in the night. They depend on corrupt or incapable Governments to provide safe haven for their operations.

We must therefore be prepared to ask questions about the role of other Governments' relationships with terrorism—this is not loose talk, as was said earlier—and that may give rise to some uncomfortable answers. At this stage, we have no evidence that the Government of Iraq had any direct role in the atrocities of bin Laden, but we know that Iraq has sponsored terrorism before and that Saddam is constantly trying to develop weapons of mass destruction as part of his personal arsenal of terror. Sooner or later, the evidence may compel us to act in such cases.

The terrorists exploit international organised crime to finance their campaigns of terror. The Prime Minister has pointed out how the Taliban and al-Qaeda thrive on the heroin trade, but we also know that IRA terrorists have been paid drug money to train Colombia's terrorists in their deadly and evil trade. That shows how networks of international crime and terrorism lead straight to the streets of our own country. It also shows that our security is inseparable from the security and stability of every other country in the world.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (North Warwickshire): I have listened to the hon. Gentleman's argument with care. The Government and the United States have tried to bring together a coalition based on precise strategic objectives—dealing with Osama bin Laden and his terrorists and the Taliban who support them where necessary. Is this the time to broaden those strategic objectives to include others, which may make it much more difficult to maintain the coalition that the British and American Governments so strongly seek to maintain? Is this the right time to set out those alternative objectives?

Mr. Jenkin: I do not think that they are alternative objectives. They are inseparable from that same objective. The United States Government and the hon. Gentleman's own Government have consistently made it clear that we must root out terrorism wherever it rears its ugly head.

Terrorists have too often prospered from our complacency and we must never be complacent again. We must give every support to Governments of countries such as Colombia and Pakistan, where President Musharraf faces frightening domestic turmoil for having the courage to support the campaign against terrorism.

Geraint Davies (Croydon, Central): A Russian general recently said that in the hills of Afghanistan a man on a donkey is as effective as four men in a tank. Will the hon. Gentleman address the need to get the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan behind this process by offering them a vision of a political and economic renewal for the future of Afghanistan so that they know that this is a war not against them but against the terrorists?

Mr. Jenkin: That is exactly what I was referring to earlier. It is important that the aid package provides for the long term. It is the other side of the coin of the military action that is taking place.

We fear that the aid programme in and around Afghanistan will not be delivered. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs. Spelman), the shadow Secretary of State for International Development, will wish to press her counterpart on those matters. How effective have been the air drops of food so far? When will it be possible to restore food convoys to the starving people of Afghanistan? Are we yet in a position to discuss what military support would be needed to ensure that food convoys were properly protected so that they could get through?

We must urge and pray for balance and restraint in the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. It is worth reflecting that while the peace process was in progress over the past two years, Osama bin Laden was plotting 11 September, which was designed to destroy those hopes of peace.

The horrible freshness of 11 September will fade in our minds. Other political distractions will come to the fore. There will be some with opposing views who will try to sap the nation's resolve, but now it is the job of us all, including Opposition Members, to ensure that never again do we drop our guard.

This hour and every hour we remember our armed forces, alongside the Americans and our other allies, who are prepared and ready to do whatever they are called on to do. That is their job and they are devoted to it. We thank them for their devotion. Our thoughts and prayers will be with them and those whom they have left at home who love them every hour of every day.

We send our service men into danger, on to the streets of Northern Ireland, into the skies over Iraq and into the jungle of Sierra Leone. In the Balkans, our forces make up the greater part of NATO's bulwark for peace—in SFOR in Bosnia, in KFOR in Kosovo and more recently in the "essential harvest" of weapons in Macedonia. They trained for war so that they can keep the peace. They are war-makers only to be peace-makers. They are the finest in the world. On deployment or on exercise, they are doing what they love to do, but we should never take them for granted. God go with them.

7.52 pm

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston): This is the third occasion on which we have met in the House to discuss this matter, and some of the newspapers have suggested that it is time to stop talking and begin to speculate. It would be absolutely wrong at this moment to speculate because we have reached the point at which we have to focus on keeping together the coalition that has been built up over the past few weeks. Now is the time to test whether that coalition will deliver, and deliver not only words but actions.

[Ms Gisela Stuart]

We have a clearly defined objective in the immediate term, which is to deal with international terrorists, as well as long-term objectives that have been mentioned by some hon. Members. Those long-term objectives should not distract us from the task at hand. People have talked about war. The traditional definition of warfare, and particularly of a just war, involves legitimate authorities fighting each other. These events have nothing to do with legitimate authorities.

In this case, an international conspiracy is fighting, not against a particular nation or authority but against an international order. Within that war, we will recognise some elements of traditional warfare, and yesterday's actions fall into that category, but there will be other elements, such as international terrorism and money laundering, that we will not immediately recognise as warfare. The Prime Minister, with the United States and our European allies, as well as some countries that a few weeks ago we would have had difficulty in recognising as allies, have formed a coalition to fight international terrorists. Many hon. Members, including myself, must express humility. I did not expect the United States Administration, and President Bush in particular, to be as thoughtful in their response and to wait as long as they did before they took action. On this occasion, I am grateful that I was wrong.

Some people would say that President Bush has followed in the great tradition of people such as Montgomery and Colin Powell, who said in the past that he would rather wait and get things 100 per cent. right. That is what we are trying to do. However, we need to remain resolved to deal with the application of force because we are now reaching a point that is very uncomfortable. We must face up to the means that we are willing to use to reach our ends. It is time to hold together.

While remembering the atrocities, we must ask how we deal with the ideas that gave rise to the Taliban and to bin Laden. Those ideas are fanaticism, which must be dealt with in a variety of ways. There are conflicting schools of thought about that. Denis Healey used to say that no idea has ever stopped a tank, and he was right. A French general said that one cannot ride on horseback into war against an idea. However, we need to deal with those ideas. We must use physical force, but in the long term we must deal with fanaticism, and with the fact that it is extremely inward looking.

Some hon. Members have mentioned last night's "Panorama". It was absolutely right to show the programme because it was made some years ago, when no one could accuse it of being warmongering propaganda, by an independent journalist, and it shows the atrocities committed by the Taliban. It was appropriate to remind us what has been happening in Afghanistan for several years and what kind of regime we are dealing with. We must remember those atrocities.

How do we change minds in the long term? We do it by reaching out to everyone with ideas. The Prime Minister said that he was proud of our armed forces, and I agree. However, I am also extremely proud of another institution—the BBC World Service. We need to shore up its facilities and programming at this time. It has been extremely responsive and has extended its coverage in a variety of native languages. We need to remind the BBC of its public service broadcasting responsibilities not only in the United Kingdom but through the World Service. I pay tribute to the World Service and encourage all hon. Members to allow it to develop further.

Britain has much to bring to the coalition. Limited comparisons can be made between Britain's actions in the second world war and our actions now against the Taliban. Britain's role was not only to defeat Nazism but to build a foundation for a civic society in what became West Germany, which is now part of a united Germany. That was a very long war. We must accept that it takes a very long time to rebuild a society that has had all its civic foundations, including education, destroyed or permeated by fanatics. We must not lose sight of the fact that this is not a traditional war like that of 50 years ago, but analogies can be drawn.

I remind the House that the short-term objective is very limited—it is to deal with international terrorists. Now is not the time to try to widen those parameters or to ask what the next step should be. We must focus on dealing with bin Laden and those who are associated with him and on keeping the coalition together. At the same time, we must work towards the long-term objective of reaching people's minds. I am sure that we will hear much more later about providing support for the people of Afghanistan to build a civic society. Those are not mutually exclusive aims.

I urge everyone here to remember that now is not the time to try to negotiate with people with whom we cannot negotiate. The left in particular should have learned that lesson from the 1930s. This is not warmongering; it is recognition of the point at which talking has come to an end and only action will speak. We are at that point now.

7.59 pm

Mr. Paul Keetch (Hereford): Through the Secretary of State for International Development, I thank the Secretary of State for Defence for letting me know that he was leaving for Moscow tonight and for the useful defence and intelligence briefing that he gave my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Inverness, West (Mr. Kennedy) and I this afternoon. That was extremely important.

I begin by offering the support of all Liberal Democrat Members for the actions undertaken by United Kingdom and United States forces in Afghanistan last night and tonight. I also unreservedly associate my comments with those made from the Government and Conservative Front Benches in connection with our wholehearted support for Britain's armed forces. In his statement yesterday, the Prime Minister said that Britain possessed some of the best armed forces in the world. In many ways, we possess the best in the world, as I am sure all hon. Members agree.

The Prime Minister also paid tribute today to the immense burden borne by the families of service personnel at times such as these. He mentioned their deep anxiety, which we all share tonight. The news that our forces are once again in action is important and chilling. There can be no more important decision for any Government or Prime Minister to take than to send our troops into action, and there can be no more important decision for any Member of Parliament than to support that action. It is not taken lightly.

We understand that no military action is risk free. Our armed forces have precise weaponry and effective training, but we know that there is no such thing as a

casual operation. The risks of engagement exist, but once our armed forces are involved we support them and their families. We back them to the hilt and we pray for their safe return home.

Liberal Democrat Members know about the armed forces, as do all hon. Members with bases in their constituencies. The armed forces are our friends and constituents. For example, the Royal Air Force has a base in the constituency represented by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell), the Army has one in Colchester, and the Royal Marines and the Fleet Air Arm have bases in our west country constituencies. As individual Members of Parliament, we know the effect that the armed forces have on our communities and constituencies.

Mr. Bill Wiggin (Leominster): May I point out to the hon. Gentleman that the base that used to be in his constituency is now in mine?

Mr. Keetch: The hon. Gentleman has made a silly remark, as I was about to say that I do not have a base in my constituency now that 22 Special Air Services Regiment has moved two miles to the base at Credenhill. That is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but many people who work there live in my constituency. The hon. Gentleman should have waited before jumping in with a rather silly point.

My experience of having training establishments in my constituency—and, at one time, a base—means that I know the importance of the action being undertaken. However, that is why Liberal Democrat Members understand and support the military action being taken tonight, which is targeted against al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime who support it. They are two sides of the same coin; the two organisations are intertwined. The action being taken is aimed not at civilian targets but at military ones—air bases, terrorist training camps and air defence positions.

The attacks have been designed to safeguard our armed forces and to protect the planes that are used, and to support the humanitarian effort that must now be directed at Afghanistan. It has been rightly said that we are not at war with the people of Afghanistan or with Islam, but that we are fighting a sustained campaign against terrorism. We have learned to our cost, in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, that words do count. We must therefore ensure that all utterances are proportionate and considered. We should not fall, as some have, into the trap of using empty phrases that may come back to haunt us later. We must remember that we are dealing with people's lives and that safeguarding the lives of innocent civilians—in New York, London or even in Kabul—is a duty, not a desire.

What does the action mean? So far, we have seen only the beginnings of a very long campaign. At every step of the way we will be asked to be patient. The foe that has been targeted will not be beaten by air power alone. The Taliban fighters who protect bin Laden and his own fanatical followers are, primarily, a sort of light infantry. They are difficult to attack from the air and are less dependent on a central command system.

Although air-to-air strikes maintain the coalition's credibility in the short term, we must be prepared for a long and involved campaign, much of which will be unseen and unrecognised. It will consist of more than fireworks in the desert, but will also require long, hard and methodical intelligence action. We support that action as well.

We must recall why we are fighting. This country—and this House—is no stranger to terrorist attack. However, the attack of 11 September caused the biggest loss of British life ever sustained in a single terrorist attack. There were 6,000 innocent people—possibly more—murdered in that attack. They were not soldiers or warriors, or even the politicians who direct forces; they were innocent men and women, of all faiths, nations and creeds. There were no demands and no warnings. Those people were simply slaughtered.

The images that we saw on that dreadful day will stay with us for ever: a plane ploughing into the World Trade Centre, buildings falling, New York firemen running up stairs while others run away. Those will be the main images of our lives. That is why we support the action being taken by our armed forces again tonight. We should not allow such a terrible crime, such appalling loss of innocent life, ever to happen again.

The Prime Minister mentioned the Taliban regime, and other hon. Members have described them. I shall not go into that again, although they are an appalling regime. The fact that at least 4 million people have fled Afghanistan to escape them is proof enough of what type of regime they are.

There are 2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and perhaps 1.5 million in Iran. It is possible that up to 1 million refugees are moving towards Pakistan and that 400,000 are moving to Iran. Moreover, we must not forget the numbers that have fled to the former Soviet republics. Those figures show that the humanitarian effort—the second pillar of our action—is just as important as the military action.

We welcome the reports that 37,500 rations were dropped last night. That might be just a drop in the ocean, but it is an important drop in a very big ocean. I hope that the Secretary of State for International Development will explain later what more needs to be done. Nothing can better win the hearts and confidence of a suffering people than the effort that has been made to relieve that suffering. I shall restate what I said last week, which is that we must never respond to terror with terror, but with justice and humanity.

The third pillar of the action being taken is the great international coalition built so successfully by President Bush and so successfully supported by the Prime Minister. That coalition must be maintained. Muslim states, and Pakistan in particular, must be kept involved and informed. I congratulate the President and the Prime Minister on their valuable work. They recognise that our actions must be kept within the framework of international law. If we are to keep the coalition together we must work for self-defence, and never for revenge.

Richard Younger-Ross (Teignbridge): Does my hon. Friend agree that the greatest risk to the coalition lies in broadening the front and the sphere of operations? Is not that the elephant trap set by Osama bin Laden, whose aim is to break up the coalition?

Mr. Keetch: I agree entirely. We must remember that bin Laden wants the coalition to fall. He wants us to

[Mr. Keetch]

overreact and strike out. That would serve his purpose. That is why maintaining the international coalition is so valuable. Others may talk of extending the war aims, but I think that we should stick to what we have for a while.

There have been fears about the justification for military action, and they need to be alleviated. We must assure people beyond doubt that the conflict will be just, proportionate and based on the principles of human rights and international law. That is why the coalition is so important.

Tonight, our forces are in action again. It is right that the House of Commons should be meeting tonight to discuss that action—not with levity or laughter, but in all seriousness. That is what the people of our nation expect, and they will take note of any hon. Members who seek to do otherwise.

8.9 pm

David Winnick (Walsall, North): We shall undoubtedly hear from some parts of the world that the United States and Britain are engaged in a war against the Muslim world. That is a poisonous and malicious lie, and most of those who spread it know that. The coalition's inclusion of several Muslim states exposes the lie.

What was the purpose of military intervention in Kosovo? It was clear: to stop the ethnic cleansing of Albanians and the Muslim population by Serb paramilitaries. If we were anti-Muslim and wanted to engage in the current action for that reason, as the liars claim, why did we intervene in Kosovo? Many of us pressed for that. Many hon. Members who support military action against international terrorism are those who pressed, as I did, for action to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

I am sure that many hon. Members remember the daily demonstrations in Whitehall, opposite 10 Downing street, by those who put forward the Serbian point of view. In truth, they expressed the Serbian paramilitary point of view. They accused us and the House of Commons of being pro-Muslim.

Let us remember as well that the United States acted with other NATO countries not only in Kosovo: United States-led intervention helped to bring the bloody conflict in Bosnia to an end. At that time, the international community was again accused of being pro-Muslim. I wonder whether Milosevic in his prison cell would describe the western powers as anti-Muslim. I doubt it.

Reference has rightly been made to various injustices in the world. I do not doubt that all hon. Members deplore the atrocities in Washington, New York and elsewhere on 11 September. No hon. Member takes the view, which is a form of sickness, that America asked for such action and that American guilt or sin justified the atrocities. No hon. Member would dream of suggesting that, and that also applies to the large majority of people in this country. However, the question for colleagues who oppose military action is simple: what alternative do they propose? That is a fair question, I think.

It is all very well saying that the leader of the terrorist network should be brought to justice, but how? He is hardly likely to surrender. He is unlikely to give himself up, and the Taliban regime have no intention of giving him up. If we are wrong in supporting military action, what is the alternative method of bringing terrorists to justice or defeating them?

Some people argue that there are so many injustices in the world that we should not worry too much about taking military action. Reference was rightly made in previous debates to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I wish that the international community would take stronger action to help the Palestinians and to form a Palestinian state, which should be no less viable and independent than Israel. There is also the need for a settlement in Kashmir, about which we hope that the Governments of India and Pakistan will be willing to continue to negotiate. The talks lasted only one day.

I reiterate the Prime Minister's crucial point: the terrorists responsible for the atrocities in New York and Washington do not want the sort of settlement that we support. They do not want a solution to Israel's problems; they want the total destruction of the Israeli state. Even that would not satisfy them because they would want the whole of Palestine run along the lines of the current regime in Afghanistan. I am critical of Israel, but no hon. Member would argue that the Israeli state should be destroyed. However, the terrorists want precisely that. Our aims—settlements and negotiations—be they in the middle east or in Kashmir, are the opposite of the terrorists' requirements. We should have no illusions about that.

My initial view was that the United States would take immediate military action after 11 September. I am glad that I was wrong. I am sure that several hon. Members shared my view. I am pleased that the United States showed diplomacy and restraint, as I said in a question to the Prime Minister last week. I was in Philadelphia on a private visit on 11 September. However great people's anger, they went about their business on the following days, and there was no hysteria. There was, though, all the anger that one would rightly expect.

The murderous network that we face can, like fascism, be appeased or fought. It is as simple as that. Let us have no illusions: if we appease the terrorists, they, like the fascists in the past, would become bolder and even more determined. They would believe that they were safe because the west did not retaliate and there was no international action. Appeasement would encourage them. The international coalition has made the right choice between appeasement and fighting evil. I support the action that is being undertaken—destroying the murderous network is in the interests of not only the west but the civilised world.

8.16 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Rochford and Southend, East): The one clear message of the debate is that we have no difficulty in convincing ourselves. In most debates, we try to convince people that we are right and they are wrong, but apart from the hon. Member who sought the private advice of the Speaker and disappeared from the Chamber immediately thereafter, everyone is agreed. I therefore want to make a short speech with some points on which, I hope, hon. Members will reflect.

I hope that one result of the appalling tragedy in New York will be that all of us in the alliance agree not to support terrorist organisations in future. Our job is to convince not ourselves, but others in the world, especially

the Muslim nations. We should show some humility because we have supported, financed and used many of the organisations that cause the appalling problems to achieve our objectives when that was convenient.

For example, a brief reference was made to the appalling situation in Iraq and the possibility that the Iraqis might be bombed. I have been a Member of Parliament for a long time, and I remember the time when Iraq and Saddam Hussein were our secret cousins in the middle east. They did our work for us and got help, finance and aid from the United States and the United Kingdom. When we see the appalling terrorist camps that are being bombed in Afghanistan, we should remember the simple fact that they were supplied and paid for with money from the United States and elsewhere in the battle to remove the Russians from Afghanistan.

I hope therefore that we shall agree not to employ or try to use terrorist organisations to help our ends and endeavours in future. I was well aware of the position when I went to the north of Pakistan on a private visit with my family. I informed the Pakistan Government that I was going, and I was taken to visit refugees who had been involved in the conflict with the Soviet Union. The second lesson that we should learn is that solving problems such as those of Afghanistan is not easy.

When I visited the refugees, I expected to meet people who were delighted at removing the Russians from Afghanistan and restoring the country to freedom. Instead, they were anxious to tell me that their particular group—it seemed to be one in five—had achieved all the victories, and that the others were useless and should not be supported or financed. The hatred and confusion among the Afghan community reminded me to some extent of Glasgow before the wonderful changes effected a miracle there. We should appreciate that solving the present problems is not easy. For us to think that we can solve them may be creating confusion.

Only two months ago, a friend of mine was in the United States, staying in a plush hotel. Someone came round with a big plastic bucket, asking whether he would help peace in Ireland. He did not agree to help peace in Ireland, but found out that the money was being sought to assist an organisation called the new IRA or some such thing, which was involved in one of the appalling bombings. Unless we are all prepared to say that none of us and none of our countries would support terrorism in any way, the recent disaster will produce no massive achievement.

There is an important matter which I hope the Government will clarify. I asked the Prime Minister a question about it, but perhaps he did not consider it important enough for him to give a clear answer. The fact is that Mr. bin Laden may well be seized by the United States, by us or by the forces which we understand are coming from Germany and France. Under our law, or our convention, as we call it, we would not be allowed to hand him over to America for trial, because of the restrictions imposed by the European convention.

There may be some people who consider that a splendid idea, as it would be unthinkable to pass on a criminal to a country where there is capital punishment. Others may say that it would be shocking not to hand bin Laden over to the United States, as that is where the crime was committed. What is the Government's position? If bin Laden is seized by troops from Britain, would the Government seek some other means of putting him on trial, or would they seek to change our law? It is a simple point, and we are entitled to some clarification.

There is a need to build support—much is potentially available—in the Muslim countries for a stand against fundamentalism and the terrorism linked to it. From my knowledge of Pakistan and other countries in the middle east, it is clear that there is a huge potential for creating terrorism, unless someone is prepared to lead a crusade against it. More is required than simple statements in which almost every organisation in the world says that the disaster was shocking and shameful. There needs to be a crusade against terrorism in the Muslim community. Many people fear that the war, which I am sure will be effectively handled by Britain, America and all its friends, will simply wipe out one group of terrorists and create many more.

Finally, could the Government give any indication of the changes that they plan to make in security law in the United Kingdom? I noticed a headline the other day in my favourite paper, *The Guardian*, "Tories back EU security measures", so I know that there is nothing to worry about, but I should like to know exactly what is being planned.

I do not want to be difficult, but the danger is that, in a situation such as the present one, on which we are all agreed, we tend simply to try to think what nastier word we can use about the enemy and what more wonderful things we can say about ourselves. I hope that as a result of the recent great tragedy, we will at least accept that some of the responsibility rests with us. If we do not admit that, we are running away from reality.

There is huge potential for the growth of confusion, terrorism and hatred throughout the world and even in our own country. There are always people who are willing to say that they will help us to achieve our objective. Let us hope that as a result of the disaster, we will all agree that no country will support terrorism in any circumstances, and that we will all fight together for freedom. We must get away from the appalling situation in which countries that are strong and powerful think that they have all the answers for the rest of the world. If we showed some humility and common sense, some good may come out of an appalling situation.

8.24 pm

Mr. Mohammad Sarwar (Glasgow, Govan): I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss the crisis today. Many of my constituents serve in our armed forces. I pray for their safety and for their families at this time.

Let me make it absolutely clear that the war is not between the west and Islam or between Christianity and Islam. Muslim communities across the UK and Muslim leaders around the world all condemned the terrorist attacks last month. We are all united in our fight against terrorism and want to remove its threat everywhere.

Yesterday, I visited Annandale street mosque in Edinburgh, the scene of a recent fire attack. I gave the message that the Prime Minister has expressed solidarity and support with Britain's Muslims and condemned acts of hatred against them. That view is shared by all political parties and leaders in Scotland and Britain.

People advocating violence and religious hatred do not represent anyone, whether they are extremist groups or Muslim individuals. The vast majority will not support

[Mr. Mohammad Sarwar]

such people. They will not succeed. I was encouraged in Edinburgh by the presence of more than 100 members of the Edinburgh Inter-Faith Community to show their solidarity and support for the city's Muslims. The vast majority of people know that Islam is a religion of peace, understanding and tolerance.

We should be firm on terrorism, but also firm on the underlying causes of terrorism. The Prime Minister outlined his vision of the world in his conference speech, where he emphasised the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the eradication of poverty. For that vision to become reality, we need to address long-standing issues in Palestine and the dispute between India and Pakistan. We need to re-examine our policy of sanctions against Iraq. The Iraqi people have suffered, while Saddam Hussein has been strengthened.

We must remain united against terrorism. Terrorists and those who support and harbour them must all be brought to justice. To that end, we must develop a proper international framework. An international court should deal with charges against individuals and states accused of terrorism. We must also give serious consideration to the repercussions of military action against Afghanistan. The whole region is facing severe destabilisation. We face the most miserable refugee crisis in history. Seven million people face starvation in Afghanistan, and aid must reach them.

It is not disrespectful to question America's international policy. If the United States treated everyone equally, it would rule the world not by military might, but by winning hearts and minds. An even-handed, neutral approach in areas of conflict would, in time, replace hostility with genuine affection and respect for the USA. The potential exists to make that change.

Lessons must be learned from our previous involvement in Afghanistan. We supported the mujaheddin against soviet aggression and armed groups against the invaders. One million lost their lives in the struggle against Russia. The war cost Afghanistan millions of lives, total ruination of the modest economic infrastructure and devastation of its towns and cities. The country had been bombed back to the stone age by the Russians during their 12-year onslaught. With the withdrawal of the Russian forces, the power struggle among different warring groups in Afghanistan degenerated into total chaos.

When the soviets left, the west also walked away. What has happened in Afghanistan during the past 12 years is the result of the west and the USA turning their backs on both Afghanistan and Pakistan after the destruction of communism. Had we adopted an objective policy based on the long-term interests of the region and helped Afghanistan rebuild their devastated country, the Taliban would not have come to power in Afghanistan. An economically viable and developing Afghanistan would never have been a safe haven for terrorists or extremists of any denomination.

I urge the Government to reach out to moderate, progressive and liberal forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Not only should we seek allies among ruling leaders, but it would be of great benefit to build a bond of trust with ordinary people.

I very much welcome the Prime Minister's assurance that we will not walk away this time when the military action is over. We must also do more to avert the mounting refugee crisis. The huge number of people fleeing Afghanistan will increase rapidly. During the Soviet occupation, the response in humanitarian aid was initially inadequate; when the Russians withdrew, that response became one of disinterest, as civil war raged in Afghanistan. Neighbouring countries have struggled to cope with the millions displaced by conflict. We expect and demand better support from our Government and allies for the millions of people who face hunger and live in terrible conditions.

The abject poverty facing the refugees represents a huge burden on countries such as Pakistan, where there are currently 2 million to 4 million Afghan refugees. That is underlined by the decline in living standards and widespread poverty among Pakistan's citizens. General Musharraf has taken a bold step in siding with the United States. Measures must be taken to show the people of Pakistan that that decision is in their interests. Recent moves to lift sanctions and extend payments are a start, but on their own, they are nothing.

The crippling burden of debt must be lifted from Pakistan. Debt should not simply be rescheduled; it should be cut. That is the only way forward. Reduced debt would allow real progress to be made in alleviating poverty for millions of people, and it could help deliver basic education and develop decent health care for the poorest people in Pakistan.

Without real benefits, support for America will lead to dark days, not only for President Musharraf and his Government, but for all the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Support for terrorism will be strengthened where we fail to lift people out of poverty, deprivation and injustice, whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere. That is the real fight that we face.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): Order.

8.32 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): It is a pleasure to follow two very thoughtful speeches—those of the hon. Members for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sarwar). I have not always agreed with them on every issue, but none the less, their speeches were thoughtful and contained a great deal.

I start with the assumptions that every hon. Member unreservedly condemns the attacks and the atrocity visited on the United States on 11 September, that we all believe that Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network are murderous and that the world would be a much better place if they can be got rid of. The vast majority of us—perhaps we are not unanimous—have, I hope, reluctantly concluded that military action is necessary in the circumstances, but I want to explore what kind of military action should take place and under what auspices. I want to make the case for a specific United Nations imprimatur on the military action that takes place.

Earlier, the Prime Minister and then the Secretary of State for Defence were asked about article 51 of the United Nations charter. This is not an academic or spurious point—article 51 represents the recognition of the right of self-defence. Under it, the UN requires that states that take action under that right of self-defence—as the American and, presumably, the United Kingdom Governments have done—must make a specific report to

the Security Council on why they have done so. As I told the Secretary of State for Defence, the US has done so, and I have a copy of the report that it gave to the UN.

The Secretary of State for International Development (Clare Short): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Salmond: I shall ask a Minister to deal with the point in a second.

In the report, the US ambassador says:

"We may find that our self-defence requires further actions with respect to other organisations and other states".

The Secretary of State for Defence said that the United Kingdom was covered by that explanation to the Security Council. This would be a very good time for a Minister to intervene to say whether that is the case and whether the statement that I have just read out represents the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

Clare Short: The issue of whether the United Kingdom has written under our article 51 obligations has been raised before, and I can confirm that the acting United Kingdom representative to the UN did so last night. A request has been made that that letter should be made available to the House. I cannot give that assurance now, but I think it highly likely that it will be, and I shall do my best to try to ensure that that is done.

Mr. Salmond: A copy of the letter certainly should be available in the Library, and the right hon. Lady should return, perhaps in summing up, to the fact that the US explanation refers to

"other organisations and other states".

She will understand the importance of knowing the objectives of military action and those that are supported by the United Kingdom Government.

The immediate risk that we face is not military. On a military calculation, there is no contest in the immediate future. Cruise missiles are obviously far more effective than small arms and sophisticated aeroplanes are more effective than rudimentary air defence systems. The real risk in the immediate future is not a battle on the plains of Afghanistan; it is the battle for public opinion on the streets of Pakistan, Egypt and Gaza. The risk is that that battle could be lost during the next few days unless the alliance proceeds extremely carefully.

During last Thursday's debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion (Mr. Thomas) said that there is no case in recorded history of

"terrorism . . . being defeated by military action alone."—[*Official Report*, 4 October 2001; Vol. 372, c. 729.]

Those are wise words, and I hope that the Government are taking full account of them. There is, of course, a military risk to our armed forces. It is not immediate, but it will exist if ground intervention follows. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken of their admiration for our armed forces and given them their grateful thanks for the risks that they take on our behalf, and I happily endorse those comments.

Of course, as the BBC programme that the Secretary of State for Defence watched told us last night, the history of military interventions in Afghanistan stretches back to Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan, and involved the British empire three times and, most recently, the Soviet Union. That history suggests that Afghanistan is a place where countries get in easy and get out bloody. The Soviet Union's forces reached Kabul in 48 hours, and it then took 10 years and 15,000 men to get out again. It does not necessarily follow that that would be the result of ground action in the present circumstances. We are told that the Taliban are deeply unpopular, and I certainly hope that that is the case, given that movement's atrocious track record, but if we are to avoid the impact of what has happened in the past in Afghanistan, we must surely avoid being seen as the target. History also tells us that armies can be greeted with open arms, as the British Army was by the oppressed Catholic population of Londonderry in 1969, but circumstances can change in a few months.

For the first time, I heard the Prime Minister say something in his statement that I thought represented a recognition that mistakes had been made in the past. He said, "I repeat: we will not walk away from them once the conflict ends, as has happened in the past." His statement contained a recognition, which was requested by the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East, of the mistakes that had been made in the past, such as the fact that the mujaheddin was financed in the 1980s, then deserted in the early 1990s. We face the current situation because of that inaction in the early 1990s, when Afghanistan was forgotten by the west because it had served its purpose of bleeding the Soviet Union white.

What is to happen to Afghanistan in future is not an academic question. The Prime Minister made a commitment in his statement today, but the Secretary of State for Defence refuses to answer the legitimate question of whether a UN protectorate, or an interim administration authorised by the UN, is what we have in mind. That should be what we have in mind, and we should explicitly say so because the UN is not designed just to provide humanitarian aid; it is the world authority and its responsibilities go far beyond the supply of humanitarian aid, important though that is.

I am very much in favour of the Prime Minister's wish to build a new world order—I am up for that. A new world order will, of necessity, be rather better than the world order that we have at present, but I am sure of two things. First, that order must be based on an international authority. It cannot be a pax Americana and it certainly cannot be a pax Britannica or a western authority; it must be a genuine international authority, and that is surely why the UN exists. It has also to be based on moral principles.

In his speech to the Labour party conference, the Prime Minister mentioned the Democratic Republic of Congo and pointed out that 3 million people have died in the Congo because of the civil war that has been conducted in that unhappy country. On 11 September—the very same day that the twin towers were attacked in the United States—there took place in this city under the auspices of Her Majesty's Government an arms fair that sold arms to both sides in the Congo civil war. My point is that if we are to move forward positively from where we have been, we must base our arguments on the foundation of democracy, not hypocrisy, and we must base them on a legitimate world authority that surely is the United Nations.

8.40 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Ochil): My memory goes back 10 years to when we were debating the Gulf war and the possibility of action and we had some of the arcane and

[Mr. Martin O'Neill]

complex, though not necessarily irrelevant, arguments about the role of the United Nations and whether it should be brought in at every turn. Circumstances have changed considerably since then, but we still support the United States and are seeking to gain the approval of a grand coalition for what we hope to achieve. However, in this instance, we are not dealing with state-sponsored terrorism or aggression of the type that we were dealing with in relation to Iraq and Kuwait.

The attack on the US targets resulted in citizens from many nations, including our own, being killed and economic havoc has been wreaked. We face all kinds of problems and the denting of confidence will not be felt only in the United States; it is being felt daily in our own constituencies. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is not present, but I hope that time will be found early next week for a statement from the Chancellor of the Exchequer so that we can hear his assessment of the economic damage that has been done to this country, the area for which he has competence. We may then begin to get an idea of the Government's assessment of the economic problems that might follow these dastardly deeds

The NATO charter says that an attack on one is an attack on all, and we have signed up to that. We have also taken a proper position with regard to the UN. We could have said that we would do nothing more and try to appoint an international detective force to root out and catch bin Laden. We could have waited on the Taliban after asking them repeatedly to hand him over. If some people had had their way, we might even have waited for the Taliban to be satisfied that there was proof beyond doubt that bin Laden was guilty. However, I do not think that there is now any doubt about his guilt, given the nature of the video that was shown last night. His complicity in the actions is clear and his approval and support for them puts him beyond the pale.

I applaud the Government's decisiveness in expressing our support for the United States—the speed and unqualified nature of the backing that we gave at the outset. Let us not forget that less than two months ago, *Time* magazine posted a "Colin Powell missing" notice on its front page. The US Secretary of State seemed to be missing from the central policy-making functions of the Bush Administration. The senior foreign policy member of that Administration had been isolated by the hawks led by the Vice-President and the Secretary of Defence. Indeed, it was suggested that the President, at that stage, had been reduced to the role of a mere mouthpiece for the US military-industrial complex.

The speed with which our Government moved in support of our American allies showed that the Americans were not alone and could be brought back from the isolationist position into which they had got themselves in the late summer of this year. That meant that, for the first time in a long time, there was a moderating influence on the US Administration.

I am not sure whether the coalition will achieve all its objectives in a very short time. We will certainly not eradicate terrorism immediately, but we have to start somewhere. The elimination of the command and control systems—such as they are in Afghanistan—and of air defence systems is important, but it is dangerous to talk about being sucked into a bigger confrontation.

The example of the Russians is all too clear, but the tolerance of the American people for any major US commitment will be difficult to establish even if that were desirable. The generation who would take such decisions—those in Congress—either served or sought not to serve in Vietnam. That was a defining experience in the body politic of the United States and people do not want to repeat it. Therefore, it is essential that we achieve our objectives with all speed. We must do so to ensure that we achieve the military outcome of eradicating the threat of terrorism from Afghanistan and cutting it down to size so that it is controllable elsewhere.

People have expressed great pride in the quality of the forces that we have placed at the disposal of the coalition, but we must remember that the people who advise the Government are far closer to the young men involved than any of us can imagine. Those young men may not be the sons of the senior officers, but those officers take responsibility for them. No one is less willing to sacrifice armed strength than the military itself. Commanders view the young men whom they have trained as part of the family.

Our experience in the Gulf and that of the US in Vietnam show that military might and incisiveness are important. We speak about aid and military power going together, but we must ensure that they are not confused. We must ensure that the people who have responsibility for distributing aid through the various channels remain untainted by what will be a nasty and dirty war. War is not a clean business and the people who are sent there on our behalf will do deeds that we would not like them to, but they will think that they are necessary to achieve the objectives that we consider to be legitimate and desirable at this time. If we can do that and we can establish a settlement in Afghanistan of the kind that we have spoken about, the efforts of those people will not be in vain. They will be a source of national pride and of satisfaction for all those who are able to take part.

8.48 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher and Walton): The House has been recalled not just to show our support for the Government—that is inevitable, because our troops are in action and it would be wrong to do anything other than support what the Government are doing—but to discover the nuances behind why we support the Government. To that extent, I welcome the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sarwar). It provided another dimension. This is a complex issue in which there are bound to be different perspectives even if we support what has happened tonight and last night and what will inevitably take place on many other nights when our forces are committed to action.

There is also no doubt that those on both sides of the House have given credit to the Prime Minister for what, from time to time, has been the brilliant way in which he has galvanised an international coalition and influenced the United States. He is performing a high-wire act, and it is in the national interest that he does not fall off. It is a high wire act because so many things are at stake.

At least at the beginning, the American Administration have shown a degree of caution about which some of their friends—I count myself as one—are rather surprised. Like the hon. Member for Ochil (Mr. O'Neill), I have had meetings with Colin Powell. I had three meetings with

him over several years—they left a greater impression on me than I fear I left on him. Nevertheless, he is a man of considerable judgment and his voice has been heard. It is quite possible that his voice has been heard more clearly because of the support that our Prime Minister gave to those in Washington who realised that this had to be an occasion on which America tried to build a global coalition rather than just taking action. Interestingly, that coalition has also involved the United Nations, which, although it is in New York, is not an organisation for which the American Administration have had much fondness. This time, it appears that we are all working in a particular way.

I also give credit to the Prime Minister for working closely within the European Union. This was a test for the European Union and, so far, it has succeeded: there is a common policy. Of course, not every member of the EU reacts in the same way. That would be surprising, as some countries are neutral and others are NATO members. The important point is that each supports what the others are doing. We heard today that several other members, including Italy, France and Germany, are likely to be involved in military action, or will at least enable our troops to move into the current theatre of war by taking our place in Macedonia, as the Germans will do.

That is vital for us because it shows once again that we are a bridge to Washington because we are America's gateway to Europe. We are stronger in our influence in Washington when we are seen to be taking a leading role within the EU. The importance of the transatlantic alliance is that it provides a diversity, enabling us to build outwards and to embrace countries where other EU member states have more influence than we might have.

The involvement of the Russians is crucial. During the Kosovo conflict, we often raised the question of the Russian reaction. On this occasion, not least because of the events in Chechnya, Moscow is very much on-side in attempting to find a solution to what has been going on in Afghanistan. That brings me to my second key area of interest: what is going on in Afghanistan and to what extent are we, at this stage, capable of defining our objectives?

It would be dangerous, although tempting, to try to say that this is a crusade against terrorism. It would be tempting but wrong, because terrorism is defined in many different ways. One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter; one alliance formed against a particular sort of terrorism can disintegrate rapidly once the focus is shifted. Bin Laden himself understood that only too well when he tried last night to create dissension by pointing to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Shortly after the Gulf war I was on the west bank and I talked to both Israelis and Palestinians. We must redouble our efforts to help resolve that continuing crisis, but it must not shift our focus from what we are attempting to do now, which is to snuff out a vicious terrorist group based in Afghanistan and supported by the Taliban.

Therefore, as we stand in the House this evening our objectives are to undermine the Taliban and remove their ability to operate successfully and to provide succour to bin Laden and his groups. Real tensions will be created within the alliance that we have created once we move from the initial air strikes to on-the-ground operations. I hope that all the efforts that we have made can be redoubled to ensure that Pakistan and others are given as much support as possible, because those tensions will arise.

There is another reason why we must not turn this into a great crusade to spread freedom around the world. When one has a clear enemy, as we have in the current battle against bin Laden and his groups, we must sometimes choose allies who themselves do not have perfect records. I do not wish to name names this evening—that would not be constructive to the overall effort—but we must understand that we have a clear task to protect ourselves from terrorists who want completely to undermine our society. We must not confuse it with battles that will definitely continue for a long time, which affect India, Pakistan, the middle east and the internal politics of Saudi Arabia. We may have to deal with those issues in a wider context, but we must not distract ourselves by dealing with them tonight, or we shall lose the full force of our activity and our ability to take people with us, both militarily and psychologically.

I am delighted that the Secretary of State for International Development will respond to the debate because the final issue on which we must focus tonight is the humanitarian effort, which will involve the help of many more countries than will be involved in the military battle. However, it is crucial. The humanitarian effort involves not just dropping food parcels but helping those countries to rebuild themselves so that the tensions that exist within them are mitigated and they can see that the hand of friendship is being held out, even after the original crisis has moved on. As the Prime Minister said, we cannot turn our backs on a country like Afghanistan. That is not to say that we must get involved in nation building, which has failed in the past. We must show the hand of friendship as between the west and the Muslim countries because, in the long term, that is most likely to result in future stability.

8.56 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): I am grateful to be able to contribute to this debate. It is a month since those horrendous events took place in New York and other parts of the United States and I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in saying that it seems to have been a month in which the Prime Minister has played a constructive and effective role in the policy formulation that has brought us to the present position.

During that period, the United States and others, including this country, have been able to identify beyond any reasonable doubt those responsible. If anybody in this House or outside had any doubts about that, bin Laden's performance on television yesterday must surely have eliminated them. He is only too pleased to take responsibility for the bombing, and to vaunt it. We have had time to put together a coalition that includes, as the hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Mr. Taylor) said, not just the European Union but our Commonwealth friends, Australia and Canada, and, most importantly, the Soviet Union. We have also had time to define the targets—military and other defence installations—and to ensure that nothing else will be attacked. That is as important an outcome as any other.

The words that the Prime Minister spoke—I believe that he leads the debate on this, as on many other issues—about the religion of Islam, when he described its peaceful

[Mr. Geoffrey Robinson]

and teaching nature, were enormously important in reassuring many Muslims in this country. I say that on behalf of my many Muslim constituents and friends in Coventry. In emphasising the equal importance of the humanitarian aspects of the operation, my right hon. Friend has brought us to a situation where, throughout this country, America, the whole of Europe and much of the Commonwealth, everybody can see that as much as possible has been done. An ultimatum was offered; time was given for its consideration; and it was refused. I believe that there is now widespread acceptance of the inevitable military action and all the awful consequences that we know will flow from that.

The whole House will agree that, if the policy formulations of the past four weeks have been difficult, now that the military action has begun, and in the dangerous weeks ahead, they will be even more difficult and complex. I should therefore like to put several points to the Government for their consideration both tonight and, perhaps more important, as they make difficult decisions and establish priorities in the weeks ahead.

The first was addressed most effectively by my hon. Friend the Member for Ochil (Mr. O'Neill) a few moments ago when he referred to a much greater role for the United Nations. The House will be reassured by the fact that the hesitant affirmation that was given initially by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has now been reinforced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development in the letter which she has agreed to place in the Library stating that we have complied with article 51. However, it seems to me that we have not been as proactive on the United Nations front as we should have been, or, indeed, as we have been so successfully on other fronts. Now is the time to do that. It is no good waiting any longer. We must envisage the endgame in Afghanistan.

Another key objective that was mentioned by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Medway (Mr. Marshall-Andrews) when the Prime Minister was replying to questions is the establishment of an international court of justice under the auspices of the United Nations, as that will be a key element in the event of the military campaign having a successful outcome.

I also believe that there will be a continuing role for the United Nations in the event of the successful outcome to which the House is committed and which I am sure will be achieved.

I now turn to the length and extent of the bombing campaign. Any comparison with what happened in Serbia—or previously in Afghanistan—or with the length of that campaign and the reservations that many of us had should not be taken too far. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sarwar) said that Afghanistan was bombed back to the stone age by the Russians and the impression that one gets from the television does not contradict that. Nevertheless, if the initial phases of bombing do not yield the minimum requirements of the campaign—the destruction of bin Laden and the elimination of the al-Qaeda network—the earliest possible commitment of specialist ground troops will become necessary. I am sure that operations are in hand in readiness for that.

I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development is replying to the debate as I should like to say a few words about our humanitarian commitment. The Prime Minister said—and the whole House welcomed it—that it is as important as the military effort and must go hand in hand with it. However, particularly if the bombing is more prolonged than we wish, there will be conflicting priorities. My message to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, knowing her powerful influence in Cabinet on these issues, is that if a choice has to be made between the bombing and the supply routes for humanitarian aid getting through, it will be in the interests of the campaign—and of the west—to consider giving priority to the supply routes for humanitarian aid.

Looking to the future, the Prime Minister said that we will not walk away, and we all welcome that, but we must also realise that there is no indefinite role that British forces or even the Americans can play alone in Afghanistan. That is why I return to my point about the United Nations and say that even now it must be possible to formulate the policy that will follow what I believe will be a successful military campaign. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can keep us informed on the thinking on that, the whole House will be reassured that we face a most successful outcome to this difficult project.

9.4 pm

Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson). I very much agree with what he said about the complexity of the situation. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sarwar) who emphasised the role of the Muslim community in this country and the fact that its members will have no truck with terrorism.

I also found the speech by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (David Winnick) particularly interesting. I have always identified him as a bit of a radical in his party, but when he asked those who oppose the war, "What is the alternative?" he recognised the uncomfortable realisation that there is no alternative.

Last night's extensive military strikes by the armed forces of the United States and the United Kingdom forces marked a turning point in the campaign against terrorism which began on 11 September. Diplomacy is coming to an end and I take this opportunity to express my clear support for the Government and congratulate them on their handling of the situation to date. However, I mean no disrespect to them when I say that what has happened up to now has been the easy part. Things will get more difficult, with anxiety and hostility being shown on the national and international stage.

It is easy for those who have been unaffected by the situation to ask why we are exposing ourselves to the extent that we are. At present, only the British armed forces stand alongside those of the United States, and the possible consequences are obvious. I am well aware that many pledges will be fulfilled, but those are nevertheless the thoughts in drawing rooms the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

I have no doubt that this is the right and proper place for us to be, but the fear of retaliation in our capital should not be underestimated. Quite rightly, security has been increased and thousands of extra police have been

deployed on the streets of London. Representing an outer-London suburb, I am well aware that police have been taken from the suburbs to the centre. Although my constituents are well aware of the importance of protecting the centre, the campaign could go on for weeks or months or even years, so I would be grateful if the Minister replying to the debate could address the issue of policing in the outer London suburbs in that eventuality.

There is no obvious end to the terrible situation in which we find ourselves. During the Falklands war, the enemy was there for us to see. The task for the armed forces was to recapture the islands. In the Gulf war, the threat was plain and a global coalition pushed Saddam Hussein back into his own country. This time the task is not so simple.

It is widely stated that our objective is the elimination of terrorism, but such is its unknown quantity and its subversive nature that we will probably never know when or if that objective has been achieved. Last night's targets may have been destroyed, but the perpetrators of the monstrous atrocities of 11 September will filter away into the night. The battle will continue and my instinct is that it will be a long drawn-out affair with serious economic consequences. I agree with the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that it cannot be addressed by military action alone. In my judgment, the most effective way of countering the global network of terrorism is to follow the money. It is no surprise that the Security Council resolution of 28 September rightly called on all nations to target the funding of terrorist organisations.

At this immediate time, the destiny of this campaign lies with our armed forces who are again in action tonight. It is a justified action against an organisation that has put itself beyond the rule of law. Nevertheless, the reaction from those who support the Taliban is not encouraging.

The Muslim world is in turmoil. The situation in Indonesia is tense. The demonstrations in Pakistan put sustained pressure on President Musharraf, whose courage and intellectual analysis of the situation deserves our fullest admiration and support. None the less, the statement made by Osama bin Laden is chilling in its tone. It called on every Muslim to rise up to defend his religion and said that America will not live in peace. There are two striking things about that statement. First, it is the first real admission from Osama bin Laden that he is responsible for the attacks and secondly, he sees the present situation as an attack on his religion. It is no such thing, as the many statements by Muslim leaders in this country and around the world have sought to confirm.

Mr. bin Laden's statement claims that there will be no peace until the army of the infidels departs from Palestine. It probably came as some surprise to him to find that last night Mr. Yasser Arafat was frantically assuring the United States and this country that he opposes Osama bin Laden and supports the military campaign. Mr. bin Laden represents a narrow aggressive sect and does not speak for Islam.

The Islamic community of this country lives in peace, participating in our democratic processes and enjoying the economic prosperity that a vigorous country such as ours can obtain. That community is a force for good. I am proud to represent Muslims in my constituency. I am proud of my association with their organisations and of the contribution I made to the establishment of the Ishmaili Jamat Khama in south London. I am even more proud of the people of Croydon who have welcomed its construction.

We have to improve our relations with the Muslim world. The helpful memo submitted by Zahid Nawaz to the Select Committee on Defence during the last Parliament was almost visionary in its analysis of Islamic thinking and activity. Our knowledge of Islam is minimal. I have no idea whether western policies help or hurt. However, the many questions posed by "Political Islam" will dominate the international agenda for years to come.

I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State for International Development is to reply to the debate. Supplying aid to the millions of Afghan refugees caught up in this ghastly situation is the way we can shore up our credibility with the Muslim world. It is possible that the supply of blankets and food will do more to win the battle than anything else. The dropping of individual rations, medicines, blankets and other items is exactly the humanitarian gesture that we need, and I congratulate the right hon. Lady and her Department on a clear course of action.

I welcome the change of emphasis announced on Friday by my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs. Spelman) and her emphasis on a long-term solution to restore the economic stability of Afghanistan. We have never been in a situation like this before, but with the coalition ranged against the Taliban, I would not like to be in their shoes. So far, the Government have got it right and I support them.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Time is up.

9.12 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East and Musselburgh): The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) will understand if I do not follow his remarks, but he was right to point out that this could be the easy stage. It is helpful that all the parties have given such support to the Government. The support given by the Leader of the Opposition was reiterated today by the hon. Member for North Essex (Mr. Jenkin). They have provided sterling support to the Prime Minister who has made such a great contribution to taking these matters forward so far.

The enormity of the situation is hard to comprehend. About 6,000 people lost their lives on 11 September. The fact that the terrorists were able to carry out such atrocities is a terrifying demonstration of the power that a terrorist organisation can wield. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, if the terrorists had had the capacity to kill more innocent US citizens, who could doubt that they would have done so?

As the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, said, if the terrorists had had access to nuclear or chemical weapons, they could have killed many more people. I should like to take this opportunity to appeal to my right hon. Friends to work to step up international efforts to prevent the ingredients for such weapons from getting into the hands of terrorists. It is clear that the current security arrangements leave a lot to be desired. I will not elaborate on that, but the Ministry of Defence has issued documents in recent years setting out the problems in that regard.

The atrocities of 11 September were a dreadful wake-up call. It is true that the world has changed, and from the ashes new alliances are being made. The United

[Dr. Gavin Strang]

Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany and France have pledged forces to the military operation, and the Secretary of State for Defence added to that list earlier today.

President Bush has said that more than 40 countries in the middle east, Africa, Europe and across Asia have granted air transit or landing rights, and he said that many more have shared intelligence.

As hon. Members have said, there is no doubt that it is important for the United Nations to be involved in these matters. If today's alliance is to be sustained—I congratulate Ministers, particularly the Prime Minister, on helping to build it—it has to be on the basis of an institution that can underpin it. As the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) said, the UN is the only institution that can do that.

As the weeks and months go by, there are bound to be strains and splits arising within the alliance. The only international institution that is sufficiently recognised and respected to resolve those disputes is the UN. The United Nations Security Council has a military staff committee made up of the five permanent members—the United States, UK, China, France and Russia. Those are the five official nuclear powers. There are, of course, what might be described as unofficial nuclear powers: Pakistan and India come to mind in the current situation, as well as Israel.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to look to the work of the UN in the weeks and months to come because it will have to play a vital role. It will be important in the humanitarian efforts, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development will deal with that, but the Security Council and the military committee will also be important.

As I have said, about 6,000 lives were lost on 11 September, and we should assume that others have been or will be killed during the current military action. A life is a life whether it is in Afghanistan or the United States. The world community must rise to the challenge of international terrorism. Yes, we have to resolve these issues effectively, but I believe that the House is united in its desire to see them resolved in a way that minimises additional suffering and loss of life.

9.16 pm

Bob Spink (Castle Point): I have four points to make, but first I pay tribute unreservedly to the British armed forces. The world recognises their unique abilities and bravery.

The overall war aim must be to remove international terrorism wherever it arises and in whatever guise it comes, not just to remove the al-Qaeda network, which is our initial aim. The priority must be to tackle and remove the threat of terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction around the world, as the right hon. Member for Edinburgh, East and Musselburgh (Dr. Strang) has just explained. In that way we can make the world a much safer place, and that must be our end product.

This time we must finish the job, and finish it properly. Throughout history, commanders have made the fundamental error of not prosecuting war to the very end. I believe that the Gulf war 10 years ago was an example of that. I wonder whether those on the Treasury Bench will accept that, at the right time, the theatre should be extended to include Iraq.

We must make this a just war and we can do that by minimising the risk to innocent civilians rather than minimising the risk to allied forces, unlike our approach in Kosovo. That must be the basic rule of our engagement at all times. We must achieve accurate and highly focused targeting and we must keep our word on delivering international humanitarian aid. In that way we can keep the coalition intact and avoid an escalation into what would be a disastrous holy war.

The levels of terrorist threat against Britain have increased significantly. Therefore, we must establish sound precautionary measures and increase our vigilance, particularly for the thousands of my constituents who work in the City of London and who must be reassured. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway), I should like confirmation that adequate police resources will be available across London. I would also stress that normal life and work in London must go on, as far as possible.

I take this opportunity to put on record the fact that the target on Canvey Island in my constituency that was hit by the IRA about 20 years ago no longer exists—the installations have been removed. I trust that my constituents can take comfort from that knowledge.

War is evil, but there are times when we have to perpetrate an evil to remove a greater evil. Our prayers and hopes go with our armed forces, along with our undiluted admiration.

9.20 pm

Roger Casale (Wimbledon): Beyond the appalling loss of life on 11 September has come the shocking realisation that our confidence in a new world order has been shaken, just as the foundations of the World Trade Centre were razed to the ground. The acts of 11 September were atrocious and barbarous. As many religious leaders of all faiths have said, it was an utterly godless act—an act devoid of any possible justification, but also of any rational meaning.

On the eve of the second world war the poet Auden wrote, describing the fears of many in the face of the awful destructive power of fascism,

> "Defenceless under the night
>
> Our world in stupor lies".

That is not the situation today, but we must not underestimate the enormous challenge before us to make reason and justice prevail.

Since 11 September, our fears and anxieties have grown and we have been shocked by further reminders and revelations: the chilling revelations about the extent and intentions of the bin Laden network, the reminder of the callous, fanatical nature of the Taliban regime and the evidence and realisation of the appalling scale of the humanitarian disaster that is unfolding in Afghanistan.

We want to reassure ourselves and those whom we represent that we can do something about that. For the citizen, our aims will perhaps be modest. We cannot bring back the dead—those who lost their lives in the World Trade Centre. We cannot even restore the unquestioning confidence in the new world order that prevailed before. From the perspective of the citizen, the best that we can perhaps hope for is that life may return to normal at some point—that we can go about our business and our daily lives and make our travel plans and so forth again.

The international situation will never be the same again. There is a contrast between the heady goals that we have set ourselves in the international community and those that we have set in our own communities. There is an immediate need for managing risk more effectively. We must hold our nerve. We must identify risk and take appropriate action. We must greatly strengthen international solidarity and resolve. International dialogue, at every level—the bilateral level, the European level and in the international institutions of NATO and the United Nations—must be enhanced. That is a continuous process, but we must redouble our efforts and set our sights much higher.

At the international level, faced with a crisis of this nature and scale, there has been a deficit of leadership, although that is being addressed. Our Prime Minister, on behalf of our country, has demonstrated leadership through dialogue and building coalitions—that is by continuing much of the work in which we were engaged before the crisis. One shows leadership by sharing it—sharing one's vision and bringing others together behind what one has in mind. However, there is still a great need to share leadership more widely. We must involve the UN and NATO more to provide the leadership that is necessary in the face of such a crisis.

At a local level, we all have a role to play. Indeed, everyone in the country has a role to play in this crisis. Our thoughts are naturally with our armed forces and their families tonight, but we can all play a role in our own communities today. My predecessor as Member of Parliament for Wimbledon, Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes, offered his services and went out to the Gulf when that war started. I have no intention of doing the same.

My instinct is that my place is in my community. Wimbledon, in the borough of Merton, has people of many different religions including many of the Muslim faith. I speak this evening on behalf of the ethnic minority centre in my borough and of the Ahmadiya community, which has its headquarters just outside. I also speak on behalf of the many Muslims of different shades of faith within my community, who share our fears and anxieties.

I have always taken great pride in the diversity of my community and I see that diversity as our greatest strength. The onus is on me and other community leaders to bring the full strength and weight of that diversity to bear, in standing shoulder to shoulder with those of the Muslim faith should there be any reprisals—I hope that that will not happen—as a result of the action that we are taking.

I support the objectives that have been set out tonight: to eliminate the threat of bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network and to replace the Taliban regime.

In the longer term we must renew our international commitment to a world in which there is a greater measure of social justice, based on compassion and the rediscovery of our common humanity in this adversity, so that the terrible events of 11 September may result in the lasting rededication of our leaders to the entrenchment of peace, justice and human rights throughout the world. As Auden said later in that same poem,

"We must love one another or die."

9.26 pm

Dr. Jenny Tonge (Richmond Park): Since the terrible events of 11 September, the world has at last been made aware of the terrible plight of the Afghan people after 20 years of war and brutal repression as well as three years of drought. One of my hon. Friends mentioned the abiding images of the past few weeks. For me an abiding image is of a two-year-old too weak to crawl to his mother who was also too ill and weak to take any notice of him. They were both starving and at the point of death.

There are estimated to be 6 million people—25 per cent. of the population—starving inside Afghanistan and between 3 million and 4 million in terrible conditions in makeshift camps on the borders of Pakistan and Iran. After a three-week temporary cessation of supplies from the United Nations and the World Food Programme aid had begun to flow again. The World Food Programme had planned to reach the target of 56,000 tonnes of food per month being trucked into the country, which would have made a significant impact.

My suggested option—airlifting food into the area, in particular when winter sets in, or bombing with food in fact—was ruled out as too difficult and imprecise. I still have not received an explanation of how we can—or we are told that we can—precisely target bombs from high altitude but the same cannot be done with food. Perhaps the Secretary of State for International Development will deal with that when she replies.

Interestingly, the United States of America is now dropping food with bombs—as from last night—which is a practice that will endanger aid agency staff now and in the future. As the hon. Member for Ochil (Mr. O'Neill) said, aid must not be politicised. I hope that the Secretary of State agrees with that.

It seemed to me that the waiting game strategy combined with food and aid was a brilliant and novel one—keeping up the diplomatic pressure, with the threat of military action in the background, always there ready to go. It might have prevented Pakistan becoming destabilised by floods of refugees, which is what everyone is worried about. It seemed to be softening and breaking up attitudes in the Taliban Government. The Afghan people would have been fed over several weeks and may have loved the west a little more as a consequence.

While that brilliant strategy was being pursued, an undercover action, perhaps SAS-style, could have attempted to capture Osama bin Laden. I am well aware that there is a huge international network of criminals in his pay, al-Qaeda being one, but he is the inspiration and lead figure for these people, and we know that it is vital that he is captured and brought to justice, as has been said many times in the House.

Sadly, the waiting strategy has not delivered Osama bin Laden. Last night, we saw the familiar sight of air attacks, this time on the ruins of Kabul and the terrorist camps in Afghanistan. We are assured that civilians will not be targeted, and I entirely believe that, but winter is approaching, which will make any action on the ground difficult. The World Food Programme and the United Nations have from today suspended the trucking of food into Afghanistan indefinitely. The borders are closed, so the people cannot escape.

I am concerned that hundreds of thousands will die as a result of western action, and that surrounding countries could become destabilised, leading to a wider war. What if the Taliban have no control over bin Laden? What if he, not them, is calling the shots? What will have been achieved? But I am, above all, a pragmatist. The die has been cast. They had their chance. The decision has been

[Dr. Jenny Tonge]

taken, I am sure with far better intelligence than I have. Therefore, I support that decision and the action. The Prime Minister is an honest man. I trust him; we all trust him. As has been said many times, our armed services are the finest in the world, and we wish them God speed.

What diplomatic effort will be expended to get the borders of Pakistan and Iran opened so that terrified people can flee to the camps? Will massive aid—all that is asked for by UNHCR and the World Food Programme—be poured into those camps by the coalition Governments? Can the Secretary of State clarify for me the reasons why a way cannot be found to drop targeted food and medical aid to people inside Afghanistan independently—I stress independently—of the bombing raids? It must come through the United Nations. Can we have an assurance, following the Prime Minister's speech at the Labour party conference, that this country will move more rapidly to increase our expenditure on overseas aid in the future?

Military action always reminds me of difficult surgical operations. It often happens that when the patient is opened up by the surgeon, it is obvious that surgery is inappropriate or too risky. The good surgeon will close up the patient and seek other ways to effect a cure or help the patient. The bad surgeon, not wishing to lose face, will battle on, take out part of a problem organ, cause severe haemorrhages and leave the patient in a worst state than before, with many problems. I know that in this case, this brilliant coalition of Governments, which has been created hugely due to the efforts of the Prime Minister, will be a good surgeon.

9.33 pm

Mr. Jonathan Shaw (Chatham and Aylesford): I associate myself with the remarks that most hon. Members have made about the armed forces. I have limited experience, having completed the armed forces parliamentary scheme.

We would be hard pushed to find a more depressed people than that of Afghanistan—a country paralysed economically and internationally, with its people living in fear. I welcome the statement that the Prime Minister made earlier that we would not walk away as we had done before. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sarwar) referred to the appalling positions taken by the former Soviet Union and America that left the country in such a desperate state.

The Prime Minister said that we must win hearts and minds, and that the impetus for change had to come from the Afghan people. How do we assess that impetus? How can 7 million starving people have the impetus to bring about the change that is needed and demonstrate to the west that they want a different country?

The regime commits public executions. We saw the chilling hanging bodies on the "Panorama" programme last night. We saw the kalashnikovs and the machine guns, used with little regard for human life. How can oppressed people—people in fear—have the impetus to demonstrate that they want change? Perversely, this is the best opportunity to bring about change that the ordinary Afghan people have had in 20 years.

If we are to maintain the coalition, we must signal some positive outcomes. If we are to capture the hearts and minds of the Afghan people and other Muslim states around the world, there must be some hope. What judgment can an ordinary Afghan form? Ordinary Afghans have only their experience on which to reflect—the experience of 20 years in which Governments have come and gone, to be replaced by the Taliban. The people of Afghanistan have been the pawns, and that is an appalling indictment of the west and the Soviet Union.

We could say, "That was then and now is now", but we must learn from history. We must create that impetus for change. We must be the enablers. We cannot content ourselves by saying that if the Afghan people say that they want change, we will help them. We must be the enablers. If we do not take their hand and assist them in rebuilding their country, we shall simply return in another 20 years, when there is another bin Laden and the country is still racked by war. We must create hope. We must have an exit strategy that puts in place a United Nations protectorate and brings about stability, with a Government who reflect all ethnic groups, but not groups that do not recognise human rights. We must also learn from history—from the mistakes that were made in Cambodia and East Timor.

Many olive branches are being held out to America, in an unprecedented way. Who would have thought that Libya and North Korea would offer them? Those branches can be made into bridges in the building of the new world order about which the Prime Minister spoke so eloquently at the Labour party conference last week.

The Prime Minister has shown leadership, as has the President of the United States, and I agree that, as was said earlier, it was not what we expected. We did not expect him to show the measured calm that he has, which is a credit to him and his Administration. There have not been knee-jerk reactions, but we want a lasting resolution of the conflict.

We think of the suffering and atrocities that Afghans have endured. We think of the dehumanisation of women. War widows are not allowed to be educated or to work, so they must beg on the streets. That is the Taliban. It is not enough simply to remove bin Laden and his associates; far more than that is required. As the Prime Minister said, we will not walk away, for the impetus must be created by us and the wider alliance.

As the military action unfolds, we must prepare for attacks. Given the sophisticated nature of bin Laden's operation and the detailed planning that was involved in the attacks on America, it is inconceivable that there will not be some sort of follow-up. Bin Laden is not going to isolate himself in his cave and await the arrival of the British and United States military to make his last stand. We know that we are dealing with a far more sophisticated evil than that. He will try to ensure that there are consequences for Israel, the United Kingdom and America. I think that he will target his resources on fracturing the very fragile alliance that we have made with the Muslim states.

Human instinct is such that we most value our possessions when we believe that a person or a force is trying to deny them to us. The attacks on America were an attempt to deny freedom and democracy.

We send our best wishes to our armed forces. Our prayers are with them as they stand up for democracy. However, let us not forget that the majority of the Afghan people would be much better off if they could simply lead a life without fear and torture. It cannot be left to them to create the impetus for change.

1 pm

Mr. David Cameron (Witney): Many right hon. and hon. Members have paid tribute to our armed forces. RAF Brize Norton in my constituency is one of the RAF's largest and longest-standing bases. I was there with the base commander and some of his team a week ago. With its fleet of VC10s, Tristars, and now C17s, Brize provides vital transport and air-to-air refuelling services. The Tactical Communications Wing supports operations by British armed forces around the world.

Many of my constituents will have been working around the clock on the current operations. Their dedication and professionalism, which I saw at first hand, enable our forces to operate overseas, in distant oceans and in faraway lands. They are magnificent people who deserve our support.

Today, therefore, my thoughts—like those of many people—are with those service men and women and their families. I believe that the House owes it to them to say clearly and unequivocally that what they are doing is right. Hon. Members must explain why it must be done. We must explain—as so many hon. Members have done in this debate—why there simply is no other way. The Prime Minister has played a tremendous role in that regard. He has carried people with him. He has spoken for his country.

The point is summarised by what the media sometimes like to call "TINA"—there is no alternative. The point is that to do nothing would be infinitely more dangerous. At heart, the action that we are taking with the Americans is not about vengeance. It is not even merely about seeking to bring to justice those who perpetrated the dreadful acts in New York. It is an act of national self-defence. It is to prevent what happened from happening again, either here or anywhere else. We know that anything less than a full response simply will not work. That has been tried before, following the bombings of the east African embassies and the attack, in the Gulf, on the USS Cole.

We also know that the organisation that destroyed the World Trade Centre wants to do very much more, and far worse things. One can reach no other conclusion from reading bin Laden's statements or watching the chilling video that many of us saw last night. No country is safe while those people are at large.

I therefore believe that our message to our service men and women should be, "What you are doing to combat terrorism is not an attack on a foreign country, but an act to defend freedom and security in your own country. It is every bit as justified as the fight against Nazism in the 1940s. We are proud of what you are doing in our name."

We also owe it to those across the country who are worried about the allied action to try to answer their concerns. Like other hon. Members, I have had very many letters raising questions. How can we take action and avoid civilian casualties? How can we fight an enemy we cannot see? What about the causes of terror? Will not action cause a humanitarian crisis, perhaps with far worse effects than those of the events in New York and Washington?

We must not avoid those questions. They must be confronted and answered, and I believe that we must be frank in doing so. Casualties cannot be avoided in every circumstance in a mission to seek and destroy terror camps and terrorists who are aided and abetted by a brutal regime. There will be casualties, but to accept that as a counsel of despair and do nothing would mean only more innocent casualties.

Clearly the allies have tried to pick legitimate targets. Even President Bush's detractors admitted in last week's debate and today that they have been impressed, as have we all, with the time and the thought that has gone into the allied response. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) made that point, as did the hon. Member for Walsall, North (David Winnick), very powerfully.

Fighting an enemy we cannot see means that the campaign will be far longer and perhaps far more frustrating than a conventional war, but given the nature of the aggressor it is, if anything, even more essential that we fight and win.

The argument about examining the causes of terror is where some people's thinking becomes decidedly woolly. What possible cause and what possible issue could justify what was done in New York and Washington on 11 September? To understand all, even if we could in this case, would not be to forgive all. It would not even enable us to forgive some of what was done.

Some commentators, in their need to find a rational motive for what was done, fall into the mistake of believing that there are, in turn, rational steps that could be taken to make these people go away. There are not. The aim of al-Qaeda is the destruction of Israel, the denial of democracy and the humiliation of the United States and its allies. Even if the international community wanted to make concessions, there is none that could be made to put a stop to these people.

We owe it to people to be frank about what we are involved in. It has been said many times today, not least by the Prime Minister, that we are in this for the long haul. That is absolutely right. Even if our military action achieves quick results—and let us hope and pray that it does—we cannot walk away from what Afghanistan has become. Just as America and its allies helped to rebuild Germany and Japan after the second world war, so we must dedicate ourselves to bringing stability and security to this desperate part of the world.

Clearly the humanitarian crisis that was already taking place in Afghanistan has become worse. As military action escalates, it will probably deteriorate further. Of course the allies must do all that they can now to help to feed the hungry and give shelter to those fleeing the country, but the war aims of closing down the terror camps and crippling bin Laden, his network and his Taliban hosts must be pursued. It is hard to imagine any proper solution to Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis that involves a Taliban Government still in power in Kabul at the end of all this. I hope that the Secretary of State for International Development deals with that point in her summing up.

Men and women such as my constituents at Brize Norton should be sent into dangerous combat only if our country's leaders are prepared to back them all the way. On the evidence of all that we have heard, I believe that they are, and that is the point. After 11 September, we have a duty not only to act, but to see this right through to the conclusion.

9.48 pm

Mr. David Lammy (Tottenham): I begin by giving thought to those of my constituents and others around the world who fear for the safety of their loved ones today and, of course, to our armed forces, whose members come from every constituency in the country. Although the military action taken by American and British forces in Afghanistan over the past 24 hours explicitly avoided innocent Afghans, those people will naturally be agonising over the safety of their friends and family.

I heard one commentator suggest that the next generation is confronting the sins of its fathers and mothers. Well, I belong to that generation which has lived without war, or at least without a war that has hurt us directly. For that generation, multiculturalism and internationalism are more than just hamburgers, samosas, saris and steel drums. Our touchstones, including the music, television and films that we enjoy and the values, good and bad, that we cherish, are overwhelmingly American. I am grateful to the United States for the education that I received at one of its best universities.

We are also, however, a generation that listens to world music and travels to the developing world. We are influenced by Comic Relief and Live Aid and we have friends and colleagues who are black, Asian, Turkish, Serb and Croat. We are more at ease with the realities of the world and the responsibilities tied to globalisation. I see Opposition Members considering whether to challenge the claim that they have friends who are Serb, Asian and Croat.

Now, suddenly, our way of life is under attack. A plane is no longer a dull, convenient way to get to the Spanish seaside. A trip on the underground to London's west end suddenly carries more risks than the possibility of getting one's wallet stolen. Foreign neighbours suddenly arouse suspicion in a way that makes us feel ashamed. Clearly, we are a generation that has lived without war, and in these times we look for leadership. We are comforted by the fact that our Prime Minister was the first on the international stage to caution the need for measured calm and to talk about an international coalition.

As the youngest Member of Parliament, I have received many letters from young people all over Great Britain. Those people were prominent in this year's general election mostly because of their absence. They have a new-found interest in world politics, United States foreign policy and the tenets of Islam. As Britain is America's closest ally, many of them fear for their own lives. They are driven by a need to understand why people might despise us so completely that they want to kill us. Perhaps we have been lulled into a false sense of security since the collapse of the Berlin wall and the end of apartheid. These events challenge our very being.

Young people want answers to fundamental questions. When is it right forcibly to challenge the injustices taking place in a foreign country? What rights are indispensable and what rights are worth sacrificing to prevent a greater evil? What balance of power exists in the world today? Have we contributed to, or even created, some of its injustices? How must we act now to create a more equal world, one in which a life lost in the west has the same importance as one lost in the east? Young people want to know why we, the west, armed Osama bin Laden and the Taliban some years ago, when they behaved so reprehensibly then. Above all, they insist that the international coalition does not create for us new friends who become tomorrow's enemies.

In Tottenham, we are small in number but we have a world reach. Just as in New York, people come from the far corners of the earth to live there. We have residents not only from Afghanistan but from each of its neighbouring countries. We welcome the Prime Minister's clear and consistent declaration that this is not a war against Islam and his continued support for British Muslims, but in Tottenham we must take a few steps further.

In this corner of north London, where 166 languages are spoken, our microcosm is so clearly an important part of this country's future and it offers lessons to the world. Whether in Tottenham, Kabul or the Congo, whether in the developing world or the inner cities of the west, we must share more than our diversity and social exclusion. Our international community brings with it the knowledge of countries throughout the world. Many of my constituents come from the most fragile nations on earth, which are sometimes ravaged by violence and often have problems beyond human comprehension. I welcome those people and want them to succeed here. I want them to feel that they live in a country that has done right by their part of the world. There are historic reasons why the Afghan people are suspicious of western involvement in their country, as we are well aware. If we are to be involved again, we must do better this time.

My constituents hear what happens in their country of origin more quickly than do readers of *The Times* or *The Guardian*. I understand that six correspondents with the World Service of the BBC speak to Afghanistan every day, and we applaud the good work that they do. However, one could multiply that figure by 100 and not get even close to the number of Afghans living in Tottenham who speak to their loved ones every day. That contact should not be underestimated, as those people could be a great asset to our country. However, if the force being used is not justified, proportionate and well directed, my constituents will know that too.

9.55 pm

Mr. Mark Hoban (Fareham): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this important debate. Fareham, like other constituencies along the south coast of Hampshire, is home to many of the service personnel currently taking part in exercises in Oman. Indeed, one of the military medical units based at the Royal Hospital Haslar in the neighbouring constituency of Gosport is in Oman at the moment.

My thoughts are with our service men and women abroad, and with their families here at home. Tonight, they are wondering what role they or their loved ones will play in the conflict as it unfolds over the next few weeks and months. We are right to offer them our full support, and they are right to ask us some questions. Are the objectives of our exercise clear? After the debates tonight and last week, I believe that they are.

Our armed forces and their families know that we support them fully, and that we have learned some lessons from 11 September. They know too that the Secretary of State for Defence is looking to add another chapter to the strategic defence review concerning the lessons that must be learned from asymmetric warfare to ensure that our troops are properly prepared in the future.

However, although times such as these make us properly value our armed forces who serve our country, we should also think of the times when we do not value them. Many members of the armed forces and their families are worried about communication. How frequently can those abroad speak to their families at home? How often can families speak to loved ones on board ship or stationed at a military base? I hope that the Government will consider whether communication opportunities should be made more regular and frequent, as that would reassure service personnel on exercise or operational duty abroad, and their families who remain in this country.

We must also consider whether our armed forces are being over-stretched. I often hear complaints from service families, who tell me of too much time spent away from the home base or the port. We must remember the welfare of our service personnel, of whom we ask so much. We demand their loyalty, dedication and commitment, but we should, in return, be mindful of their welfare, and of the need to maintain morale and retain the troops who serve us.

There is another pillar to the international response, over and above the military reaction. That is the humanitarian response, to which hon. Members have alluded already. I was pleased that, last night, humanitarian aid was dropped alongside the bombs. That is vital, for three reasons.

First, the humanitarian aid represents the compassionate response of this country and our allies to the suffering of those Afghan people forced by drought to leave their homeland. Secondly, it shows the Afghan people that our quarrel is not with them but with their rulers and those whom they harbour. Our quarrel is with the Taliban and Osama bin Laden.

The third message that the humanitarian aid sends is very clear. It shows the wider global community that the action is not about revenge. It is being undertaken in the interests of the Afghan people. We have a clear objective to help them, as well to safeguard our freedom. However, our humanitarian aid should not stop when the military campaign stops—

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the Adjournment of the House may be proceeded with, though opposed, until midnight.—*[Mr. Heppell.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Heppell.*]

Mr. Hoban: Humanitarian aid should not stop when the conflict ends. Thriving on discord and disunity is a hallmark of Osama bin Laden's activities. His first base was in the Sudan, when that country was plagued by civil war. His second base is in Afghanistan, which is also plagued by civil war. We must ensure that, when the military action is over, we do not recreate the conditions that allowed him to thrive. The aid must continue, as a carrot to encourage the parties to form a broadly based Government, and as a stick to ensure that, once at the table, they remain there.

The fight will not be easy; it will not be a short haul. We cannot tell our service personnel and their families the duration of the campaign. I am worried about the stability of the international coalition over a long haul. All credit must go to President Bush and the Prime Minister for their work in bringing the coalition together, but it is important to ensure that it is not riven by the discord and disunity that allows bin Laden to thrive. However, we should not allow our hands to be stayed by those who do not have the stomach for the fight, or those who are nervous about the outcome.

We owe it to the people who lost their lives on 11 September and those who, in the next weeks and months, will fight for our enduring freedom, to remain resolved to defeat Osama bin Laden, replace the Taliban regime and ensure that the world is again a safer place.

10.2 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): It would be appropriate to begin by giving some information that is especially relevant to the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Hoban). Last week, I was privileged to be in Oman, watching Exercise Saif Sareea. I spoke to many of our military personnel—the medical and catering staff at the bases and those in the field, undertaking the exercise—to whom the hon. Gentleman referred. Many of those on our vessels come from places that are not a million miles from his constituency.

The exercise was planned two years ago and is undertaken in partnership with Omani military forces. It is a joint exercise to measure the capability of joint rapid reaction forces. Several important points have emerged, not least the coincidence of the exercise's proximity to Afghanistan. I stress to the hon. Gentleman that although nothing is ever perfect in such huge logistical challenges, our personnel clearly acknowledge that the welfare package has improved dramatically, especially provision for telephoning home.

Like my colleagues from all parties who were present, I intend to set down my thoughts in detail to ensure that we learn lessons. We can always learn lessons; that is the point of an exercise on such a scale. The morale of the troops and our Navy and Air Force personnel has undoubtedly been helped by the improved welfare package.

Many of the personnel to whom I spoke recognise that over the next few months their role may change, for obvious reasons—the purpose of the debate. They recognise their responsibility, and during the debate the House has rightly paid tribute to their bravery, dedication, commitment and professionalism. I know that reports of our debate will be welcomed by our forces in Oman and throughout the world.

I shall comment on the role of the media over the past few weeks. In Afghanistan the media have no real freedom at all. I do not suppose that the television station had a great deal of choice but to broadcast bin Laden's outrageous statement last night. That contrasts starkly with the freedom of the media in this country and in the free world. There is a sharp distinction between the freedoms and the kind of society that we enjoy, and the terrible situation facing Afghan people. However, we had a problem at the outset.

My plea to the media is to think carefully about broadcasting before some of our troops' families at home know what is happening. The situation needs handling with great care. The media were rightly reporting on the movement of ships and forces in the Omani exercise, but

[Mr. Andrew Miller]

they construed it as an operation in preparation for a direct attack on Afghanistan. Unfortunately, that put fear into the families back home. In the context of improving morale, the media could think carefully about how they disseminate information. Nevertheless, I want their freedom, which the entire House values, to continue in our society.

Much has been said about the scale of the atrocity and the type of action that we have undertaken. The selection of targets was clearly meticulous. The objective was to damage, disrupt and destroy the al-Qaeda network. It would be foolish to speak here about detailed tactics. As many hon. Members have acknowledged, those are matters that we must entrust to our colleagues in the Ministry of Defence, in liaison with their opposite numbers in the coalition, but as has been said, there are other matters about which we can speak openly and freely, and demands that we, as a nation that believes in openness and freedom, can make for the longer-term.

One such demand is that aid should be delivered. It would be a tragedy if the efforts that we have already made were not followed through. I understand that an additional £36 million has been committed over and above existing funds, and that must continue. We must make sure that food and aid is delivered. As the winter approaches in Afghanistan, the conditions in the country and the surrounding camps will be horrendous. We must not underestimate the scale of that potential tragedy.

Assets need to be frozen. We need to push harder in the anti-drugs war. We need to recognise the success that we have had in partnership with other navies—for example, in the West Indies. Our West Indies guard ship has done a tremendous job for many years. Let such action be multiplied throughout the coalition to ensure that other sources of heroin, especially Afghanistan, are frozen out. That also includes an attack on the moneys held in accounts in this country.

Finally, we need to ensure that the relationship with Muslims in this country is sustained for the future.

10.10 pm

Mr. George Osborne (Tatton): When I spoke in the debate that was held just three days after the appalling attacks in New York and Washington, I said that we had a duty to support the United States and show that America was not alone in its fight against the enemies of civilisation. Four weeks later, the full measure of that support can be seen in the skies over Afghanistan, and like many other hon. Members I pray tonight for the safety of our pilots, our submariners, our sailors and our soldiers as they go about their difficult job.

That it has taken four weeks to respond to the heinous crime of 11 September is, as many hon. Members have said today, a tribute to the thoughtfulness, strength and patience of the coalition. There were many who, misjudging the character of the American President, expected the US to lash out in anger within days of the attack, to bomb indiscriminately and to assuage the anger of the American people with a bloodbath on the streets of Kabul. Thankfully, the American President is a great deal more intelligent and more courageous than many people have given him credit for.

If the Americans had lashed out, we would have achieved very little, other than to satisfy the basest of urges for revenge. Indeed, we would have created 10,000 bin Ladens, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) warned in his powerful speech on 14 September. Instead, by acting in a measured and determined way—using the rapier rather than the blunderbuss—the coalition has correctly judged the mood of the people whom I represent and that of the people of this country.

This much is clear from every conversation that I have had and every letter that I have received from my constituents since 11 September: they want the perpetrators of the outrages, and those who harbour them, brought to book for what they have done, but they do not want innocent Afghans to be slaughtered. They want peace and security in the middle east and central Asia so that they can go about their lives here in Britain without fear of future terrorist attacks. They do not want us to sow the seeds of decades of turmoil, unrest and fear. As one of my constituents, Mrs. Sellers, said simply in a letter to me:

"There must be justice, not revenge."

The action taking place tonight does, indeed, represent justice, rather than revenge.

In the time remaining to me, I should like to touch on two more specific issues—one immediate, the other long term. The first, immediate issue is that of Pakistan. The support of Pakistan is obviously crucial to the military and diplomatic success of the campaign that we are fighting. Of all the countries involved in the coalition, it is the most vulnerable to attack from so-called Islamic fundamentalists and, as the riots in Quetta and elsewhere show, its Government have taken a big risk in supporting the United States.

To a large extent, of course, the Pakistani Government are reaping their own whirlwind, for until 11 September they were the Taliban's main external backer. They have actively sponsored terrorist organisations that operate in Kashmir, which have committed terrible atrocities—and, of course, President Musharraf only came to power by military coup. In other words, Pakistan is not what one might call the ideal partner in what the Government persist in calling an ethical foreign policy, but we are not always able to choose ideal allies in our foreign policy.

Several Members have said tonight and in recent weeks that we and the Americans have, in our time, funded and armed some of the very Afghan groups that we are now fighting to destroy. We should not be particularly embarrassed about that because it happened in the days of the cold war when we were fighting the Soviet Union and the prime objective of British foreign policy was to defeat the Soviet Union, and we were prepared to use whatever means we could to achieve that end.

Now defeating international terrorism is a prime foreign policy objective, and, as George Bush says, either Governments are with us or they are with the terrorists. Pakistan has not hesitated to support us, so we should support it in return. Therefore, I very much welcome the Prime Minister's visit last week to show our visible support for the Pakistani Government. They need that support because there could be no greater catastrophe for the civilised world than if the Government of Pakistan, with their nuclear arsenal, were to fall into the hands of the fundamentalists.

The second issue that I briefly wish to mention is the much longer-term one of ballistic missile defence. Virtually nothing has been said about missile defence since the events of four weeks ago, but surely the ruins

of downtown Manhattan are grim evidence of why we should try to develop a defensive missile shield as soon as is technologically possible.

Before 11 September, there was a great debate developing—at its liveliest on the Labour Benches—about whether ballistic missile defence was a vital necessity or a threat to global peace. Those against ballistic missile defence rejected as implausible the argument that a rogue state or terrorist organisation might one day get its hands on a ballistic missile and fire it at a western country. Surely no one can now doubt that this is indeed a great risk.

Mr. Barry Gardiner (Brent, North): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. Does he not agree that if it was not possible for the mightiest superpower in the world to shoot down four 747 aircraft at 20 minutes' notice when it knew from mobile phones where those aircraft were and that they were targeted at important buildings, the chances of it shooting down a missile of which it has received no warning in mid-air at 20 seconds' notice are highly improbable?

Mr. Osborne: I am not a military expert, but I would have thought that the difficult decision to use a fighter plane to shoot down a fully passenger-laden aircraft is of a completely different order of magnitude and is a completely different technological problem from deciding to shoot a missile out of the air with a ballistic missile defence system. They are completely different technological issues. The type of people who fly planes into skyscrapers are the type of people who can fire ballistic missiles at us.

Mr. Keetch: One of the arguments that some people moot against ballistic missile defence is that if people can fly aircraft into towers and achieve such devastating consequences, they do not need to fire ballistic missiles. If America had had NMD, how does the hon. Gentleman believe it could have stopped the appalling tragic events of 11 September?

Mr. Osborne: My point is that although those people used planes this time, they might use ballistic missiles the next time if they get their hands on them. If we are really saying that we will not take the decision now to try to build a defensive ballistic missile system and, in five or 10 years' time, someone gets their hands on a ballistic missile and fires it at one of the great cities of the world—perhaps the one in which we are standing—will we not then be saying that we were extremely neglectful and extremely foolish not to attempt to build such a system?

The Government say that the war on terrorism must assume many forms and will take many years. Military action tonight is one of those forms, but developing a ballistic system is another.

10.18 pm

Jim Knight (South Dorset): I enjoyed the contribution of the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne), and I look forward to future debates on missile defence. However, I shall steer well clear of that subject now.

The past four weeks have been truly remarkable, memorable and, obviously, highly regrettable and traumatic. As the world has struggled to comprehend the magnitude of the worst terrorist attack in history, all Members of Parliament have been asked to comment on and sum up our feelings throughout these weeks. That has been difficult enough as the media has filled our newspapers, television screens and our thoughts with speculation and anticipation as to how the world should react. Now that the military response has begun, a new round of comment and reflection has also begun, and it is no less challenging.

The most important starting point for us now is whether military action in itself has been justified. I have every respect for pacifism and for those who argue that military force will antagonise and create martyrs. There is nothing wrong with, or unpatriotic about, such views, but I hope that they are proved wrong. There is a time for dialogue and for compromise, but there is also a time for action.

The current situation demands considered, targeted action under the authority of the UN mandate and article 5 of the NATO treaty, and with as broad a coalition of support as possible. Dialogue and compromise are the right response where there may be reason, but how can we reason with people who are prepared to murder up to 7,000 innocent civilians? How can we reason with a cult that is prepared to die a glorious death in the service of its cause? How can we reason with a regime that, as we saw on "Panorama" last night, revels in the public execution of its women?

I am convinced that the Taliban and the al-Qaeda organisation are a mutually dependent alliance; that, together, they are responsible for 90 per cent. of the heroin smuggled into this country, which causes so much misery and crime in the UK; and that al-Qaeda killed 18 US soldiers in Somalia in 1993, 224 in east Africa in 1998, and 17 members of USS Cole's crew last year. I am convinced that they have sought to acquire nuclear and chemical weapons and would not hesitate to use them in Europe or north America against civilian targets if they had the capability.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the Taliban and al-Qaeda present a real threat to this country's security, as well as to that of our neighbours and allies. The best way to defend against such a threat is to destroy the organisation itself. Military action has been inevitable and must be supported throughout.

Some may argue that we cannot destroy the terrorist threat and that attempting to do so only increases the risk of further terrorist attacks. Clearly, we must be mindful of that potential outcome. We must work actively with as many partners as possible around the world to share intelligence and co-ordinate action to destroy terrorist capability wherever it is found. To do nothing is simply not an option if we want to claim to be defending our own people.

This morning, Sir Alan, I opened—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst): Order. May I make just a small point? The hon. Gentleman is catching the bad habit of the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller). I must be addressed as Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Jim Knight: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This morning, I opened the Lawrence of Arabia trail in my constituency. A beautiful 6-mile walk through some delightful Dorset countryside links his house to where he

[Jim Knight]

died and his grave in Moreton. Along the way one is reminded of the achievements of that remarkable man. In many ways, Lawrence provides a role model for us today. His legend is that of a man who spent time living with and trying to understand the Arabs, who were on the point of revolt against their Turkish rulers. He used that understanding to build an effective liaison between the British military and the Arabs to secure crucial victories in almost impossible terrain. Later, Lawrence campaigned for the Arabs' self-determination and for them as a people, not just a military ally.

We need the same understanding in a similar situation. We need to work in harmony with our Arab friends, both diplomatically and, where appropriate, on the ground. I am proud of what the Government have achieved already in doing what they can to broaden the coalition. They are right to stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States. As a true friend to the Americans, I am proud that our Government's voice of patience and pragmatism has been heard in the White House.

Who would have thought on 11 September that it would take almost three weeks before an alliance with the support of the whole of the civilised world would respond? Who would have thought that, when the time came, missiles would be accompanied by food and medical aid? Who would have thought that such care would be taken to work with Pakistan and Iraq in helping with the long-established refugee crisis? Even now, as we share deep concern at the military action in which we are engaged, we must retain our pride in the role that Britain has played in laying the foundation for a measured and rational response.

This morning I spent some time with members of the Royal Armoured Corps in Bovington, as I did on Thursday night after the debate in this House. The mood was uncertain but thoroughly professional. I spoke with officers who had commanded soldiers in Bosnia knowing the real risks to the lives of their men of sending them into battle. Our troops are ready, trained and professional. The officers who lead them are not gung-ho, jingoistic boys with toys; they are acutely aware of the responsibilities that they bear and are making decisions that will live with them for the rest of their lives.

Our armed forces are now in action to protect our security and destroy the capability of these terrorists to strike again. They are fighting an enemy who cares nothing for civilian life. By contrast, our armed forces are taking whatever care they can to protect civilian life and assist the innocent Afghan people with food and medical aid.

I fully support this action and my thoughts are very much with our armed forces who are serving our country at this time, but I must quickly voice two concerns. First, I am concerned that if action continues over a significant length of time it will impossibly overstretch our armed forces. The time I spent during the recess with service men and women has shown me on every occasion that they are overstretched. Our service men and women are the best trained in the world and will do the job that they are trained to do, but they are also human. They cannot punch above their weight for ever and we must do our best to support properly the armed services' greatest resource—the people.

My second concern is the economy. These are uncertain times. A close member of my family working here in London was made redundant last week. Others close to me fear the same. Uncertainty leads to a lack of confidence and hesitancy among decision makers. This is clearly affecting industries beyond the obvious aviation and tourism casualties of the crisis. At the same time I am hugely encouraged by the capacity of the vast majority in my constituency to carry on regardless. Businesses are still doing well in many places. I believe that the economic fundamentals are right, but I would value some debate on how to encourage confidence in the City and increased economic stability so that the terrorists who have killed so many do not also succeed in damaging thousands of livelihoods.

10.26 pm

Mr. Andrew Selous (South-West Bedfordshire): I am grateful to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker as I had the privilege to speak in last week's debate. So tonight I shall address only one issue.

In the thoughtful speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) he said that Osama bin Laden did not represent the views of the Muslim world and he was absolutely right. However, this morning we learned that Osama bin Laden is winning the propaganda battle throughout the Arab world, particularly and dangerously in Saudi Arabia.

The Secretary of State for Defence, in his well-reasoned speech, spoke of the obligation imposed on all states to suppress terrorism which is mentioned in United Nations resolution 1373. To my mind, that obligation should include the withdrawal of the oxygen of publicity from the terrorists themselves. I am picking up on a point made by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) when he spoke about the media. I am thinking in particular about the Al-Jazeera TV channel based in the state of Qatar. I would urge the Government most strongly to use whatever influence they have at the United Nations and elsewhere to ask the Government of Qatar and all media organisations to deny the terrorists the oxygen of publicity.

I fully accept the need for the events in Afghanistan and elsewhere to be reported by the media, but it is of a wholly different order to give publicity directly to the terrorists and to have Osama bin Laden broadcasting to the whole of the Arab world. We are entitled to ask, in the words of the President of the United States, whether the state of Qatar is with us or against us on this particular issue.

10.28 pm

Mr. Stephen Pound (Ealing, North): The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne) claimed that he was no military expert, and by his comments this evening he proved his entitlement to that description. By seeking somehow to link these awful and perilous matters to the future creation of some absurd, bizarre, galaxy spanning, nuclear missile defence scheme, the twisted thoughts of some Dr. Strangelove, he did the House a grave disservice. If there is to be a child of this conflict, let it not be some further extension of militarisation, but rather the new

world order, the recognition of interdependence and community that has been spoken about so powerfully and so much.

Mr. George Osborne: I think that ballistic missile defence has more to do with the events of 11 September than the scout movement does.

Mr. Pound: I am unused to right hon. and hon. Members sneering at and criticising the scout and guide movement of this country. The fact that there are those who do so is a fact to be deplored.

I shall return to the rather more impressive contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart). She spoke of a just war. I am at one, odd though the picture might seem, with her, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine because this clearly is a just war. The fact that it is a war that aims at justice, does not mean that there is anything less than a determination in this nation to pursue it. The fact that we have no appetite for war does not mean that we will not pursue it, and the absence of hunger does not mean that we do not have a stomach for it.

When the hon. and gallant Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) referred to the conversations in the drawing rooms of his constituency, I thought of those in my constituency, where sadly we do not have drawing rooms, with whom I have discussed these issues. This morning I spoke to a group of Muslim constituents whom I am proud and honoured to represent. They are part of the multiracial, multicultural and multi-faith community which is in so many ways the glory and strength of this nation. They told me that their fears were as mine. They said that they do not see any commonality of interest between their Muslim faith and what they have heard on the airwaves, and which has been mentioned already today. They do not see a war against the west. They desire to live in peace in a decent and civil society.

I spoke to the pupils of Viking primary school in my constituency where 50 per cent. of those attending are of the Muslim faith. Those Muslim children told me that they saw the enemy clearly and that it is terrorism, not Islam or some foreign demon. If a primary school child can see that so clearly, is it not depressing that there are still those voices around us, and occasionally within the House, who seek to demonise a peaceful religion and somehow subvert it to their own agenda?

At my surgery this morning I spoke to a 30-year-old man from Afghanistan. He has been in this country for three years and his application for asylum is supported by a testimony from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. His physical torture was so horrific and barbaric that I would not bring the details of it to the Floor of the House. He told me that he wept for his nation, the nation that he loved. He also wept tears of gratitude that those of us in the west are finally realising that we are our brother's keeper, that we have to act and that we cannot allow this barbarity and assault on civilisation to continue unchallenged. That greatest challenge was supported by that young man from Afghanistan, whose family still live in that country.

Like many hon. Members I have had letters from constituents saying that we should do nothing. They say that we should stand back and allow the internal contradictions of the Taliban regime to somehow collapse the system in on itself, let the lonely watchtowers of the Khyber crumble to dust or, as we have heard today, let an official of the court, accompanied by a tipstaff, prowl the echoing alleys of Kandahar and Kabul and take Mr. bin Laden into the care of the court and haul him before some British system of justice. That is a good idea, but is it practicable?

I have had letters from constituents equally practically asking what is to happen to the many Mrs. bin Ladens and their numerous progeny. At the end of the day, however, the one question that I would ask them is, "If not this action, what action should be taken?"

In the 21st century, at the dawning of what must be a century of hope in which we can finally show that there is a better way of living, can we really justify inaction and dream that somehow the world will become a better place without our doing anything?

There will be sacrifices. There must be. We are already suffering. Our service men and women may already have suffered far more than we in the House can imagine. We owe a duty, however, not only to our people and those of the coalition but to humanity, to find a better way of living.

On 11 September we saw the ghost of the past, which still has the power to haunt us. We saw the way that things should not be done. Now we have the opportunity to show how they might be done. The unanimity that I have heard expressed by almost everyone in the House will send a message of such strength and power beyond the walls of this Chamber that there will be no doubt anywhere in the world of the determination of this nation, this coalition and ultimately, I hope, this planet to live together in peace. That is the future. Bin Laden and his murderous crew are the past. The sooner that they are consigned to that past the better.

10.36 pm

Richard Younger-Ross (Teignbridge): I join the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Pound) in adding my thanks and praise to those service men and women who are serving us in Afghanistan to bring the terrorists to justice. I also add my thanks to those who serve us at home in the intelligence service. We have not heard much about them this evening, but they are working day and night to thwart terrorist attacks throughout the world. We may never hear about their sacrifice but I am sure that we all thank and praise them.

Many hon. Members mentioned the Gulf war. Several commented that we should not have stopped when we did, but carried on and put an end to Saddam Hussein and his evil regime. I agree, but that is history. We did not do so. To say that we did not do it then, so we should not do it now does not follow. It is dangerous for people to try to make up for the mistakes of the past by making a mistake today. That is not the way to go.

I ask those who do not recall or know much about military history to remember some of the basics of warfare. One has to keep one's eye on the target. Those who are distracted and leave the field in hot pursuit of some small detachment or who go off to fight their own small battles, return to the battlefield to find that they have lost not only the battle but the war.

Much work has been done by President Bush and by our Prime Minister in particular to bring about a coalition of many countries throughout the world. Many people are

[Richard Younger-Ross]

trying to undermine that coalition. Many are working through the media in the middle east. Many are trying to do so through riots in Pakistan. There are Palestinians fighting in the occupied territories. In the coming days and weeks, we will hear about more riots and about attacks on embassies—possibly those of the United States or our own. All those people want to destabilise the coalition, but in doing so they would be giving victory to the enemy.

Iraq would love the alliance to attack it. I am fairly certain that there will be activity at the edge of the southern and the northern no-fly zones to provoke alliance forces to drop bombs and missiles to destroy targets. I would not be surprised if missiles were placed close to civilian targets. The Iraqis have done it in the past; they did it in the Gulf war. They claimed when the missile was attacked that civilians had died there. They want to undermine the coalition in seeking a victory in a struggle that they lost many years ago.

I urge hon. Members who wish to appear to be bold and upstanding—to be bigger and more macho than anyone else—that they are like the elephant walking towards the elephant trap. Those who enter the elephant trap are bound to give Osama bin Laden victory, and that we must resist.

10.40 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington): I must explain my constituency interest. The constituents of many west London Members will be starting their shifts at Heathrow tonight. With Heathrow a target, there is concern that we tackle terrorism in the long term to make all our communities safe.

I was interested by the comment of the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) about the broad agreement in the House about concerns and approaches, the sadness, and the general welcome for the cautious approach that has been taken. He also said that continuous reference was made to a just war, which my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Pound) also mentioned. If we are to tackle terrorism in the long term, it is not ourselves whom we need to convince that this is a just war but the young men and women in north Africa, Pakistan, Iraq, the middle east and Palestine.

Every action that we take in the coming weeks needs to be guided by the principles of a just war. Our concept of a just war goes back to Augustine, Aquinas, Vittoria, Grotius and others and formed the basis of the charter of the United Nations. They are also the principles laid out in the Koran. The first principle is that there has to be just cause. Seven thousand dead is a just cause for pursuing and ensuring that we bring to justice the people who perpetrated that atrocity. However, many in the countries that I have mentioned do not believe that the deaths justify the invasion or bombardment of a whole country.

The second principle of just war is right intention. The motive has to be the pursuit of a just cause. We cannot bring in other motivations at this stage if we want to describe the present conflict as a just war. So, for example, we cannot broaden it to a turkey shoot at the Taliban because we would undermine the support for a just war in the very countries that could create the next generation of terrorist suicide bombers. We cannot broaden it to a battle against Iraq. I was worried by the reference made by the Secretary of State for Defence to Afghanistan as a priority target, which implied that other targets might be pursued. If we pursue Iraq at this stage, we will destabilise the whole region and create the next generation of suicide bombers who will come to Heathrow and elsewhere.

The third principle is that there must be proper authority. The United Nations resolution gives us some authority, but we should go the extra mile. This is not some pacifist approach. I am not a pacifist, but we have to convince the whole Arab world at every level that we have just cause. The international court has been stalled by the United States of America. Perhaps we should suggest a special United Nations commission to prepare the indictment to start legal action under international law against the perpetrators. In that way, we would convince everyone that we were pursuing the terrorists according to the process of law.

The next principle is last resort. One does not go to war unless one has pursued every alternative mechanism. I do not believe that ultimatums are diplomacy. The shooting war has now started. The tactically correct approach in the coming weeks may be to offer an interval in which we could go the extra mile to demonstrate that the Taliban have another opportunity to meet the demands that we have put to them. If nothing else, that would consolidate the support that we already have.

The final principle of just war is proportionality. That is not just about a body count or the numbers dead on a quid-pro-quo, eye-for-an-eye basis. In proportionality, under the just law concepts, there is complete immunity for non-combatants. One cannot have just cause to react to the massacre of innocents with a further massacre of the innocent.

Of course we need to consider whether the mechanisms that we are using at the moment will ensure the immunity of non-combatants. However, we must also recognise that the concept of proportionality applies to the life that we shall bestow on the refugees and to the potential for destabilising a whole region—not just during limited periods of military activity but in the long term—and that regional instability will eventually destabilise whole sections of the world.

Those who have argued that this is a just war have not convinced many throughout the world, and if we do not convince them, we shall suffer the whirlwind in the long term, in our own constituencies, in our own society, when the next generation of terrorists emerges. I believe that the long-term interests of this battle against terrorism are best served by bringing the shooting war to an end as quickly as possible.

Mr. Salmond *rose—*

Ms Stuart *rose—*

John McDonnell: I give way to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond).

Mr. Salmond: There is a final criterion of a just war—jus ad bellum—which is that there must be a good chance of success. Would the hon. Gentleman like to comment on that?

John McDonnell: I was just coming to that conclusion. I believe that unless we reinforce our mandate, unless we

demonstrate proportionality to the whole world, unless we can demonstrate just cause, right intention, proper authority and proportionality, we shall fail, perhaps not in the short term, but in the long term, and the long-term consequences will be felt in my constituency.

10.46 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cotswold): I am delighted to be able to catch your eye during this important debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) made a thoughtful speech. The House should be focusing on the concept of proportionality. The events of 11 September were probably the worst terrorist atrocity against a civilised nation that we have ever known and we are in uncharted waters, but we certainly do not want to do anything that would destabilise the region.

In my question to the Prime Minister, I praised him for his action, combined with that of President Bush, in building the broad-based coalition, especially among the front-line Islamic states. It is very important that we keep all those states on board.

One thinks with admiration of the bravery of General Musharraf of Pakistan. I have visited Pakistan and travelled right up to the front line, and I know the considerable difficulties that the Pakistanis face. The Pakistanis and Iranians already have 3.5 million refugees between them, and they are likely to face many more. We should continue with every possible aspect of the humanitarian effort and with every other effort that we can to help states such as Pakistan. Its debt-to-GDP ratio is enormous. Its people are among the poorest in the world. I hope that, at the very least, one outcome of the conflict will be that we not only keep it on board but eventually bring a better quality of life to the people of that very poor country.

I praised the United States, which has shown tremendous restraint. The building of the broad-based coalition is most important. We should have specific, achievable objectives for this military action. We should aim to use democratic means backed up by military action, by which I mean that we should aim to bring Osama bin Laden and his colleagues to an international court for trial. That must be the ultimate aim of democratic states. We should not be aiming simply to kill these people by undemocratic means. Although such deaths might be an unintended consequence of the military action that we are taking, our ultimate aim should be to bring those people to trial in an international court and a democratic country. I am sure that many other people in Afghanistan—leaders of the Taliban regime—will be declared international criminals and should be brought to trial.

I have some first-hand experience of the brutishness of the Afghani regime as some of the hijackers who brought an aeroplane to the United Kingdom last year were put in a camp in my constituency. I spoke to them through an interpreter, and they described the very brutal regime under which they had been living. It might be useful for the House to understand what that regime has done. The Taliban have burnt all the books in the libraries and destroyed all the schools. They do not allow any of their people to go to school. They do not allow Afghani women to set foot outside the house unless they are fully covered and accompanied by their husband. Women are certainly never allowed into someone else's house. The poor people of Afghanistan are living under that type of regime.

We therefore have to be careful about our military and other objectives in Afghanistan. If we leave a vacuum in the area, a much worse situation could well succeed the current one. We have to be clear in the objectives that we set ourselves.

We must also maintain the broad-based coalition that has been built. I have just returned from a trip to China, which I shall register as an interest. It was interesting to talk to some of the top communist officials. Although they were very supportive of the broad-based coalition to act against terrorism, they made it clear that they would not support the coalition if large numbers of innocent civilians were caught up in the action. Although it will be a difficult balancing act to keep on board countries such as China and Pakistan, it is essential that we do so. We will be in a much more difficult position if the coalition collapses.

We also have to be very careful to keep on board the front-line states, particularly the Islamic ones. As the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington said, if we embark on military action that is seen to be disproportionate and start to lose coalition members—especially the Arab states—we could find not only that the region has been destabilised, but that many more bin Ladens have arisen as a consequence of our action. That would clearly be a most unfortunate consequence.

We must be careful not only about that but about extending the action to other countries, such as Iraq and South Yemen to name but two possibilities. If we become embroiled in a larger front—any military strategist would say that one should not become involved in a too-large front—we will get into difficulties. Although we must pursue terrorism to the nth degree, we must also be careful about how we do it.

I pay great tribute to our armed forces, as many hon. Members have. I participated in the armed forces parliamentary scheme and spent time with the RAF. Hon. Members saw how, even before this military action, it was already overstretched. As a consequence of this action, our armed forces are likely to be even more overstretched. Now, armed forces members will have to spend even more time away from their families. Their families will not only be very concerned about them, but have to endure the absence from the household of their breadwinner. I was therefore pleased to hear the assurances of the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary that the armed forces will be given whatever resources they need.

Many hon. Members have mentioned humanitarian aid. I think that it is critical that we should continue every possible effort to get humanitarian aid into Afghanistan. Although it will be difficult to deliver aid, surely it will not be impossible to do so once our armed forces are in place. It will not be impossible to hire Afghani drivers to take aid from Pakistan to Afghanistan. We do not want to cause those very poor people more suffering than is strictly necessary by the military action. I am sure that it will be possible, using the available military resources of the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries, to get resources into Afghanistan.

I also urge the Secretary of State for International Development to say something about what she can do in terms of resources for the huge number of displaced people. I have seen them in the camps and they live in appalling conditions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. John Austin.

10.55 pm

John Austin (Erith and Thamesmead): Like most hon. Members, I heaved a sigh of relief that there was not an immediate and ill-thought-out response from the United States after the appalling atrocity of 11 September. It is comforting that there has been such restraint and I join in the tribute that has been paid to our Prime Minister's contribution to putting together the international coalition. It was important to get resolutions 1368 and 1373 crafted and I welcome the assurance given this evening that, under article 51, the United Nations Security Council has been informed of our actions. I hope that it will continue to be so at every step of this engagement and that the UN will be brought much more into play in this issue.

I also welcome the clear statements by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition that this is not in any sense a war against Islam. As the Arab newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat* says:

"Terrorism doesn't have a race, religion or nationality . . . The perpetrators must be brought to justice, but also be treated as a tiny minority. Everyone understands the US is entitled to take action. It is time for resolve but also wisdom. This should not be turned into a clash of civilisations."

Our own Muslim communities here in Britain were among the first and the most outspoken in their condemnation of the atrocities of 11 September and I welcome the Prime Minister's meeting with the Muslim Council of Britain and others.

We need to keep all the partners in the coalition together, but we need also to keep our own Muslim communities informed and on board. The Greenwich Islamic Centre and Woolwich mosque in my constituency were among the first to express their condemnation of this appalling atrocity. This is not a war against Islam, but we in this country need to wage a war against Islamophobia.

In that respect, the outburst from Baroness Thatcher, which echoed the racist language of Mr. Berlusconi and the similar intemperate Islamophobic utterances and anti-Arab racism in *The Daily Telegraph*, did great damage to good race and community relations here and damaged the ability to keep the coalition together.

Although my Muslim constituents support action to combat terrorism, they recognise only too well that the support from Islamic countries and in the Arab world in particular could rapidly decline in the wake of pressure from and unrest in their own communities. The hon. Member for Cotswold (Mr. Clifton-Brown) referred to the difficulties for the Government of Pakistan, but countries such as Jordan, which have said that they support the international efforts to combat terrorism, stress the necessity for restraint in respect of inflicting losses on the innocent civilians of Afghanistan.

Lebanon has stressed its concern, saying that the UN must play more of a role, and Ghazi Afridi, the Lebanese information Minister, hopes that

"these strikes remain targeted and limited . . . otherwise they will spark feelings of anger and grief which will be difficult to control . . . by countries whose stability cannot be said to withstand every shock."

Syria has supported the strikes, but says that their success depends on getting Israeli leaders to "respect the international law" with regard to Palestine.

Muslims in my constituency share the anger of their brothers and sisters about the international community's failure to resolve the conflict in the middle east and the failure to make progress in Kashmir. They also express concern about the situation in Iraq. It may be that they see thousands of children dying in Iraq. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) may place all the blame on sanctions and I know that our Foreign Secretary would say that the blame rests fairly and squarely with Saddam Hussein. I happen to believe that the truth lies somewhere in the middle, but the perception in the Arab world is that children in Iraq are dying because of sanctions. We must be aware of that perception.

I want to use the "P" word—Palestine. Of course the Prime Minister was right when he said that Osama bin Laden has no interest in resolving the middle east conflict. It is in his interest to prolong and intensify that conflict, but its continuation, the illegal occupation of Palestine and the failure to make progress in the peace process provide a fertile recruiting ground for Osama bin Laden and threaten continued support for the coalition. That is why two things are essential to the solidarity of the coalition against terrorism.

First, we must ensure that any military response is measured, targeted and proportionate. The deaths of innocent civilians in Afghanistan as a result of military intervention would lead to the protests in Peshawar being repeated in cities and towns throughout the Muslim world and could destabilise the Governments who, at the moment, support the international coalition. We also need to build on diplomacy and ensure that development aid gets through. I fully support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart), who said that we need to think now about what will happen afterwards to rebuild Afghanistan. I hope that consideration of a UN protectorate is on the Government's agenda.

Secondly, we need to deal with the issue of Palestine. It cannot be left to negotiation in which Israel effectively has a veto over any process. Under Sharon, the most extreme, fanatical and fundamentalist groups have returned to the centre stage of Israeli politics. This is the man who was responsible for the massacres in Sabra and Chatila. We ought to have an international criminal court. That is where Osama bin Laden should be tried; it is where Saddam Hussein should be tried, and it is where Ariel Sharon should be tried.

We need to build a coalition to support the ratification of the International Criminal Court so that we can have a civilised response to the evils of terrorism throughout the world, whether it is the terrorism of Osama bin Laden or the state terrorism of Ariel Sharon, Tansu Ciller and Saddam Hussein.

11.1 pm

Geraint Davies (Croydon, Central): There has been a great deal of discussion tonight and I am sure that we are all persuaded by it, but there are those in the communities that we represent who may not accept that this action is justice, not revenge. They may not accept that we have no choice but to act against terror or be attacked. There are those who think that these are issues between races or faiths. We must continue to talk to our communities about what has happened.

We all know that 7,000 people of different races and religions were needlessly killed. We all know that if different means of destruction had been available to the

perpetrators, that number could have been 70,000 or 700,000. It is important that we remind people that it was nearly a month before action was taken, because there are those who think that it was almost immediate, whereas we know that a coalition has been built on a humanitarian strategy and the need to find political solutions, as well a commitment to achieve justice on the basis of evidence.

Overwhelming evidence against bin Laden has been emerging. Some of that has been placed in the public domain, but there are those who say that they have not seen all the evidence and do not accept the argument that someone might be shot if all the evidence were made public. We have now heard from bin Laden himself that, in his view, the events in New York were God's actions and therefore good, but still there are those who are uncomfortable with the proportionality and nature of the response. They argue that it is against Islam, even though Muslim leaders in Saudi Arabia and at home have said that the terrorist actions defamed Islam and Muslims' reputation in the world. The Muslim Council of Britain said that Muslims must be in the vanguard of the movement to achieve justice following those crimes against humanity.

We know that bin Laden thinks that all Jews and Americans, whether civilian or military, are legitimate targets. We ought to remind any hotheads in our local communities of that fact. We should remind them also that in Bosnia, Kosovo and Kuwait, we acted to defend Muslim communities, and we will do the same in Afghanistan.

Years of drought, war and misrule in that country have left people facing a humanitarian disaster of apocalyptic proportions as the winter approaches. We have been told by many speakers that, even before the events of 11 September, there were 4 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and that 7 million Afghan people were dependent on aid, in part because so many women are uneducated and unable to find work for themselves. I am glad that Britain is giving an extra £55 million in aid, and that George Bush last week announced $320 million in aid. It is important that the UN should now get a grip and provide refugee camps with the access, funding and administration that will enable people to escape the horrors of war.

Our commitment is to root out bin Laden and his terrorist network, and to avert a humanitarian disaster. However, we must also give a commitment that we will play our part in providing a lasting peace in Afghanistan and in creating an opportunity for renewal there. We must not make the mistakes that the Soviet forces made when they withdrew 10 years ago and left behind civil war and carnage in a country awash with small arms. After the Soviet forces had gone, fundamentalism—initially in the guise of the Northern Alliance—was on the rise. The Northern Alliance now appears to want our support, but it really only wants our arms and air power so that it can resume committing the war atrocities that it used to commit.

We should build a lasting peace in Afghanistan, in which all ethnic and religious groups are represented. We should also, in the aftermath of our action, get involved in the country's economic renewal. The international community should give its support to schools, hospitals and economic renewal.

Last time, we simply left Afghanistan without rebuilding strong and neighbourly relationships with Iran and Pakistan, which had to pick up the pieces and the refugees. If we do the same this time, the peace will not be lasting, for, in time, another bin Laden will emerge.

It is important that change come from within, so that lasting reconciliation can be secured, in Afghanistan and in the middle east in general. In that way, we would be able to demand that an independent Palestine be established alongside Israel.

Our immediate priority is to overcome bin Laden and to avert a humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan, but our lasting commitment in a shrinking world is to admit our vulnerabilities while accepting our responsibilities. In that way, we can hope to push forward peace, hope and justice instead of war, fear and terror.

Finally, it is important that we, in the community of communities that is Britain, should strengthen our resolve to work together. We must condemn those who divide us and stoke up hatred on the back of catastrophe. Prejudice cannot be tolerated, regardless of the community from which it comes. This is a testing time for people in all communities. We must lead by example, at home and abroad, and in so doing celebrate the fact that there is hope for the future of Britain and the world, and for all people and children everywhere.

11.8 pm

Mr. Frank Roy (Motherwell and Wishaw): On 11 September, nearly 7,000 people from more than 60 countries had their lives snuffed out by acolytes of terror who showed no regard for the main religious ethos, which recognises the sanctity of life.

On that fateful day, only four short weeks ago, 10,000 children lost a mother or a father—the light that would have guided them through childhood to adulthood. All parents will recognise the sheer horror faced by those children over the past four weeks, a horror that is compounded by bewilderment. Those children will have regarded their parents as heroes, and they will be asking why people should have committed such a gross act against them.

On 11 September, life took a different twist, and not only for the victims in New York, Washington DC or Pennsylvania. It took a different twist for all hon. Members and for all our constituents.

I consider myself to be streetwise, and images or even the reality of violence do not shock me easily. But who will forget watching the images of 11 September, as I did, in my living room, with my family? I felt shock, bewilderment, and repugnance towards the hijackers. I wondered what made people commit such atrocious crimes in the name of religion. Their actions had nothing to do with their religion.

On 11 September, thousands of men and women, sons and daughters, aunts and uncles, husbands and wives woke to up to another day in their lives. Little did they know that it was the last day of their lives, which would be cut so tragically short. As I watched the images and discussed them with my family over the next few days, I tried to imagine being in those buildings on that day, looking out of the window and seeing an aeroplane coming towards me at more than 500 mph. It is beyond belief. Let us try to imagine being on the hijacked airliners

[Mr. Frank Roy]

and knowing, as the passengers knew, what could happen. Disbelief, shock and incomprehension are the response. We cannot comprehend how those people felt.

That is why yesterday's action must be supported and defended by all hon. Members. Operation Enduring Freedom will be a testing time for us all, especially the men and women of our armed services. Two weeks ago, I was lucky enough to visit a hillside on the Albanian-Macedonian border to witness at first hand the work of British troops in Operation Essential Harvest. The area was awash with arms that were being fed to terrorists. Albanian villagers told me that some arms, including kalashnikov rifles, could be picked up for $25 in the local market.

I spoke at length to an ethnic Albanian Muslim Member of Parliament, who told me about the extent of the good work that our armed services had done. He acknowledged their courage, devotion to duty and professionalism. I also spoke to some of the troops there. I asked a soldier what he thought that he should be doing now that they were approaching the end of their exercise. He replied, "I wish I could stay here to see a logical conclusion to our work."

Operation Enduring Freedom must ensure that millions of Afghans see a logical conclusion to current events in their country. I hope that the free world has an endgame strategy, which sets up a United Nations protectorate, lets Afghans discuss matters among themselves and helps them to bring their country back to some semblance of order.

The endgame strategy must also include the poppy fields of Afghanistan. They are the killing fields for many young people in our country and the western world. Seventy-five per cent. of the market comes from Afghanistan; 90 per cent. of the heroin in this country originates from Afghanistan. In the following days, weeks and months, we must ensure that the poppy fields stop sowing the seeds of misery, which transcend borders and affect our constituents.

The men and women of our armed forces deserve our full support and prayers. Those men and women are striving to defeat terrorism and to take terrorism out of the lives of so many innocent people. We wish our forces well and send them the message that through their bravery over the next few months, peace and freedom in the name of religion, honesty and integrity must prevail.

11.15 pm

Mrs. Caroline Spelman (Meriden): I begin by thanking the Secretary of State for International Development for being present tonight. We were hoping to have the opportunity for a debate with her last week. Tonight's debate has shown how important it is for her to be in the Chamber, as her area of responsibility is a key aspect of the current crisis.

I am keen to leave the right hon. Lady the lion's share of the remaining time, as she has indicated her willingness to answer questions on the subject of the humanitarian crisis and more generally, and it seems that this will be the last parliamentary occasion that we shall have for a week to put questions through her to the Government. Now that military action has started, it is a tense and difficult time and it is good that we have the opportunity to raise such questions.

I am only sorry that the debate is taking place so late at night and that the gentlemen and ladies of the press have gone. I often feel that when we have debates in which there is a strong consensual tone—when, together, we are feeling our way towards the right response—that is the time when Parliament is at its best, yet I fear that we are talking among ourselves this evening.

For the past four weeks we have tried as an Opposition to be unstinting in our bipartisanship, and have supported the allied effort to track the perpetrators of the attacks in America. My contribution tonight will be in the same constructive spirit, infused with a natural sense of compassion for the victims of starvation and war in Afghanistan, the victims of the bombs in America, and the families of the service men and women who are putting their lives on the line for us.

I place on the record a tribute to our American allies who, through their restraint, have given the world time to think and to consider the best way to tackle terrorism while limiting the damage to innocent people. We have had time to realise that there are no quick fixes and that we must be in for the long haul. We have seen other creative ways of hitting terrorists where it hurts—through their financial supply.

During this thinking time, we keep asking why—why would intelligent, educated men who have lived among us for several years want to fly aeroplanes into buildings at the cost of their own lives and the lives of many others? That bears all the hallmarks of cult behaviour. Bin Laden as a cult figure can be seen in his true context. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) described that cult as a narrow, aggressive sect that does not represent Islam. Bin Laden would like a holy war, but we have no war with Islam or the Afghan people, only with terrorists like him who claim innocent lives.

Within hours of the twin towers being felled, people understood that one of the underlying causes was that terrorists had been allowed to exploit others' abject poverty and turn it into hatred against the west. International development has now risen up the agenda because of the scope that it offers to prevent that from happening again, and we must keep it there until poorer nations can see for themselves that we are trying to help. That is not to say that someone who is poor is more likely to become a terrorist; of course that is not true. However, if someone is poor, he is vulnerable. That is why we must help.

The tragic events in America have made strange bedfellows of the rest of the world, with former adversaries now joined in alliance against the scourge of terrorism. The lion has, indeed, lain down with the lamb—America with Russia and China, and now Pakistan and India. They are new allies with a common purpose.

Britain is in a unique position to help; our history confers such a responsibility on us. We enjoy a special relationship with America, a partnership with Europe and strong ties with the Commonwealth. We must use that influence, above all, with a sense of humanity and responsibility.

The refugee crisis is here and now. Our war effort will not be helped unless we get the care and treatment for the refugees right. We welcome the fact that the Government will spend an additional £25 million on the crisis, but announcing the money is not the same as putting clean food and water in the hands of a starving refugee.

Aid agencies have recommended that the internationally agreed standards of the Sphere project should be used to ensure that refugee camps have enough food, water, shelter and sanitation, so I should like to ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether she can reassure the House that those international standards will be enforced.

I am sure that the right hon. Lady is aware of the reports on the conditions in the refugee camps in Pakistan—"makeshift" was the word used earlier. We should not blame Pakistan for that, for without adequate international support it cannot be expected to bear the burden of 2 million refugees—a figure that rises by thousands every day.

Our view is that no country should have to bear a disproportionate burden; it is a shared responsibility. We have the resources and capability to ensure that the camps, and the new camps, are brought up to acceptable international standards. The sight of men, women and children struggling in the squalor of refugee camps is as bad as that of the innocent victims of military action.

Pakistan will not feel encouraged to open its borders unless the international community can ensure that it will not be swamped by refugees. The United Nations estimated that 30,000 refugees were massing on the border with Pakistan, but it did so on 27 September and I wonder whether the Secretary of State has more up-to-date figures. We need to know the likely scale of the problem.

We should not overlook the fact that Iran has more refugees than Pakistan. Fewer of them are in refugee camps; most have been diffused into the population, but the possibility of unrest in Iran could be as great as that in Pakistan. Given that Iran is suspicious of any military action, what are the Government doing to ensure that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan does not become an intolerable burden on the Government of Iran?

Now that military action has begun, we must urgently consider how humanitarian and military action can take place simultaneously. That must happen because only a four-week window is left before the onset of the Afghan winter.

Given the Taliban's legacy of disrupting essential humanitarian aid and stealing the World Food Programme's food stocks and their manifest lack of care for their own people, delivering aid into Afghanistan will now be very difficult. What assurances can the Secretary of State give to the House that the aid will not fall into the wrong hands and fuel the Taliban war effort?

It has been announced that 37,000 food rations were dropped yesterday, and the Prime Minister said in his statement that 5,000 tonnes of wheat had been delivered, but does the right hon. Lady accept that that amount would have to be substantially increased to avert a disaster? The UN estimates that 7.5 million Afghans depend on food aid and that 1.6 million face starvation. The crisis is, therefore, several times the size of that which we abhorred in Kosovo.

The awful truth is that, before 11 September, Afghanistan already had the worst refugee crisis in the world, with 4 million refugees in the region and more than 1 million internally displaced. However, I got the impression from the statements this afternoon that we are in danger of giving up on the difficulty of getting aid into the interior. We must not give up on the refugees there. A United Nations spokesman said tellingly:

"Their grip on survival is definitely slipping."

We need to get the numbers into perspective: 20 million people are still left in Afghanistan.

I talked to the Christian Aid workers recently returned from Afghanistan and I was shocked to learn that following three years of drought, the water table is 57 m below ground. I had to check that figure—I thought that they meant 57 ft. It means that women and children are unable to haul up water and they lack the equipment to pump it up.

The aid agencies make a very important point, and it is important to share it with the House. They strongly desire to keep people in their villages where they have shelter and where they can be in place to plant next year's crop. Their all fleeing to refugees camps will only exacerbate the problem that we have at present.

What will the Secretary of State do to ensure that people are enabled to stay in their villages? Does she accept that the air drops may miss the refugees as they flee from their established communities and that road convoys stand a better chance of intercepting the refugees before they leave home?

Nobody is ever a willing refugee. Refugees have fled famine and oppression and most would like to return home. We have a duty to ensure that they are able to return. As the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Mr. Shaw) said, we have to create that hope.

As an Opposition, we have said several times that we must be prepared to rebuild Afghanistan. That is the best way we have of demonstrating that the west has no war with ordinary Afghan people. We have all seen the pictures of Kabul even before the bombing started. It had been reduced virtually to rubble by 20 years of war, and the present military action is bound to cause more damage, so reconstructing the infrastructure of the country will be vital to putting it back on its feet.

We must keep these long-term results of the action firmly in our sights. Weak, unstable countries are the tinderbox of conflict and have proved a seedbed for terrorism. What will the Secretary of State do to ensure that the people of Afghanistan and the millions of refugees in Pakistan, Iran and the other neighbouring countries can look forward to a safe return? A country with a future presents less of a threat to world security.

This needs to be a shared responsibility. We have chosen to stand shoulder to shoulder with America to provide global leadership in the fight against international terrorism. Britain is at the heart of building an international coalition that bridges ideological divides. It can be used to set the example that restoring a homeland should be an integral part of solving a refugee crisis.

To win the war on terrorism we must not only re-establish the rule of international law but tackle the humanitarian consequences and do that well. By providing aid, decent camps and long-term reconstruction, we will help to maintain long-term peace. The new humanitarian coalition is our best chance of bringing that about and, then, from this awful tragedy, we can wrest some good.

11.29 pm

The Secretary of State for International Development (Clare Short): I congratulate the hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs. Spelman) on taking up her post. I hope that it will not embarrass her if I say that the Bishop of Birmingham, of whom I am enormously fond—he recently announced his retirement and has done much good service in our city—rang me to say what a fine woman she is. I look forward to working with her. As she says, not only is the task of seeking to make life better for the poor of the world one of the most honourable that one can have in politics, but we shall not have a safe world order in the future unless we make a bigger effort to deal with the poverty, suffering and injustice that exist in our modern world. I look forward very much to working with the hon. Lady to that end.

We have had an unusually thoughtful and high-quality debate. It is normal in times of crisis for the House to pull together, but almost all the contributions have been deeper than that; there has been a shared analysis and a deep consensus. Hon. Members agreed that military action was necessary to deal with the evil perpetrated in the United States and to take apart the terrorist network that is capable of inflicting the same kind of evil again in another part of the world. There was an absolute consensus across all the parties that we must give as big a commitment to humanitarian action, both in an emergency and to rebuild the countries that are suffering. There is a real commitment to global social justice and to dealing with some of the injustices, particularly in that region of the world, which do not excuse the terrorists' actions but feed the bitterness that misleads some young people to engage in that action.

I have been a Member of the House for 18 years and I have never seen such a deep consensus, built on an analysis rather than a coming together at a time of crisis. We all want to pay a warm tribute to our armed forces. We send them and their families our support, concern and thoughts at this difficult time.

It is important to remember that the Afghan people were facing a crisis before 11 September. They have suffered 20 years of war and three years of terrible drought, which have contributed to a huge loss of life and tremendous human suffering. Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries, with some of the world's highest child and maternal mortality rates. Disability is common—a consequence of the large number of landmines that litter the country after so many years of war.

Health and education services have virtually disappeared and women and girls have suffered grievously from the limitations of movement, health care, education and employment imposed by the Taliban. Clearly, that situation was deeply serious before 11 September. As has been said, there were large numbers of refugees in neighbouring countries even before the current crisis. Both Iran and Pakistan have been hosting large numbers of refugees, with insufficient international support, for a long time.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs. Spelman) asked a very important question: are we giving aid to Iran to help cope with the refugee problem in eastern Iran?

Clare Short: I can assure my hon. Friend that we are not just giving aid to Iran now; we have been doing so for many years. Many other countries have not been providing support to Iran and Pakistan for the large numbers of refugees that they have been hosting. The UK has been providing aid for many years and we are now increasing that aid to help the countries concerned to welcome refugees if they reach their borders and to ensure that they do not have to carry the burden of caring for those refugees.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: As I said in my speech, as Pakistan is one of the most heavily indebted countries in the world, will the Secretary of State say something about any possible relief of that debt, which would help Pakistan's poor considerably?

Clare Short: Indeed; I planned to come on to that. With its GDP per head and its level of debt, Pakistan is suffering as much as many of the highly indebted poor countries, but it does not qualify, for technical reasons that I shall not take the time of the House to explain. We need to persuade the international community to provide debt relief to Pakistan. Ironically, the economic reform package of Pakistan's military Government is better than that of any of the preceding so-called "democratic" Governments. We must help Pakistan now, but we must help the Pakistani Government sustain their reform so that they can build a better country for their people in the future, and debt relief must be part of that package.

Even before 11 September, the Taliban regime were making the humanitarian effort very difficult. They were harassing non-governmental organisations and making it difficult for United Nations agencies to operate. Before that date, we had made additional resources available because the drought was worsening and the level of need was so great. The difficulty was not in finding resources from the UK but in deploying them inside Afghanistan, because it was difficult to find agencies that could take help through to the people in need.

All that made the provision of humanitarian aid very difficult, even before 11 September. After 11 September when all international workers were withdrawn from Afghanistan and the World Food Programme convoys ceased, matters became very serious indeed. I must confess to the House that I and some of the professionals in my Department who have worked in this field for many years were fearful that in addition to everything else there would be famine in Afghanistan.

I am now heartened as I think that we can do much better. In the last week the World Food Programme restarted aid convoys into Afghanistan. As there are no UN workers in the country, commercial Afghan lorry drivers were used—the hon. Member for Cotswold (Mr. Clifton-Brown) may have referred to this—so although it was impossible to give assurances of accountability, a judgment was made that it was better to get food to hungry people, even if some of it was diverted, than to send nothing at all.

The operation involved sending food to warehouses that were known to have existed previously, hoping that the distribution mechanisms were still in place as the Taliban had issued an edict that Afghan workers working for international agencies could not use telephones to communicate with those agencies—on pain of death. Although we could have no certainty that the food would be distributed, convoys went in rather than letting people go hungry.

The reports that came back after a week of that activity—before military action began—were most heartening. We reached the point at which 500 tonnes a day was reaching the warehouses and being distributed. Some of it might have been diverted but most of the food was getting to hungry people. We need to double that quantity for a six-week period, not just to feed people now, but to lay down stockpiles to carry them through the winter. That activity has been disrupted by military action, but I am hopeful that convoys will start again as soon as possible and that it will be practical to get the food that is needed into Afghanistan to ensure that the people there can get through the winter.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, the UN issued an appeal for $600 million for six months to look after the refugees coming out of Afghanistan and to feed people remaining in that country. We now have that $600 million, but as the hon. Member for Meriden said, some countries make financial commitments that are not quickly deployed on the ground. The UK has a reputation for deploying its money quickly. In fact, almost the whole of our commitment has already been deployed. The resources are there, getting people into the camps. I agree that the existing camps are not adequate and we need to raise the standards as well as prepare for more people to come out of Afghanistan.

When the UN issued the appeal, it estimated that in addition to the refugees who are already in Iran, Pakistan and other neighbouring countries, 1.5 million people would need to be provided for. So far the numbers leaving Afghanistan have been very small and we do not know why. We do not know whether people were being prevented from moving, whether only those with transport and the ability to carry food with them have been able to leave and the most vulnerable and the most needy have been moving out of the cities and returning to their own villages rather than making for the borders.

We have to be prepared for both eventualities, which involve the same number of people. We have either to provide for them to arrive at the borders as refugees or get food to them in Afghanistan. We need sufficient flexibility to do whatever is required.

The priority now is to get the convoys moving again as rapidly as possible. I have been liaising with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my Department will be communicating with the Ministry of Defence to make sure that we bring that about.

Hugh Bayley: Many hon. Members have made the point that co-ordinating the aid effort is a huge logistical task. I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announce last week that the UN Secretary-General has appointed Lakhdar Brahimi as a co-ordinator. What precisely will his role be and how will the British operation dovetail into a wider plan to make sure that aid is provided as effectively as possible?

Clare Short: The United Kingdom has been working for a long time to strengthen UN systems. At moments like this we have to rely on UN systems. We had to do so in Kosovo, and this is a bigger country and a more difficult situation. We put many of our resources through UN systems and do a lot of work to strengthen its management and effectiveness.

We already had a special representative to the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Vendrell, who was trying to deal with the political crisis in the region. He needs to be respected as a fine representative. Kofi Annan has now appointed Mr. Brahimi to co-ordinate and drive forward the humanitarian effort. He is a man of enormous standing and long experience. Clearly, there is a strong interface between the political and humanitarian, in that we need all the neighbouring countries to welcome refugees, to supply the help they need and to get convoys and supplies in. Mr. Brahimi will be working to bring about that sort of UN political and humanitarian co-ordination so that the international system works as well as it can.

The hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) asked when the House would be given details of the emergency legislation that has been promised. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be making a statement to the House as soon as it returns. The details are being worked on now and full details will be provided to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sarwar) spoke about the views of the British Muslim community and its natural concern about the crisis. He also spoke about its anger that Islam has been so misrepresented by Bin Laden. I found that in my constituency too. Good Muslims were angry that he should claim that their religion would justify such action and was not a religion of peace and justice. Like many hon. Members, my hon. Friend called on us to learn from the mistakes of the past. He said that we must stand by Pakistan and Afghanistan in the long term and not leave them with a crisis after the emergency is over. There is a strong commitment in all parts of the House and in what the Prime Minister said earlier, to stand by Pakistan and Afghanistan, not just through this crisis but in the future so that they can be rehabilitated and reconstructed and provide a better life for their people.

Many hon. Members talked about the centrality and importance of the role of the United Nations. Let me make it clear that we have had unprecedented consensus at the UN. There was a strong and unanimous resolution from the Security Council deploring the crisis and a similar resolution from the General Assembly, and we had them quickly. Since then, there has been a second resolution from the Security Council making it compulsory for all members to strengthen their laws to deal with terrorism. There has been more unanimity and strength in the UN's response to this crisis than to any other I can remember.

The hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Mr. Taylor) wisely—

Mr. Salmond: The right hon. Lady indicated earlier that she would seek to have published the UK's response under article 51 of the Security Council. Is she also aware that the American response talks about further action in respect of other organisations and states? Given the restraint of President Bush and Colin Powell until now, that the opinion of many Islamic countries is on a knife edge and that the view in the presidential palaces is perhaps different from that on the streets, I cannot understand the wisdom of that statement now. I should like to know whether the Government agree with that statement and whether a statement of that sort is in their letter to the Security Council.

Clare Short: The hon. Gentleman asked earlier whether the letter from the UK would be placed in the Library. I have it with me and I can assure the House that

[Clare Short]

it will be placed in the Library and be available to all hon. Members. I agree with his point, which was also made by the hon. Member for Esher and Walton, that we must not widen the objectives of the campaign. It must be a focused and just war with no civilian casualties. We must keep the global coalition together and go after those who perpetrated the monstrous acts in the United States of America. We must not look for all trails that need to be corrected over time. We must focus this campaign. That was the point made by the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and for Esher and Walton, and we agree strongly.

Many hon. Members stressed the need for the United Nations to be involved in building a new Afghanistan. The Government are sympathetic to that argument, but all hon. Members should be clear that the Afghan people are very proud and have an independent spirit. It is not for us to lay down the exact mechanism that will bring about a better governed and more inclusive Afghanistan.

It is not an objective of the military campaign to bring down the Taliban Government as such; it is to bring to justice terrorists and prevent the sort of action that was brought about in the United States by the terrorist network. However, the Taliban Government and the al-Qaeda network are so intertwined that it is almost impossible to believe that one objective can be achieved without it bringing about the other. We are looking for a new government in Afghanistan, therefore, which needs to be inclusive of all its people and to be a much better government than the people of Afghanistan have seen for a long time. There is a strong possibility that the United Nations will be involved in that process, but we must respect the people of Afghanistan and their wishes.

Mr. Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend agree that 7 million people who have been beaten and abused for 20 years and who are starving are unlikely to have the impetus, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, to rise up against the Taliban and to say that they want a better future? Is it not up to the west and the alliance to provide that impetus? How do we test an impetus? If that test is not met, will we have another 20 years to wait for another bin Laden?

Clare Short: I am afraid that my hon. Friend was not listening too closely. I do not think that anyone has talked of the people of Afghanistan rising up. There is evidence of Taliban authority and control beginning to crumble in parts of the country. That is the optimistic scenario—that it will crumble and a new regime can be put in place.

I said that it was unlikely that the objectives of the military campaign could be achieved with the Taliban remaining in place, given that they have failed to respond to the international call to hand over those guilty of the terrorist actions in the United States. We are talking about a process to bring about a new inclusive government in Afghanistan and about ensuring that the international community does not impose a government that represents only some of the people—that there is an inclusive process, they are all consulted and all the different ethnic groups are included in the formation of a new government that ought in time to be renewed by democratic means.

The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) asked for an assurance about the policing allowed for London. I will ask a Home Office Minister to write to him about that matter. Importantly, although we are talking about military action tonight, he said that the campaign will have many different facets, including action against the money and drug dealing that feeds and strengthens the networks. The action against money laundering that he mentioned is crucial. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has just returned from a meeting of the G8 in Washington that focused on worldwide action to strengthen action on money laundering—broadly, criminality and drugs, but also the activities of terrorists. That is an important part of the work.

The hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) said, eloquently and rightly, that war is always an evil but that in this case it is necessary. That is the spirit of the House. We should never celebrate war. Sometimes, regrettably, it is necessary—as it is in this case—but it is a necessary evil and we should always try to minimise the number of people hurt in the process.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Roger Casale) said that we need to be determined to strengthen global institutions in the face of this sort of crisis, as well as keeping our commitment to global social justice. He is right and, again, that was the mood of the whole House.

The hon. Member for Richmond Park (Dr. Tonge) called strongly for bombing Afghanistan with food to bring an end to its people's troubles, but she showed greatness of spirit when she accepted that military action was probably necessary too.

The hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Cameron) very effectively made the case for this military action being self-defence under the United Nations charter. It is about not only bringing those who are guilty to justice—important though that is—but stopping what happened happening again, possibly in our country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Lammy) spoke of his generation's expectation of real global social justice for all people in the world. We all say amen to that. The hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Hoban) said that we must be clear that we are taking action not in revenge but in our own interests and those of the people of Afghanistan. That is right, too. Our objective is to make our own country and the world safe from such terrorism in the future—to bring about a change in Afghanistan that will also offer a better future for its people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) talked about the need for a just war and perhaps revealed the kind of education that he had as a child, which I shared. We were thoroughly grounded in the principles of a just war. I heard a discussion on the radio one Sunday morning, in which the Islamic teaching on a just war was outlined. It absolutely parallels the principles that underpin Christian teaching. I am sure that all the principles—proportionality, there being no other way, and the requirement that the action can be successful—are fulfilled in this case. The campaign absolutely meets the principles of a just war and we have to ensure that people across the world understand that that is our approach and that it is our determination to carry this through to success.

The hon. Member for Cotswold (Mr. Clifton-Brown) raised the question of debt in Pakistan, and I have responded to that. He also spoke eloquently of how asylum seekers coming to his constituency taught him

how brutal the regime in Afghanistan was, and underlined the need not to widen the objectives of the campaign to the pursuit of terrorism everywhere, which could weaken our effectiveness.

Many other hon. Members raised important points, and it is impossible for me to do justice to them all. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Geraint Davies) said that we must not allow the stoking up of prejudice and enmity at home and abroad. Again, we have the determination across the House, with a few exceptions, to hold together our own multicultural community and reassure our Muslim communities that we stand for justice and echo the voice that we have all heard in our constituencies that Muslims find what happened in the United States of America abhorrent. This is not a battle with Islam but a battle against evil. Islam teaches that innocent civilians should never be killed in the course of warfare in the way that happened in the United States.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell and Wishaw (Mr. Roy) talked about the need to destroy the poppy fields. Indeed. The poppies that are used to manufacture drugs that end up on our streets and cause mayhem, human suffering and criminality are grown because many people in Afghanistan have no alternative decent livelihood. They do not use the drugs, but they grow the poppies because they are the only crop that brings them a rate of return. We have to guarantee to the people of Afghanistan a better legitimate livelihood so that they can see a better future for their children. Then the drugs will cease to be grown and come on to our streets, and our communities will prosper and be rid of the monstrous evil and criminality that comes with drugs and drug addiction.

I want to end by underlining once again our determination not just to provide aid to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran to deal with the immediate crises but to increase the food and humanitarian relief getting into Afghanistan to see people through the crisis. We are determined to stick by Pakistan and Afghanistan for the long term, as hon. Members have called on us to do throughout the debate. Clearly, the role of Pakistan is crucial. We need to help that country with its short-term needs and economic reform, and with the transition to democracy. We have been engaged in that work for some time.

Hon. Members know that not very long ago there was a military coup in Pakistan. It was welcomed by almost all the people of Pakistan, and by our own communities living in the United Kingdom, because the two previous so-called democratic Governments had so misgoverned that country. There had been terrible corruption and blunder, absolute economic mismanagement and absolutely no social provision. The trends in maternal mortality and numbers of children in schools had gone into reverse.

No one welcomes a military coup, but General—now President—Musharraf has made it clear that he wants his Government to be a transitional Government to genuine democracy, better economic governance and better social provision for his people. We are determined to stay with the Government of Pakistan and help them to secure that aim. Already local democratic elections have taken place throughout the country. We provided technical support to ensure that those elections were well run, and they have been well run. The House might be pleased to know that that military Government made it a requirement that a third of the local government councillors would be women, and there are now more women in power in Pakistan, democratically elected, under a military Government than Pakistan has ever seen.

Pakistan has never previously completed any economic reform programme that it has agreed with the international community. Now, for the first time in its history, it has just completed an International Monetary Fund economic reform programme. Therefore we must help Pakistan in the short term, but we must stick with the reform effort in Pakistan.

When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was in Pakistan, he made it clear that we are looking to provide budgetary support, when Pakistan's new poverty reduction and growth facility is negotiated with the IMF, to ensure that it can provide better healthcare and education for the poor of that country, and also that we are determined to do all that we can to help with the debt relief that was mentioned by the hon. Member for Cotswold. I have made it clear that some debt that was owed to the Commonwealth Development Corporation, which has now been taken on to the budget of my Department, will be written off.

We must stick with Pakistan right through this crisis and into the future. The people of Pakistan deserve better government and we must ensure that the present Government is a transition to better government.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Pollok): May I clarify the terms in which all these arrangements are being made with Pakistan? I welcome what is being said, but will there be an undertaking from the Pakistan Government that they will remove the terrorist camps in their own country, which have for a long time been directed into Kashmir and caused great death and destruction there?

Clare Short: The reform programme that we have with Pakistan is conditional on its driving forward the reforms that it has already agreed with the international community. We must help it in the short term, but occasionally when countries are in crisis, the international community comes in with short-term relief, which can sometimes divert a country from the reform effort, and then when everyone goes away its economic programme is in difficulty. That is what happened to Pakistan in the past, and we must ensure that it does not happen in future.

The present Government of Pakistan face difficulties from all sorts of pressures within the country. We have to understand that and stand by them. The question of the long-standing conflict over Kashmir is delicate and enrages. It has caused war between India and Pakistan in the past. We should all be determined to make progress on Kashmir, and we must respect the delicacy and complexity of that conflict, especially at the present time.

Before finishing, I want to discuss the need to help rebuild Afghanistan, and not just politically by putting in place an inclusive Government. Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. We must have a long-term programme—a big engagement of the international community—to drive forward economic and social reform and enable the people of Afghanistan to look forward to a better future.

When I briefly left the Chamber to have something to eat, I learned that there have been demonstrations

[Clare Short]

tonight across Pakistan and across the Arab world. The determination and unity of the House are impressive, and we have to stand together. However, we should not underestimate the difficulty, or the need to stand for global social justice. We have to explain what we are trying to achieve and carry it through to the end—

It being midnight, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved,

That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Norris.]*

Adjourned accordingly at Twelve midnight.

Westminster Hall

Tuesday 17 July 2001

[SIR ALAN HASELHURST *in the Chair*]

Urban Community Relations

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—[*Mr. Caplin.*]

9.30 am

Simon Hughes (Southwark, North and Bermondsey): I am grateful for the opportunity to have such a debate, but I am not happy that we are having to hold it at the end of this summer term. Given the short time that is allowed for response to a Home Secretary's statement, it is however timely to have a more considered view of the events of the past few months, hence this debate on community relations and unrest in our urban communities. I hope that it encourages support for leaders in urban Britain as well as encouraging us to listen to each other and hear the messages that come from towns and cities where, all too sadly in recent weeks and months, there has been local unrest.

Later today, the Conservative party will choose the two people who will go forward to its wider membership for its leadership election. That causes me to reflect on the fact that it matters to people in urban communities—indeed, in all our communities—not so much who the political leaders are, but what they do. During the 18 Tory years when many of us were critical of some of that party's policies, many of which did not work, it would be fair to say that some of its statements of intent would, however, apply equally well today. One of the most widely quoted, but often ridiculed, statements by Lady Thatcher, when she was Prime Minister, related to our urban communities. When she quoted the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, many people reacted as though they did not believe that that really was what she aspired to achieve. The prayer's core message was about bringing harmony and unity out of discord. I want this debate to achieve that, too.

My political background is appropriate to this debate in two respects. I was born and brought up in the north-west, on the outskirts of Manchester in what is now the borough of Stockport—the constituency that was recently won back for the Liberal Democrats by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Patsy Calton). In those days, not long after the end of the war, the regeneration of Britain was a key issue in Manchester. When I came to London after having been a student, I settled in the constituency that I am now proud to represent. I was driven into active party politics more by a sense of urban dereliction, decay and frustration than anything else. I was a youth leader. Young people and their families felt so frustrated by their powerlessness within the system that they had little hope for the future. Those facts led me to make the contribution that I have made as a Member of Parliament. I feel very strongly about these issues.

Recent written commentary in many newspapers—the think pieces—have often been helpful. Some television and radio commentaries have not. Immediately after the events in Burnley, Bradford, Oldham and elsewhere, the press fell into the easy trap of exaggerating the disorder, trouble and problems and looking for people with extreme views to make the position seem worse, which is positively unhelpful. In contrast, over the following weekends, some helpful and perceptive comments were made, including one reported in *The Observer* by someone clearly of Asian background, called Faisal Islam, who said:

"Racism makes matters far worse. But the essential problems facing all the communities of these northern towns are the same: lack of jobs and prosperity.

The cream ... will head to the south-east for the high paid jobs ... Those that are left, white or Asian, do not have an exciting menu of career options. Some drift into the general pattern common to disaffected British males: crime, drugs, and assorted forms of yobbery.

These threads of commonality should be the starting-point for concerted action across estates of this kind. Regeneration is required on a regional scale. The racist agitators who have been stirring up trouble offer no solutions to the long-term problems of de-industrialisation."

Around the Chamber are colleagues from places such as Stoke-on-Trent, Sheffield, Keighley and so on who, like me, live in such communities all the time and will speak with possibly just as much understanding and experience as I do.

A perceptive analysis of what is often over-simplified as a racial divide was also provided by Yasmin Alibhai Brown last week in *The Independent*, who referred to the identity crisis of both many Asian youths and many white youths. Asian men are not accepted as British by this country's white culture but are chastised as too British by their own families. I have experience of young Asians in exactly that position—not fully accepted by the white community and rejected by their own community. Many white youths feel equally detached and alienated from the society for which they are supposedly standing up against foreign cultures. Yasmin Alibhai Brown writes:

"Both groups feel like aliens in the knowledge economy, which is passing them by, and in a society where you are what you own. Pimping and drugs offer prospects of control and money, which is why so many of these white and Asian rioters are involved in such activities. Police racism and violence provoke understandable hostility but some of the anti-police anger stems from irritation that the law intervenes in their business activities ... The young men who are burning cars today remember this lesson well. People in power ignore you until you make them fearful. White voters who supported the BNP think the same."

I do not pretend that that is an entire analysis, but it is a perceptive one of some of the issues involved.

When we debated the Home Secretary's last statement, my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) sidled up to me and said that we must not paint a picture that suggests that burning cars happens only in big cities such as Bradford, Leeds or Manchester. He said that in a constituency such as his, which has only small, ex-mining towns as well as a rural community, such activity is equally common at weekends in the rundown estates.

Two years ago we had our own party leadership election, and those of us involved went around the country to meet our members. I visited an estate on the outskirts of Rotherham that was God's neglected territory. It was absolutely grim. Every property seemed

[Simon Hughes]

to have been damaged in some way. Every fence had been pulled down, and cars and rubbish littered the street. No sense of community pride was possible. I drew the tragic conclusion that I have had to draw regularly and that the year's events confirm: in many places in north and south Britain, north and south England and the midlands, especially in inner-city and outer estates, people believe that opportunity and accessibility to a decent life are passing them by. The places are sometimes reservoirs of almost entire hopelessness, and escape is the only way for people to better themselves. I am sad that that is still the case in our rich country, and I have a sense of anger and urgency that unless we deal with the matter more effectively, we will lay out for ourselves not treasures on earth but major problems such as those we have seen over recent weeks.

This summer, part of my community, which is just two or three miles from here, has also been on the edge of severe community difficulties. Happily, a combination of factors has kept things quiet. However, a lack of belief in the fairness of the housing allocation system, a lack of belief in the opportunities offered, a lack of belief in the fairness of the police, lack of respect for other people, intolerance of one's neighbour, or a small community dispute can turn a community that has lived adequately but tensely into a place where suddenly cameras and newspapers report civil unrest.

We must clearly and publicly pay tribute to our colleagues of all parties in public office who seek to lead communities in cities such as Bradford and Stoke-on-Trent, and towns such as Burnley and Oldham. We must remember that many people do an extremely good job seeking to lead and to bring communities together. Before the difficulties of this summer, all those places had commissioned reports on how better to go forward. That was the case in Bradford with the well-publicised report by Lord Herman Ouseley, and also in places such as Oldham and Burnley. I am grateful to all the colleagues to whom I have spoken in those places, and in Leeds, for their wise advice and intelligent analysis of what is needed.

Councillor Richard Knowles, the leader of Oldham metropolitan borough council, makes it clear that there are no instant solutions and that the increase in sporadic acts of violence was not necessarily racially motivated. The root cause is the high degree of segregation and deprivation, and the fact that much of Oldham is economically depressed with a low-wage economy. There is a major housing problem. Most of the Asian families live in privately owned housing and have not benefited from regeneration funds in the same way as estates that are predominantly occupied by white residents. There has been huge segregation over the years, and the community leaders in the places that we are discussing say similar things, although each place has local issues. There has been increased segregation in education because some schools are almost entirely white and others are almost entirely Asian. That repeats on itself and encourages people to reinforce it when they apply for school places.

I talked to Councillor Gordon Birtwistle, who is the Liberal Democrat leader in Burnley. He said that many of the larger problems escalated from individual small criminal acts. Funding has been used in geographically defined areas meaning that people who live in other areas feel that they have not shared the benefit. If one racial group predominantly inhabits the areas where the funding has been used, that produces a sense of alienation and marginalisation, which, in time, is fertile ground for agitation. If Government interest is generated as a response to disorder but people feel that the Government are not consistently interested, the feeling will grow that there is support only with publicity, and that support recedes without it.

My colleague, Councillor Jeanette Sutherland, who leads the Liberal Democrat group in Bradford, where there is no overall control on the city council, makes it clear how much we must be careful not to undermine all the good work that is continuing. We must not make it sound as if Bradford is a city that is entirely full of hopelessness, agitation, community difficulty and despair. The message is the same—"Please don't generalise. Please look at our particular problems. Please keep a continuing interest."

I therefore want to suggest what might be the right response. Clearly, we must say together that criminal activity is unacceptable. Unless we say that, we are immediately in difficulty. It may be understandable sometimes, but it is clearly unacceptable. Together, we must seek to dissuade those who are motivated to act in that way from doing so again. The issues become slightly more complex beyond the debate about criminality.

First, we must reinforce the idea that, in every case, solutions will be arrived at best at local community level. Building blocks must be established at that level, and local people must own and participate in community regeneration. As far as possible, initiatives should be bottom, up not top down. We must be careful to remember that communities can be cheek by jowl yet entirely different. In my constituency, some rich communities are next to some of the poorest communities. To state the obvious, that does not help.

One positive move by the Government would be to facilitate the creation in all our urban areas—in the metropolitan areas, unitary authorities and London boroughs—of the parish and community council network. That happens throughout the rest of the country—it is the building block of our society throughout rural England. As a result, people know more clearly that they can share in the running of a particular place, whereas in urban areas that does not happen. I believe strongly that if we allowed parish and community councils to exist where people who were able to stand for election could speak with authority as the representatives of that community, we would have a much more accepted, acceptable and participatory democratic structure, and a much more organised way of distributing funds and the like.

We need to understand that the crime and disorder partnerships and the local strategic partnerships that the Government created a couple of years ago are extremely good vehicles, although it is early days to see how they are working. However, we must also make sure—a similar message came from all my colleagues—that the funding that comes from central Government does not get split in Whitehall and sent in pockets to different places, depending on who bids best, who knows how to bid best, and who gets their act together most quickly. It must be distributed so that the democratically elected

local council, together with the other partners in its local strategic partnerships and in its crime and disorder partnership, can decide, on advice from the community, how best to allocate the funds. There must be much more coherent management of the financial mechanisms for renewal, and I hope that we can move to much less ring-fenced and much more community-led distribution of local finance.

Funding in those areas, whether for economic regeneration, housing renovation or something else, is too often largely reactive and applicant-led. It should be much more proactive, responding to the vision of the community put forward at local level. In an area such as mine, the major issue is the need for more affordable housing, of which we are desperately short, whereas in the north, where housing is in much greater supply, much renovation is needed, as is economic regeneration. It is therefore necessary for design and promotion to be done locally.

We must be honest and admit that regional policy is not working. There is a pull to the south-east, because unemployment is low there in most parts whereas it is high in much of the rest of the country. The south-east economy is overheating. We need more strong strategic levers to encourage business, enterprise, building and development in the areas that most need and can best benefit from that prosperity. I agree with the Prime Minister—it is not simply that the north is less prosperous than the south. There is huge prosperity in the middle of Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield or Manchester. However, a mile away from the centre of Manchester are some of the worst estates in the whole of Greater Manchester.

We must examine the problem in the context of what the old Department of the Environment called the local urban parishes, the Z scores and so forth. We must identify areas of great deprivation, but understand that a regional policy that encourages regional development away from the south-east is also important.

Nationally, it is coincidental that figures came out last week showing how the Government are doing in achieving their poverty targets. They are not achieving them. Child poverty is still enormous and by the Government's indicators the poverty total is still approximately 14 million people. Where there is great poverty, there is often great inequality. My noble Friend Earl Russell asked a question in the House of Lords the other day about black males under the age of 25. The Minister answered:

"Only 31 per cent. of ethnic minority men and women between the ages of 16 and 24 in Bradford, for example, are in work. Nationally, for ethnic minority young people the figure is 40 per cent. For the country as a whole, including people of all communities, the figure is 65 per cent. In other words, the figure in Bradford is less than half the national average."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 10 July 2001; Vol. 626, c. 1008.]

If one lives in a community in which the prospect of a job for a certain type of person is half what it is elsewhere, such people are bound to feel thoroughly disadvantaged and disaffected.

We must face the fact that, at local level, the political system is often not working. The current electoral system militates in favour of division and segregation, and against co-operation and participation. Until we learn the lessons learned in other places, we are highly unlikely to increase participation and a sense of empowerment in the political process. We need a properly representative electoral system in which every vote counts. People must have a chance to change the local party in power. Young people must be able to be elected on a ticket of young people's issues and others on one of local or regional issues. Unless people think that they can make a difference politically, they may not even try.

If young people are involved, they are more likely to be positive and work with the grain of the community rather than against it. To achieve that requires many things that we do better in some places than in others, although in many places such things are not done at all well. We need more young people to participate in youth forums and youth parliaments. Some primary schools have mock elections to encourage young people—I participated in one in my borough the other day in which the whole school elected their school council, year by year, in a system much like a parliamentary election.

In addition, other countries offer many more extra-curricular activities than we do. For young people whose prospect of energetic work is reduced, unless we offer the chance of outward bound courses, cadet forces, more sports such as swimming at school, or an active youth service that offers alternatives, they do something of their own choice—they make their own fun. Let us be honest, setting a car alight or smashing a window—as Matthew Parris argued in an article over the weekend—is fun for that age group.

Let us not run away from that self-evident truth. We should work with the grain of the Government Connexions programme for mentoring and careers but also put someone into the top-year primary schools to find out what motivates each child so that they can be supported in that interest. We must go back into secondary schools to find out which pupils are interested in judo, cricket, dance or computers, so that those interests can be developed. We should make the ridiculously neglected and belated change of putting the youth service on a statutory footing.

I put it to the Home Secretary that, welcome though the new Minister is in his co-ordination role—I am absolutely convinced of his integrity and commitment—if we have a Secretary of State responsible for rural policy, we should have one for urban policy, as we did when Michael Heseltine was in the job. Some 80 per cent. of people in this country live in urban and suburban communities, and it is nonsense that we do not have a co-ordinating role at that level for one of the key Departments of State. I hope that that will soon change.

In addition, we need to consider the thorny issues of education admissions policy and new school creation. I understand that the White Paper on education has been delayed until the autumn, not least because of the difficulties created by those issues. I would rather it was deferred and right than rushed through hastily and wrong. My area, unlike that of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Allan), does not have a co-ordinated school admissions system, so parents run around from school to school rather than choosing a school using a system like that for university entrance. The reality is that bright, motivated parents will do far better for their child than less motivated ones.

Some faith schools do well, but if one allows Christian schools one must allow Sikh or Muslim schools, and such schools may be 90 per cent. Asian. Is that what we

[Simon Hughes]

want? If it is, as my colleagues in Oldham make clear, we must have many better links between schools and more combined activities in sport, drama and educational activity, so that young people grow up among different faiths, colours, creeds, backgrounds and communities. In that way, pupils from different backgrounds will not be separated from each other when they leave school, but will be integrated and together.

My last substantive point relates to the apparent increased activity of far right organisations. It would be wrong not to pay attention to that. The Government have an equality Act on their agenda, which I urge them to introduce as soon as possible, as it would ensure equal treatment for all people in this country. We must also consider how we might, by policy changes, undermine any agitation by the far right that preys on disaffection and offers simplistic solutions. I am not one of those who believe in proscribing people if I do not agree with their views—down that road is a dangerous outcome. However, scope exists for a sensible collective look at whether, in those places where organisations keep on marching, there may be grounds for giving further powers to alter the day, the route, the time or the frequency of marches, when they cause severe community disruption.

The police arrest and charge people for incitement to racial hatred far too infrequently. I have asked for figures in my recent parliamentary questions, but my sense is that the police almost never take action. I understand why that may be so sometimes, but the number of occasions on which people walk around saying "Pakis out" or "This area for whites" and no action is taken add up to a collective disgrace. I urge the Director of Public Prosecutions and the police to be absolutely clear that that sort of behaviour is incitement to racial hatred and should be dealt with accordingly.

In many of our urban areas there is far too much prejudice. As someone said to me when I was preparing for the debate, and as the Bradford report makes clear, we need to replace communities of prejudice with communities of pride. That means replacing people of prejudice with people of pride. Someone with pride in their possibilities in life, attainment, culture, work and family prospects is far less likely to be prejudiced against their neighbour or the person or community down the road. We can continue to build Britain well together, but the current policies are not sufficient. We must do more and listen to the voices appealing for help every day in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the country.

10 am

Mrs. Ann Cryer (Keighley): I associate myself with all the comments made by the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes). Clearly, I could not put things better myself because I do not know his area, but his speech also applies to the situations in Bradford and my constituency. Most of my comments will relate to the riots on 7 July in Bradford, which took place within a few miles of my home.

I welcome the report that was published on 11 July by the team led by Lord Ouseley: "Community Pride not Prejudice, making diversity work in Bradford". I should like to place on record my appreciation for Lord Ouseley's work. He has delved into areas of Bradford that had previously been untouched, and I hope that his work has inspired many discussions there. My comments follow 30 years of work and friendship with the Asian community in Keighley, which constitutes a fifth of the Bradford district.

Since I was elected in 1997, I have had many anxieties about the under-achievement of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities in my constituency. Last year, Warwick university published a report confirming my worst fears: the Sikh and Hindu communities are doing extremely well, but the indigenous population is not doing so well and the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities are massively underachieving, both academically and economically. The time has come to ask why.

After lengthy discussions, my view is that the riots were led by a criminal minority responding to fascist taunts. The criminals were supported by hundreds of young Asian men hellbent on causing havoc, mainly for their own community. It is always their own community that suffers. Those young men were also determined to punish police officers and prevent them from carrying out their legitimate duties.

We need to examine why those young Asian men were so keen to join in the criminal activity. Was it because they had little to lose, little else to do and therefore felt that such activity was a way of making their presence felt, as they had not impressed the world or Bradford with anything else? Do they and many other young Asian males in Bradford feel that they have little, if any, stake in the United Kingdom's growing prosperity, which was created by the Government I support? Do those young men feel disaffected, disenfranchised and let down by their country of birth? Do they ask why all the qualifications, good jobs, nice houses and powerful cars seem to go to the whites? That is a rough guide to the attitudes that I have encountered over many years.

Let us consider the causes. There is little point in blaming the situation simply on racism and Islamophobia. We must instead consider in detail what causes the under-achievement that I have mentioned. The main cause is the lack of a good level of English, which stems directly from the established tradition of bringing wives and husbands from the sub-continent who have often had no education and have no English. As a result, the vast majority of Keighley households have only one parent with any English and children go to school speaking only Punjabi or Bangla. That frequently gets children off to a slow start, which can damage their progress and mean that they leave school with few, if any, qualifications. Many cannot get paid work or find only poorly paid jobs.

I should like to suggest some remedies, which I know will be regarded as controversial by many of the self-styled Asian leaders in Bradford. Asian parents should consider arranging marriages for their children with Asian Muslims brought up and educated in the United Kingdom. That would avoid the present importation of poverty into their families and the problems that I mentioned for the next generation when the children go to school, and would also stop the increasing number of cases of young men and women having extremely unhappy and difficult marriages with spouses from the

sub-continent with whom they have nothing in common. I have dealt with such cases, and they are a growing problem in Keighley.

Months off school for extended holidays in the sub-continent should be avoided. At the moment, there seems to be little regard for the problems that this can cause. Instead, people in the Asian community could add a week before and after the long summer holiday, because I would be the last person to suggest that they sever their links with the sub-continent.

When possible, English should be used and encouraged in the home in addition to Punjabi and Bangla. Much more should be provided in further education colleges and community centres for non-English speakers by way of high-quality teaching of English as a second language. That should include crèche provision, with the funding coming from both central and local government. Such projects would be much better than channelling finance towards extra policing, as we have seen over the past few weekends. Sponsors should be encouraged to enrol husbands and wives who enter from the sub-continent in full-time English courses.

My most controversial point is one that I have made previously. It has not gone down terribly well, although I have had support from hon. Members. I will repeat what I said, so that I place on record precisely what I mean. If, after possibly five years, we are no nearer to achieving the solutions and ambitions, and the deprivation, with all that flows from it, continues, the Government should consider having an element of English as an entry clearance requirement for husbands and wives who seek permanent settlement. There should be a further requirement for them to take a full-time English course to reach a reasonable level. The conditions should apply to all applicants outside the European Union. My proposals are in line with immigration requirements in many countries, including the United States of America, Canada and the Netherlands.

I should like to examine the "Community Pride not Prejudice" report by Lord Ouseley. I am pleased that he has written that report, which is excellent. Many of his recommendations dovetail into my previous comments, including, for example, his remarks on pages 13 and 14 about other education concerns. Although many of us who have worked with the Asian community over the past 30 years may claim that he says nothing new, it is good to see the comments in print. I hope that it will enlighten debate, particularly for those who have not had the good fortune of a good relationship with our Pakistani and Bangladeshi constituents during the years as I have.

Lord Ouseley's report remarks on the need for understanding between communities, and the fact that everyone must take on board the advantages of integration, for the Asian community in particular. That will be easier to achieve when all members of the Asian community have some grasp of English and when whites and Asians recognise that there can be gain only from all sides living together in peace and understanding. The alternative is a Belfast-like situation in which we will all be the losers, including whites. I have been encouraged to express my views by Lord Ouseley's comments on the "fear of talking openly and honestly about problems". He has helped me to overcome my fear of verbal abuse from the so-called leaders among the Asian community and the politically correct whites. Following my experiences in the past few days, I can say that the thought police are alive and well in Bradford.

I should like to finish on a silver lining. The Asian women and children's group in my constituency is doing wonderful things for the women and children of Keighley. Many women who worked with that group are now taking a leading part in their community, and not before time. The sure start experiment is working so well with whites and Asians, especially at Guardhouse in Keighley, to bring together white and Asian children and young mothers—fathers, too. Unfortunately, too little effort is being made in the Bradford district to get whites and Asians to work together.

I visited Greenhead comprehensive school—formerly Greenhead grammar school—in my constituency just before the election, where I met many young, capable Asian women who were completing their A-level courses. They were going on to universities with their parents' approval and enthusiasm.

I mention those aspects of the silver lining, because, as the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey said, it is not all doom and gloom. We are moving in the right direction, especially in respect of the projects that I mentioned in Keighley. I apologise for being so parochial, but I only know about the situation in Keighley and, to a certain extent, in Bradford. There is a south-north divide on these issues, with difficulties especially in West Yorkshire.

10.11 am

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I shall not detain the House for long. In view of events in Stoke-on-Trent at the weekend, I felt that it was important to listen to the debate.

I very much appreciated the important contribution of the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) and I thank him for the thoughtful way in which he introduced the debate. My only sadness is about the events that prompted the debate, which should have been held long ago, and that relates to the way in which Parliament operates.

Parliament may seem to be proactive and Back Benchers may have the opportunity in Westminster Hall to listen to a statement or to debate an event that has taken place, but there are few opportunities for hon. Members to shape the debate and perhaps to influence policy and to see that action follows vision. We want Government and Parliament to show the way forward.

I want to put the disturbances in Stoke-on-Trent at the weekend into perspective. There were no serious injuries and the police did an absolutely wonderful job in ensuring that the situation did not escalate. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that at the time the Staffordshire police were also responsible for policing the Northern Ireland peace talks in Staffordshire. I thank the police for doing such a good job, in the country as a whole and in individual constituencies.

That brings me to my next point, about how public services are financed. In whatever town or city we live, we all have a vision of people working together for urban regeneration, but to make that vision a reality

[Ms Joan Walley]

adequate funding is needed across the board. Throwing money at the problem is not the only answer, but without adequate funding there will be less progress than there could be.

I take this opportunity to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to review the way in which almost 17 per cent. of Staffordshire police funding is spent on police pensions and to look for a means of ironing out through the funding formula the inequalities in the system that are the result of decisions about police funding many years ago.

I was pleased to attend the annual meeting of the North Staffordshire Race Relations Council on Thursday night last week. The many people who attended that wonderful event reflected all strands of society. It was clear that the statutory agencies, the voluntary sector, community leaders and business representatives in our community all have a vision of how we can work together to take the agenda forward. We must look at the mechanisms for doing that. I was interested in the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey's comments about mechanisms. Perhaps we do have a new approach to local government and more opportunities for partnership funding. However, if we do not ensure that there are enough people on the ground with the expertise, skills and commitment to deliver the policies and see them through, we run the risk of seeing a piecemeal and fragmented approach with an initiative here and an initiative there.

I hope that my hon. Friend, in his Home Office co-ordination role and in the working group that I believe he chairs, will bring together the means to implement the new Government policies. If the Government do not deal with the thorny issue of local government finance, the success of the new partnerships will be limited. I know that there is a consultation paper and that the Government will be dealing with the issue from September onwards, but I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider the example of Stoke-on-Trent, which may have lost as much as £5 million in education funding. That loss reduces the ability of community workers to work with young people outside school hours and reduces the opportunities to open schools for wider community purposes once school is out for the day. It is critical that we look at local government finance and ensure that, whatever else we might want to add to an area, we have a baseline of services so that we are able to employ teachers and provide the education that is the foundation on which we build society.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is a wonderful tool to bring about the equality that we want, and I am confident that my hon. Friend will look at ways to ensure that the provisions of the Act are properly introduced and monitored.

We have the Rogers report on urban regeneration, the regional development agencies and the extra money coming in to many of our most deprived areas for neighbourhood renewal. We have the skeleton of a system that can deliver the services that are needed. If we do not have the mechanisms for delivering the services, the money stays in the pot and is not unlocked; it does not go where it is needed. Members of Parliament have a role in ensuring that all the different agencies, businesses and local partners at community level are properly co-ordinated so that needs are met in the areas concerned. We are in touch with our people and do not need focus groups to tell us what needs to be changed. Given the Cabinet co-ordination that now exists, I hope that we can look at urban regeneration from the angle of community relations to ensure that we develop a genuinely joined-up approach.

My final point concerns citizenship. I have introduced a citizenship award in some schools in my constituency. During the long years of Thatcherism and the last Conservative Government when there was no such thing as community, we did not home grow community leaders for the future. We must use citizenship to bring about a can-do culture, where people, whatever their age and colour can say, "This needs doing. This is how we can do it. This is our vision. This is how we can change our communities."

I want support from the Government for the citizenship project that I have introduced. It is already supported by Britannia building society and the local newspaper. We have a vision. We have the whole issue of neighbourhood renewal, not just for certain communities, but for all our people. We have to find a way of delivering. The Prime Minister is right: it is about delivery—but if we cannot deliver at community level, we cannot bring about the changes that we want to see.

The Minister has a wonderful opportunity in his work at the Home Office to bring all those strands together. I know that the Home Office no longer has responsibility for electoral change but we will receive the report from the Electoral Commission before the end of July. I hope that he will look at that and at the democratic deficit that clearly exists in some parts of the country and see whether we could have some pilot projects, perhaps in an area such as Stoke-on-Trent. It is not about voting in supermarkets, but about building citizens for the future. I hope that he will look at all my suggestions and get back to me in a positive light.

Several hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Frank Cook (in the Chair): Order. I think it appropriate to remind all hon. Members that it is normal practice in Westminster Hall to commence the closing Front Bench comments no later than 30 minutes before the termination of the debate. I hope that everyone will bear that in mind.

10.22 am

Mr. Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Having made my maiden speech on Friday, I hope that I am in accord with the procedures of the House if I speak today. I apologise for arriving late as I was detained at another meeting. I want to participate in the debate because it is on an important issue.

The disturbances that have taken place in our communities recently are a serious matter, particularly for those of us who represent integrated communities, as I do in Birmingham. It is not just a matter of funding. We must look at how we build up the moral fabric of our societies. Those are the issues that I want to address. Youth service is a particularly important area that needs to be looked at. If the health authorities, the education authorities and the youth services could work together, they could play a vital role. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley)

pointed out, Members of Parliament need to play an active role in their constituencies. They have their eyes on the local issues and represent the people of those areas, as do local councillors and representatives on neighbourhood and community forums.

It is important that we do not overlook the issue of the community as a whole. We should consider integration. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mrs. Cryer) mentioned assimilation as opposed to integration, an issue that I want to pick up, although perhaps not as blatantly as some of the self-styled community leaders in Keighley.

I came to this country when I was nine and my first language was not English. I was educated at local primary schools and the local comprehensive, and I then ended up in this place. My experience of going through that structure shows that the opportunities are there for all of us.

As my hon. Friend said, the backgrounds of different groups of people are important. The majority come from rural areas—my father came from a rural area in Kashmir. Parental education, particularly that of mothers, is as crucial as education for the children. Further education has a tremendous role to play and the sure start scheme offers a good beginning. Local colleges and the learning and skills councils established by the Government need to play a more active role in reaching into the community. Further education for parents and young adults in problem areas can help to close the gap

I disagree with my hon. Friend's comments about visits to the country of origin. It is important for children to have a feeling for their own identity and culture, but it must happen in a more positive and integrated way. Schools should assist by suggesting projects for children when they go back to their parents' place of origin. Projects should be focused on cultural differences and cultural richness and the trip should be more constructive than simply allowing children to go away for a month's holiday. They should come back with a project and share it with others. That is what integration is all about.

The hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) spoke about the electoral system. It may engage the wrong sort of people as much as the right sort of people. People on the far right have equal claims and the same influences on the environment. We need to engage the whole community and encourage participation in the current political process. That is the important challenge before us.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman about racial incitement charges and with my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North about the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It should be applied to all people—the ethnic minorities and the far right—who use racist abuse. All should be treated severely. We are here to integrate and work together. Any form of division from any side is deplorable and should not be tolerated by the police.

I accept the point about the low academic achievement of Pakistani and Bengali children. It also applies to the Afro-Caribbean children in my constituency. We need to think about how best to deal with the problem. Involving the parents could be the answer.

I hope that I have not taken up too much time in my first contribution to Westminster Hall, but I felt it necessary to say a few words on this important subject.

10.29 am

Mr. Richard Allan (Sheffield, Hallam): I am grateful to have an opportunity to pick up some of the threads of the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) on securing this debate in such a timely fashion.

I want to discuss the wider context of the debate. It is important at the outset to recognise that the far right have poisoned the debate. They complain that they are deprived of free speech—I do not think that they are but they often deprive the rest of us of free speech. They twist what is said in ways that are unhelpful to the debate. Those of us who fiercely oppose them often end up constrained in what we can say because we know that they will pick up what we have said, twist it and use it against people in wholly destructive ways. Their responsibility in stirring things up should not be forgotten. It is not the most important element but it is a significant factor. It is no coincidence that they have been present at places where fighting has broken out. Other community relations problems are factors in the riots, but elements of the far right have been present at almost every such riot.

I therefore do not agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Keighley (Mrs. Cryer). That is partly because of my fear that the far right will take such comments and say to people, "If you cannot speak English properly you should not be in this country." I know that that is not what the hon. Lady means and I wish that the fear of the far right twisting our remarks did not make it so difficult to have an open debate. I hope that we can have a debate without it being poisoned by those who will twist our words. We visualise that happening and we all fear it.

We need to move beyond thinking about community relations issues purely as ones of race. Anthropologists and sociologists have done much work on that—people such as Claude Lévi-Strauss spoke as far back as the 1950s and 60s about the way in which people identify themselves within communities. Ethnicity can be an element of community relations, as can religion, but they are not essential elements and are not necessarily part of the equation. We see many incidents in the United Kingdom in which ethnicity is not a factor. In Sheffield, for example, we have inter-area gang warfare. It has gone on for years in most cities. It is not a question of race or religion, but is about self-identification and "us against the rest". People express the belief that "Them lot are out to get us and we need to defend ourselves." That dynamic is as old as the hills. Understanding it is important, rather than simply seeing the problem as one of ethnicity or religion.

There are some important elements to consider in terms of how we fight the forces that pull people apart. We should not play into the hands of the far right and over-play the difficulty of the situation. There are problems that need to be managed but we need to be clear and consistent across the political spectrum in expressing our belief that there is an imperative political will to manage them. We need to be clear that we believe positively in a diverse and multicultural society and that

[Mr. Richard Allan]

we wish to defend that and make it work. At no stage must we give in to those forces that have said, "That is impossible; it cannot happen. The only solution is to separate the communities."

British people are people who live in Britain. It is important to make the lives of British people as positive and beneficial as possible and to make us all into good neighbours who look after each other. We should not define one group as British and another as less than British because of where their parents or relatives came from—or, indeed, where they came from if they married into or joined a British family here, claiming British citizenship and identity. It is important not to give in to the forces of darkness, as it were, but to understand the dynamics and deal with them.

Early intervention is vital. The problems that resulted in the recent riots were trailed long in advance. We could see them coming yet have been like rabbits trapped in the glare of headlights, seeing the problem, being frightened of it but not taking any action until the car hits us. The same was true of the riots of the early 1980s. We see trouble building, read the reports and know that tension is increasing, yet seem incapable of intervening early in a way that could effectively prevent it.

In some cases, the police start to intervene once trouble has started. I was pleased to hear from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) that that happened in her area. She also made an important point about the intervention of local authorities. During the summer riots of the early 1980s, when I was a teenager in Sheffield, Sheffield city council put on concerts and a series of youth events as a deliberate way of diverting people from trouble. It worked. People did not riot in Sheffield. Empowering local authorities with sufficient financial discretion, thereby enabling them to say, "We can see it coming. Let us do something about it." would be important. I want councils such as Bradford and Oldham to be confident that, whenever they see signs of trouble, they can intervene, often by spending money, and find ways in which to divert people away from unrest.

The Rogers report on urban structural regeneration is important, but there have been no signs that such information has been picked up. The police should be congratulated, and we all felt for them when we saw what they were being dropped into, as it were. I do not want to force the police into such situations. I want councils to have the ability to intervene early enough so that problems do not result in hundreds of youths and policemen being involved in pitched battles.

I come now to community consultation. We are all aware of the same faces turning up in consultation exercises. Such matters are not confined to ethnic minorities, but involve business and other communities. Consultation exercises draw out committee people and we somehow think that that is enough. We do not make contact with the important people—young people and those from harder to reach communities. We must be serious about such matters and break down language and style barriers. The method of communication used whereby people in suits and ties talk about regeneration budgets and objective 1 or objective 2 status is thought of as rubbish by communities.

Too often we settle for the fact that, if someone from the ethnic minorities is a member of the committee, it is a true partnership and matters must okay. The same pattern occurs in the business community. I hope that the Minister can deal with the community consultation issue and support the broadening out of such matters. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey on securing the debate. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response to his substantive points as well as to others that have been raised in the debate.

10.36 am

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I congratulate the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) on securing the debate and on his thoughtful and constructive introduction. I agree that the problems are national. I disagree with the hon. Member for Keighley (Mrs. Cryer), however, when she said that the north had far greater problems than the south. I am the first to acknowledge that northern cities probably have more acute social and racial problems than urban communities in the south, but as the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey and others know, various London districts have had their troubles in recent years.

A few years ago, there were riots in the Blackbird Leys estate in Oxford. Whether one is thinking of Aylesbury, High Wycombe or Reading, many communities in the south of England have had equivalent problems. It may be that, because of the general prosperity of such areas and the smaller size of the towns, problems will be present but in a less acute and more manageable form than in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley.

My thoughts have been informed by the experience of my constituency, by the visit that I made to Bradford for a day last week and by my conversations with police officers and community leaders in the two years that I have held this brief on behalf of the Conservative party. I want to refer first to police and disorder. If streets are unsafe or if law-abiding people believe that the streets are unsafe, we will have problems and there will be an opportunity for criminal gangs and political extremists to thrive.

The police service in many of our urban areas is badly overstretched. Police officers of all ranks say that there are too many target and performance indicators. They have referred to problems of recruitment and retention, which we have debated in the House many times. There is also doubt among a worryingly large number of officers about what is expected of them when it comes to policing ethnically diverse areas. They often feel beleaguered. I remember one police constable in London saying to me after the publication of the McPherson report, "All my career, I have worked on the basis that I should police impartially and treat everyone alike, regardless of their colour, religion or ethnic origin. Now, suddenly, I am told that that approach is all wrong, and I have to do things differently." We need to understand those uncertainties and address them.

While the police feel beleaguered, it is also the case—I certainly got the impression that this was true in Manningham—that many local people feel that the

police service has been slow to respond to their calls for assistance. Too often, low-level disorder, drug dealing, racist abuse and harassment have been allowed to go unchecked. It is only when criminal activity has got more serious that the police have been prepared to crack down in force. People feel the lack of neighbourhood police officers whom they know and trust, and to whom they feel that they can impart confidential information about what is going on in their area. I spoke last week to people in Manningham who said that they only see the police patrolling in vehicles, and that the police seem to have no connection with the neighbourhood. The police officers were horrified at the impression that had grown up, but there was an undoubted gulf of understanding between the service and a large number of residents—by no means just disaffected youths or criminals.

The hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey referred to social problems, to which the hon. Members for Keighley, for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley), for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Allan) and for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Mahmood) also referred. All Members should be concerned when they reflect on the fact that a large number of young men have gone through 11 years or more of full-time education in this country's tax-funded schools and still come out unable to communicate effectively in written or spoken English and lacking the skills to make them employable.

In Bradford and other cities, a fair number of young men are coming out of school unskilled, and can make far more money by carrying heroin round the corner for the local drug dealer than they could hope to earn from any legitimate unskilled occupation. That is not a problem that affects ethnic minorities alone. As other hon. Members have said, it is a problem that is found in estates and cities throughout this country, and it affects people from all ethnic backgrounds. Certainly, recent events have been aggravated by the racial element. It was summed up well in Lord Ouseley's report from Bradford, which states:

"The current Bradford scenario is one in which many white people feel their needs are neglected because they regard the minority ethnic communities as being prioritised for more favourable public assistance. Some people assert that the Muslims, and in particular the Pakistanis, get everything at their expense.

Simultaneously, the Asian communities, particularly the Muslims, are concerned that racism and Islamophobia continue to blight their lives, resulting in harassment, discrimination and exclusion. They argue that they do not receive favourable or equal treatment and their needs are marginalised by decision-makers and public-service bodies."

While there are good things going on at the Bradford Mela and various local initiatives, to which the hon. Member for Keighley referred, there are also big problems. In February this year, the Home Office published its report on race equality in public services. That made it clear that under-achievement among British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis is a serious challenge. Whereas British Indians seem to be succeeding in formal education, that is not the case with people of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin. Those problems are also true of far too many poor young white men. Those experiences make those groups ready and attractive prey for political extremists of whichever wing.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): We all understand the argument about educational under-achievement, but does the hon. Gentleman accept that all the evidence shows that even where Afro-Caribbean and Asian young people have exactly the same formal education as young white people, their chances of getting a job are much worse?

Mr. Lidington: There is evidence to support the hon. Lady's contention, but it is a mistake to classify people as either white or from an ethnic minority, because the experiences of people from various ethnic communities are different. In addition, a young white man growing up in a rough area with no family experience of or support for higher education and professional achievement has a hugely different experience from a young white man growing up in a supportive home with role models to demonstrate that he can achieve something in life.

One challenge that we face in integrating young men of Pakistani origin is that although many do not feel at home in their parents' traditionalist culture, they are not welcomed into mainstream British culture either. Hon. Members have spoken about that. I find that feeling among my constituents and I suspect that it is common in most British Pakistani communities. I agree with those who said that the British National party and the National Front—I would add elements of the ultra-left—are only too willing to exploit those real social tensions.

What are the solutions? There are no panaceas or magic wands, but I shall make a number of suggestions. We must ensure that there is effective policing, particularly neighbourhood policing, which means more officers. It also means giving a greater national priority to intelligent patrolling and rigorous consideration of police functions. For example, the booking of suspects into custody could be carried out by a different agency, freeing police officers to go back on duty. We need to cut back on centrally imposed targets and performance indicators.

We must give priority to the teaching of both spoken and written English in our schools. I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr about the importance of helping with the education of mothers from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. We do not hear much about the views of British Asian women in such debates.

The hon. Member for Keighley's heart is in the right place, but perhaps the key to achieving her objective is to present opportunities in the English language as just that—opportunities for new Pakistani or Bangladeshi immigrants to play their full part in British society and to allow their children to do the same. They should certainly be encouraged to take part. I agree with the hon. Lady about the problems caused by long absences from school for overseas visits. Local education authorities and head teachers need to tackle that problem.

We need to consider Government spending programmes. Under Governments of both parties and local authorities run by all three parties, we have been spending millions of pounds on what was called section 11 funding but is now called ethnic minority grants. When we find that too many children from ethnic

[Mr. Lidington]

minorities leave school without an adequate command of English and the skills that make them attractive to employers, we must ask ourselves about the effectiveness of some of that spending. Similar questions could be asked about the single regeneration budget. I was told that a lot of money has been spent in Manningham, which caused resentment in areas such as Keighley, but that the people living there did not feel that they had ownership of the projects. They felt that the projects had been imposed from on high.

I agree with the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey in his call for greater decentralisation. We must find ways of tackling the problems at a local level, whether that is the policing of urban areas or sustained action to encourage social and economic regeneration. That will mean a loss of power for Whitehall, but it is only through the empowerment of local people that we will achieve solutions to the deep-seated problems.

10.50 am

The Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs (Mr. John Denham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) on initiating the debate, and thank the hon. Members for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Allan) and for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) and my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley), for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Mahmood) and for Keighley (Mrs. Cryer) for their contributions.

Hon. Members will appreciate that I have limited time to reply to the many issues that have been raised. I hope that that does not matter, because none of us can say that we have a monopoly of wisdom on or all the answers to the issue. The opportunity to have such a debate in which we have wide-ranging, measured and uniformly constructive discussions is enormously helpful, and I will reflect after the debate on the more detailed issues that hon. Members have raised.

I start by placing on record our unequivocal view on the disorders. There can be no excuse for the destruction and violence that we have seen in Burnley, Oldham, Bradford and, albeit on a lesser scale as my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North said, Stoke. The communities from which those who are responsible come suffer deep-seated problems, and I will speak about how we can address those. However, throwing stones and petrol bombs at police officers, burning down businesses that are part of the local community and putting people in fear of their lives cannot be justified in any circumstance.

I pay tribute to the work of the police in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, West Yorkshire, Staffordshire and other places for their response to the events. Officers from throughout the north of England have been involved in Bradford and were on the receiving end of attacks that they should not have had to suffer. I repeat my thanks to them and to the other emergency services that handled the difficult problems.

Having said that, I do not want to minimise the malign influence of racism in the events. The work of the far right to inflame and make political capital out of community tensions is wrong. Those who work to set one community against another are attempting to exploit prejudice for their own political interests. It is important that, in addition to the necessary police response to those activities, democratic political parties must ensure that they consistently resist the temptation, not only in Parliament but at every level at which they operate, to give sustenance to those who are involved in those far right activities.

We have heard a lot of talk about the involvement of Asian youths. However, to use the term "Asian" in a broad and loose way causes offence particularly to those members of communities who have not participated in certain recent events. We know that, especially in Bradford, those involved in the disorder included a substantial number of young white males. We must always be careful about our language.

This is not just a matter of addressing problems faced by part or all of the Asian community or of tackling the systematic racism that they undoubtedly face. We must recognise that the people who peddle racist views, whether in an organised or an unco-ordinated way, often find their audiences among an equally alienated group of young white people who also feel excluded from many of the things enjoyed by the rest of society. Whatever else we say, we must agree that the solutions we seek must work for all communities and that all communities must be part of the solution in the months and years ahead.

I should like to touch briefly on a few important areas. First, there is a broader police response than the response to disorder itself. The massive programme of change in the police service set in train by the Stephen Lawrence inquiry is under way and is as necessary as ever. The police are working consistently to build on their response to the needs of policing a diverse community. The Association of Chief Police Officers recently wrote to chief constables all over the country reminding them of the guidance of good practice in policing diverse communities that has been produced over the last couple of years.

We all accept that we must address our response far more widely than just the towns and cities that may have suffered from disorder. There are good reasons not to simply tailor a response to those areas and ignore the needs of others. That would send all the wrong messages. There are many other areas that have much in common with those where there has been disorder. They have high levels of deprivation, pockets of high unemployment, de facto segregation and subsections of the community involved in crime and hard drugs. We will need to look at all those issues.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary told the House last week that a group of Ministers has been established across Government. I chair the group and it has met on three occasions. Our task is to look at the practical help that the Government can give to local communities both in the short and long term. Like other hon. Members, I emphasise that we must help local communities to find their own solutions. Solutions that are imposed from the top will not work. We want to collaborate with local government and other statutory agencies, but also to involve other less formal structures, whether they are neighbourhood forums, faith organisations or other places where local people who are

concerned about their communities come forward to demand or take action. We must invest in the capacity of those communities to tackle some of the problems.

While I would not put it forward as the solution, over the summer we are expanding the range of activities that are available for young people, particularly those that bring young people together from different communities. That is an important and immediate response to the needs of many communities across the country. We will be working through the Government offices for the regions to do that. We also need to look at ways to assist local communities and local authorities to promote dialogue and to strengthen democracy. As hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North have said, a lead from local government will be important in leading the way to local solutions.

We are working closely with the Local Government Association, drawing on its knowledge of best practice and what has worked in different parts of the country to strengthen that programme of work. We need to find ways to enable the voices of those who have the least say to be heard. It has often been said that traditional structures in some of the ethnic minority communities do not work as they did in the past. Elders do not automatically represent the younger people. It is equally true that talking to the tenants association on many predominantly white council estates does not automatically put one in touch with the local 16 or 17-year-olds. We have to find voices for all communities, ensuring that young people's voices can be heard.

I acknowledge the need to examine the substantial programme of single regeneration, new deal, community and neighbourhood renewal and other such investment to ensure that we overcome the problems identified by hon. Members today. Those concerns will certainly be included within the work programme of the ministerial group.

Private Finance Initiative

11 am

David Taylor (North-West Leicestershire): The full title of the debate, which I am delighted to have secured, is the rather prosaic "Implications of the Private Finance Initiative". If I were to provide a subtitle, it would be "Myths, Sorcery and Other Accounting Devices". As a public sector accountant—I declare an interest to that extent—I must confess dismay and astonishment at the readiness of my Government to prod and coerce public agencies down the PFI and public-private partnership route using a rationale that is frequently dubious, shot through with subjectivity and based on figures of doubtful authenticity to demonstrate the desirability of projects that, in the medium term, are costly, inflexible and will depress the quality of public services, accelerate privatisation and divert taxpayers' hard-earned cash into the pockets of multinational companies that view the ethos of public service and the existence of the public sector only as a barrier to trade and an obstacle to profit.

I referred at the outset to myths. One of the most persistent myths is that PFI somehow squares the circle of bringing in new money while reducing the need for scarce public finance that otherwise could not be afforded. That is financial illiteracy raised to an art form. Every penny raised for PFI schools, hospitals and the prisons to which tomorrow's electorates will no doubt commit today's responsible Ministers is paid for by the public purse, plus interest, plus profits. Stretching over half a century, in some cases, PFI does not lever in private finance; it merely allows private shareholders to dip their large ladles into an increasing stream of tax revenue.

Independent research shows quite unambiguously that the Government could have paid for the whole programme of PFI projects without breaching the sustainable and golden fiscal rules articulated by the Chancellor. The Major Government lost control of public borrowing. In a frenzy of creative accounting, they conceived public-private partnerships and involuntarily bequeathed that poisoned chalice to Labour on 1 May 1997.

It is a sadness that the Government have been so seduced by the flawed and feeble justification for this abandonment of prudence that they have conveyed the firm impression that PFI is the only show in town. Local government and health authorities have trudged down this rocky path with increasingly heavy hearts and increasingly lighter purses.

Let me deal more thoroughly with value for money. PFI projects cost much more than conventionally funded projects, not least because the private sector borrows at higher rates than the public sector, which is underpinned by the lowest-risk borrower of all: the Government. The extra costs are boosted by lengthy negotiations with expensive City lawyers, consultants and fine wines employed by both sides. The escalation of costs is accelerated, notwithstanding the low risks, by the large returns demanded and the ballooning of scale.

The Birmingham schools PFI is a good example. It started in 1996 at £20 million for eight schools and presently stands at £80 million for 13 schools. The higher levels of finance unsurprisingly lead to an

[David Taylor]

affordability problem for the client authority, which often responds by reducing service and capacity, drives down labour rates and drains subsidies from other budget heads to bridge the PFI gap. PFI hospitals are another example. They have worse staffing levels and, typically, 30 per cent. fewer beds.

At the heart of the judgment as to whether PFI provides better value for money than its public sector comparator is the allocation of risks between the public client and the private deliverer. At this point we enter the seedy world of accountancy massage parlours, where figures are pummelled and distorted into unrealistic shapes. Research for Unison by Professor Allyson Pollock into the transferred risks that allegedly made schools and hospital projects value for money showed that calculations of risk are arbitrary and unreliable; what a surprise. A specific example is that the average cost overrun for national health service capital projects in the 1990s of 7 per cent. can be almost doubled in typical transferred risk calculations to upwards of 12.5 per cent. No wonder that the first PFI hospital at Dartford failed to make projected savings.

Despite frequent assertions by Front Benchers of both main parties, there is little or no evidence that private sector management, with its hallowed status as a third way icon, is more efficient at delivering quality services than workers in the public sector. As PFI projects come on-stream, the anticipated quality standards and adherence to cost and time scale are not delivered as frequently as their advocates suggest.

There is insufficient time to examine the litany of failures. Three will suffice: the fiasco at the Passport Agency, when Siemens paid only £2 million of the £13 million bill; Andersen Consulting's national insurance recording system, which needed to provide £35 million compensation to pensioners; and PFI's own big daddy—the channel tunnel rail link, bailed out by a Government bond guarantee that, at a stroke, took back the project's risks.

The belief in the natural superiority of the more creative, innovative and risk-taking private firm over the poor old public authority is seriously flawed. In practice, the private sector relies on the expertise of public sector professionals to run their newly acquired services. It shies away from too-intensive competition, through takeovers and mergers that have led to a handful of mega-multinationals dominating the sector. Such touching faith in private management flies at the speed of sound into the face of the evidence experienced on a daily basis by those who must endure some contracted-out services in the public sector. Most notoriously, Britain's filthiest hospitals are cleaned, if that is the right word, by private contractors.

My party and my leader seem to take it as read that innovation and the efficiencies of the private sector can be straightforwardly harnessed to deliver public health priorities and goals. However, the fragmentation caused by the PFI approach will divert resources and miss more goals than a Chris Waddle penalty. A key component shoring up the whole PFI edifice is the lowered pay and conditions of staff engaged. High-quality public services need high-quality employment and although transferred staff receive some protection, new ones tend to have poorer pay, weaker conditions and little in the way of occupational pensions. Women, the crucial and undervalued resource in the public services, take the biggest hit. As PFI contracts last for decades, the original tier of staff is steadily replaced by an entire class of women working under weakened conditions and terms. PFI depends on the exploitation of staff. There is a strong link between poor employment practices and poor quality services.

The Government state that value for money is the sole issue when PFI projects are assessed against the cost of traditional procurement. That appraisal is heavily shaped by the discounting of future cash flows at 6 per cent. Payments from taxpayers for the capital elements of PFI schemes are typically made later than is the case under conventional procurement. The higher the discount rate used, the better value the PFI project will look in comparison with the public sector option. Such discounting to a net present cost is flawed in two key ways. First, it does not acknowledge that public sector purchasing now tends to spread costs over time through borrowing, and the formulaic approach tends to assume a clumping of expenditure in the early years of public sector projects.

Secondly, the real costs of public borrowing have reduced and the arbitrary 6 per cent. discount rate used by the Treasury can no longer be justified. Reducing the rate to 5 per cent. would make a typical PFI project in this cost area 5 per cent. more expensive over its lifetime than its public sector comparator. That difference is enough to level the spreadsheet in favour of public purchasing for a raft of projects that have been forced down the PFI route. This is not some arcane discussion between sad accountants who should get out more; it really does matter.

The recent Sharman report reviewing accountability for public expenditure showed the difficulty of accounting for public funds when the private sector is the provider of public services. In the brave new PFI world, it is not clear that the Government have sufficiently strong and flexible mechanisms to guarantee the probity of public expenditure. Politically, PFI and the wider use of PPP restrict the operational terrain for politicians and inhibit our ability to make a difference. Services are supplied increasingly by private bodies that are not accountable in any way that people can recognise. That may lead to a lack of responsiveness by service providers to users, a blame culture between different public bodies and widespread electoral disenchantment.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I am reluctant to interrupt my hon. Friend's excellent speech, but I want to comment on the issue of transparency as regards elected Members of Parliament. In my borough of Hackney, in common with many other inner-city boroughs, the housing benefit service was privatised and the service promptly collapsed. As a Member of Parliament, I found it almost impossible to get information from the private service contractors. There was no transparency whatsoever in that case.

David Taylor: I am pleased to be given further evidence of the flaws of private sector management, which, in my experience as a senior public sector manager, are as frequent as in the public sector. At the

very least, in an improved world, taxpayers, citizens and consumers have a right to expect that grievance procedures and effective sanctions will give them the prospect of redress when service failures occur.

In responding to today's debate and to the stream of criticism about PPP that will no doubt characterise this Parliament, the Minister and the Government may be tempted to pray in aid the recent publication from the Institute for Public Policy Research entitled "Building Better Partnerships". The commission that produced the report was critical of how some PFI and PPP projects operated in the past, but endorsed the Government's view that expansion of private sector involvement into the heart of public sector provision should be pursued energetically.

Even that stacked commission felt moved to say that the link between private provision of public services and cost-cutting would have to end, and that partnership should not be seen as privatisation by stealth. It, too, asked that PFI proposals be subjected to a sensitivity analysis to examine whether different assumptions on risk allocation would lead to different value for money conclusions. Even that commission comprehensively demolished the fatuous theory, so frequently articulated in this place by people who should know better, that PFI allows Governments to undertake more projects than would otherwise be the case. It does not, cannot and never will.

The IPPR is to be congratulated on initiating what appeared to be a rational and measured debate on this most provocative of topics, the interface between the private and public sectors and the possible takeover of the latter by the former. However, we must set that report in context. The commission carried out its inquiry in private, with an unprecedented coalition of big business and Government movers and shakers. Sponsors of the commission can in no way be described as politically neutral; they have a direct interest in the expansion of the PFI market and in tapping into public funds for education and health. They have been quick to recognise the possibility of positioning themselves to benefit from the dismantling of the barriers that previously protected the public sector from the warm embrace of private firms.

As the Catalyst Trust said, the IPPR makes the case for extending PFI by setting aside or downplaying the fact that almost all analysis of the potential of PPP acknowledges the inability to improve efficiency, concentrating instead on the benefits of alleged risk transfer. I referred earlier to the lack of objectivity in risk calculation, but the position is worse than that. The methodology used does not take into account the additional risk presented by outsourcing services when the most vulnerable people in our society are the ones who will suffer most if essential services falter or fail and, to quote the intellectual mother of PFI, "there is no alternative". Even when risk has been transferred, it has frequently proved impossible to enforce that contract in a practical way. PFI apologists will say that these are just teething problems. My view is that the private sector seems to talk up the risks in contract negotiations but talk them down when raising capital finance from the market.

"Does it matter whether public services are delivered by the private sector?" say the commission, the official Opposition and some of those at the heart of Government. Of course it matters. The public sector's motivation is social responsibility, while commercial firms have a responsibility to their owners and shareholders, with obligations to clients and customers some way behind. In countries such as Australia and the United States of America in which health privatisation—by PFI and other means—is further advanced, evidence strongly points towards poorer services with a lower quality of care, more bureaucracy and more inappropriate and less effective treatment. In short, services are down to a price, not up to a standard.

Our party should be the last to stand aside when the necessary modernisation of public services on which millions of our people depend is accompanied by the unnecessary collateral damage inflicted by the PFI: the inflexibility and rigidity of service provision, reduced access, decreased diversity and, ultimately, the failure to meet public need. We should resist the PFI-inspired erosion of the foundations of our public services that usher in the expansion of user charges and show the door to the principle of the public funding of services that are free at the point of delivery.

My comments have drawn on research from a range of organisations and the early evidence of the effect of PFI contracts on a number of public services, not least the NHS, which has experienced significant changes whenever PFI has been utilised. The express concerns of health professionals encapsulate the serious flaws inherent in PFI and render it incapable of being a long-term strategy for increasing capital investment.

The British Medical Association is concerned that the planning of PFI hospitals presumes increased output because of reduced bed numbers, with attendant implications for clinical services in the hospital as well as for primary care and social services in the community that do not have provision in the contracts. The BMA also points out that an implicit assumption of long-term contracts is that there will be a continued demand for the services of a particular hospital. That pre-empts revenue decisions to be made by local health authorities and primary care trusts for the foreseeable future.

Naturally, the BMA points out that PFI funding is effectively hypothecated and forces resource constraints to focus on staffing. That may lead to unplanned changes in work force configuration. The non-NHS owners of PFI hospitals will employ former NHS staff, but there has not been guidance to back up the welcome assurance from the top of our party that clinical staff will remain in the NHS. I am unconvinced that that is possible in a PFI context.

Mr. Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton): I realise that the hon. Gentleman is reaching the end of his speech, which I have enjoyed. He is speaking rationally and clearly. So that others do not try to misrepresent his remarks, does he think that there will ever be a role for the private sector in the delivery of public services?

David Taylor: Of course there is. The private sector has always been involved in the delivery of public services; the debate is about scale and location. In the recent election campaign we were told by the electorate to invest or lose. In yesterday's speech, the Prime Minister told us to reform or bust. Today, we should robustly say that public provision, not privatisation, is the way ahead.

[David Taylor]

It may be clear that I am opposed to the PFI on accounting, economic, social and political grounds. I remain convinced that public finance and provision remain the most effective, efficient and equitable way in which to modernise our hospitals, schools and other public services. The route that we are pursuing will take us more steeply into a private sector swamp that is populated by those who set the price of everything but who rate the value of public services as low.

A former Prime Minister criticised a later Administration for selling off the family silver. We run the risk of a house clearance of that on which our national family depends. When my children ask me in 2020—if I am still alive—what I did in Parliament to prevent the disaster of the PFI that will, no doubt, beset them at that time, I shall point to the text of this debate and, I hope, future debates. The PFI is prohibitive in cost, flawed in concept and intolerable in consequences for the taxpayers, citizens and workers who put us in this place and look to us to defend their interests.

Several hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Frank Cook (in the Chair): Order. I remind right hon. and hon. Members that it is normal procedure in such debates to commence Front-Bench Members' closing statements 30 minutes before the termination of the debate, which in this instance is 12 noon. It is not necessary to be a great mathematician to work out that with eight Members trying to catch my eye, 40 minutes does not allow much time for anyone. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will bear that in mind and make their contributions pertinent, proper and brief.

11.20 am

Hywel Williams (Caernarfon): I shall make two broad points on PFI in health; one on risk, and the other on value for money. We all face the risk of ill health, and health care will always be in demand. As the private sector realises only too well, under this Government—as with the previous one—the market for health care is good. PFI projects in health are a rock-solid investment for the private sector. Demand is infinite, and the Government are the guarantor; not the final one, but the first and only one necessary. It is right to ask how the obscene profits that have already been reported are justified. PFIs are a licence to print money; money that the NHS can ill afford.

On value for money, people see through the "Buy now, pay through the nose for 30 years" scam. My constituents have campaigned long and hard for a hospital at Porthmadog. One may now be on offer, but on the basis of PFI, if a private investor can be tempted. What are my constituents to say about that? Should they say, "No thanks, PFI is a con we'll do without. We prefer to travel up to 50 miles to the local district general hospital up in Bangor"? They have no choice but to take a bad deal, as no other deal is on offer. The market is good for the seller, if not for the buyer.

The hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) referred to a distinguished critic of the previous Administration, who said that they had sold off the family silver. It is a case not of selling off the old family silver but of gambling in silver futures. Imprudent gamblers often burn their fingers in the futures market. For example, according to yesterday's Welsh edition of the *Daily Post*, a kilo of silver that cost £125 in 1975 can now be had for £106—much-devalued pounds. By the end of 30 years of a PFI contract, the taxpayer will be left not with some devalued pounds but with precisely nothing—quite an example of value for money.

Before I came to this place, I ran my own business. Had I done so in the way I have described, I would be not here but in the poorhouse. It is not this Government who will pay the price in 30 years' time. They will be long gone. It will be our children and, I fear, our children's children who will have to face the results of the Government's actions.

However much we in Wales might object to PFI, the National Assembly in Cardiff has no choice in the matter. That is one more reason why the so-called devolution settlement is untenable in its present form. We in Plaid Cymru call for proper investment in a reconstructed public sector that has faith in its capacities, is publicly accountable and whose activities are not shrouded because of alleged commercial sensitivity. New Labour may not have an ideological objection to putting shareholders before hospitals and profit before patients, but Plaid Cymru most emphatically does.

11.24 pm

Mr. Kelvin Hopkins (Luton, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) on initiating this important debate and on his magnificent introductory speech. His was a root and branch demolition of any case that might have been made for PFI. Many Labour Members believe that PFI is irrational nonsense, and it is also extremely unpopular with the public. An opinion poll for *The Guardian* suggests that only one in ten thinks that bringing the private sector into the public services is a good idea. That means that privatisation and PFI are less popular than the poll tax, and the Government ought to take careful note of that. The poll tax destroyed a previous Prime Minister. If Labour Members are not careful, we could find ourselves in political trouble. I want to avoid that above all, because it is vital for the future of the country that our party remains in government and continues to do its best for the great mass of ordinary people, and not for big business and those who make money.

Popularity is not everything, of course. Sometimes I am slightly unpopular with my Whips, but I do not necessarily take that as conclusive evidence that I am wrong. On the other hand, popularity is important in politics. We should bear it in mind that, although we have won two elections with big majorities; the public are watching us. We should note that they do not like privatisation and one day they may judge us more harshly than they have so far.

My hon. Friend the Member for North-West Leicestershire talked about the costs of privatisation and the rates of return. The rate of return required on private investment is vastly higher than on public investment. The typical rate in the old days of the Public Works Loan Board was, perhaps, bank rate plus 2 per cent. Current examples of required rates of return are 18 per cent. for the Skye bridge and 19.4 per cent. for

Bridgend prison—vast sums of money—and, of course, the assets still belong to the private sector. I will not dwell on escalation, which my hon. Friend has already mentioned.

The illogicality of insisting on expensive private investment instead of cheap public investment defeats me. We have been told that it is about the importance of containing the public sector borrowing requirement. However, there are two types of borrowing: borrowing to finance the poor and unemployed during a recession, which is cyclical borrowing, and borrowing for long-term investment in assets, which is different. The risk involved in the provision of public hospitals and schools is not high. It is not a risk at all, because there will always be a demand for such facilities. It is just pushing extra cash into the pockets of the private sector rather than paying more cheaply to get things done in the public sector.

Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Hywel Williams) gave a somewhat different view in his criticism of the PFI. He said that, for the companies involved, PFI was a gamble; they could have their fingers burned. Does not all the research from people such as Professor Allyson Pollock prove that the risk is virtually minimal? It is a sure way for a few multinational companies to make a lot of money.

Mr. Hopkins: Of course I totally agree. The channel tunnel is one of many examples. It was a type of public-private arrangement that effectively was underwritten by Government. It made vast losses, which have been financed by the public sector. I do not mind paying from the public purse for those things that are valuable and essential for public use or a vital part of our infrastructure. However, let us not pretend that things must be bought in either the private or the public sectors. Indeed, the public sector could have built the channel tunnel—I would have preferred that—and it would have been built more cheaply, more effectively and, I suspect, more quickly. However, that is neither here nor there.

The important point is about public borrowing. On the continent of Europe, much of the public borrowing that we include in the PSBR is not included. Those Governments rightly look at the public borrowing level in relation to the state of the economy. Those countries are concerned with cyclical borrowing and not long-term borrowing for risk-free investment in necessary public services. We have introduced a new ethos into the public sector, which is deeply worrying. If we pursue it in the long term, a situation may develop in which some of the values that now drive people who work in the public services may be lost for ever. That would cause terrible damage to our society.

Many outside the Government take a critical view of privatisation and the PFI. I end with a quotation from Will Hutton, the director of the Industrial Society and former editor of *The Observer*. He said:

"For the NHS is no longer governed principally by considerations of public health, clinical need and patient care. Its overriding values are cost reduction, operational efficiency and the need to reproduce the managerial culture of a privately-owned PLC. Patients' interests have become secondary to those of ideological public-accounting principles and the enthronement of market values in public provision. A policy begun by the Conservatives, which the nation voted to change, has been continued largely uninterrupted by new Labour."

It is time we changed that and reverted to the view that the Labour party has traditionally taken—that public provision should be provided by public investment.

11.32 am

Dr. Richard Taylor (Wyre Forest): I congratulate the hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) on his demolition of the arguments for the private finance initiative. I was delighted to hear so much understanding of it and its iniquities. All he missed out was the devastating fact that the first call on a trust's money, before anything goes into patient care, is paying off the PFI debt.

I shall briefly mention two concerns, illustrated by local events in Worcestershire. First, everyone knows that most PFI hospitals have far fewer beds than the hospitals that they replaced. To our amazement, the Worcestershire health authority has tacitly admitted that fact, by agreeing to provide an extra 112 beds, over and above those in the PFI hospital, in existing buildings that were to be decommissioned. As beds represent money, that must immediately put the cost of the PFI above the hallowed public sector comparator.

Secondly, I shall give a characteristic example of the spin that has been used. When the previous Secretary of State went to Worcester to cut the first sod for the marvellous new PFI hospital, the press release—of which I have a copy—from the Department of Health heralded it as costing £116 million. When Professor Allyson Pollock conducted the survey last year, she was kind and said that the cost was £108 million; she excluded the cost of equipment and of money that would be obtained from land sales. The health authority pilloried her for getting the sums wrong, although they were taken from health authority figures, and claimed that the cost was only £91 million, despite the figure of £116 million given in the press release.

Now, the health authority has at long last admitted that the true cost is £109 million. The difference between £91 million and £109 million is the cost of raising the finance to provide the building—which cements the arguments of the hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire that the initiative will damage the health service in the long term. In a comment column just before the election, *The Guardian*, described the PFI as "bleeding the hospitals".

11.33 am

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I welcome the debate and the contribution of the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor). I had hoped that he would tell us the rate of return on the £109 million capital invested in the new hospital in Kidderminster and the comparative figures if it had been built by traditional public sector finance methods, which would, I suspect, be much cheaper.

Dr. Taylor: I can compare it in another way. The cost to a trust of capital charges, which were the previous way of paying for one's premises and equipment, is approximately 8 per cent. of a trust's income. The cost under the PFI is approximately 13 per cent. of income.

[Dr. Taylor]

While the 8 per cent. is recycled within the NHS, the 13 per cent. goes into the private pocket. That is as close as I can get to the answer.

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. A report by Professor Allyson Pollock compares the cost of repayments for several hospitals, pre and post PFI: for Norfolk and Norwich hospital, it was 0.7 per cent. pre PFI and 18.9 per cent. post PFI, for Swindon and Marlborough trust, it was 3.3 per cent. and 14.3 per cent. respectively, and for Calderdale Healthcare, 3 per cent. and 11.3 per cent., and so forth.

I welcome the debate, because it gives us a chance to challenge the ethos that the use of PFI finance in public services is the manna from heaven, money from God-knows-where that will give us the shining new building on the hill. A good, new hospital can be built, apparently at no cost, under PFI. However, the reality is that we are storing up an enormous charge for future generations; if there is a problem in financing those hospitals, the first call, the absolute priority of the debtors, is the private finance, not the patients.

Mr. Hopkins: Is it not unfair to ask a local electorate, "Would you like a PFI hospital or no hospital?" Local people could be asked, "Would you like a PFI or a publicly financed hospital?" Which would they choose?

Jeremy Corbyn: Indeed. As my hon. Friend suggested, it is a ridiculous question, because clearly there is an option. Either projects are financed by the public sector in the normal, traditional, cheaper and more secure way, or the vultures of private enterprise banks are brought in—a rip-off at public expense—and given an absolute guarantee of income.

It is time that those promoting PFI realised that public attitudes have changed. I was brought up on a diet of publicity that told me that public investment in industry and anything that was publicly owned and publicly run was intrinsically dangerous, probably imported from the Soviet Union and a threat to freedom, health and democracy. I remember the campaign, "Say no to nationalisation". Those who are even older than I am will remember Mr. Cube.

On a cold morning in March, I was outside Euston station in the company of the general secretaries of RMT, ASLEF and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association—very nice people, fine folk—handing out leaflets saying, "Bring back the track. Take Railtrack into public ownership". The leaflets pointed out that Railtrack had been given away to its shareholders by the Conservative Government at much less than the capital value of the land it owned, never mind all the infrastructure. Is that a rip-off or what? We were collecting signatures from people who wanted Railtrack to be brought back into public ownership. That is nationalisation if you like—a word that people do not like to use these days. There was a queue across the concourse to sign the petition and the staff asked us if there was anything we could do about it. I told them there was nothing I could do about it because people wanted to sign the petition to secure the jobs of staff and to ensure that Railtrack was properly run. We must think again about the ethos of privatisation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) described what happens when public services are put out to private contractors. I have wearied the House before on that subject, so I shall speak briefly about housing benefit in my borough, which used to be run by the local authority. The system was not wonderful, but people could get answers and solutions to problems at the neighbourhood offices. The system was centralised by the local authority and it got worse. The local authority was then denied the capital allowance from central Government to invest in the new computer systems that were necessary and along came the wonderful company from Birmingham known as IT Net, which said that it would run the scheme for the local authority.

A short time later, 20,000 people were awaiting answers to their queries about housing benefit, private sector tenants were being evicted, people were having breakdowns and families were breaking up. There were horrendous problems because of the sheer incompetence of the company, which seemed to have the local authority in an armlock. That company was being paid—the directors were even getting bonuses. My right hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I have been tearing out what remains of our hair to ensure that the company does its job properly. We were reduced to having a meeting with two directors of IT Net to ask them to improve the service.

Public money paid through a local authority should be providing a service to local people, but we have been reduced to talking to two directors who are answerable to shareholders, who have no interest whatever in the needs of the people of Islington. It is a negation of democracy that we hand our services over to the private sector.

Ms Abbott: The privatisation of housing benefit caused the collapse of the service and there was a total lack of transparency. One could not discover anything from the private firms about internal targets, or any other information. Those were not the only bad aspects of the privatisation, however. When it was clear to my local authority that the housing benefit service in Hackney was collapsing, it delayed a long time before removing the contract. People in the authority said, "In practice, Diane, we cannot remove the contract once we've handed it over to them, because there is no genuine in-house competitor or capacity."

Jeremy Corbyn: My hon. Friend is right. On Thursday, the Liberal Democrat-run council in the London borough of Islington will have a chance to remove that contract from IT Net. As I understand it, however, the Liberal Democrats propose to continue with the contract. I trust that when the Liberal Democrat spokesman speaks, he will give us some good news after his promise to intervene with the local authority leadership on that matter.

Finally, I am a former official of the National Union of Public Employees, I later became part of Unison and I am acutely aware of the enormous commitment that public sector workers make to the public sector. They resent the fact that their jobs are sold to the lowest bidder every few years, even under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations

1981 by which they may receive a guarantee that their employment will continue if the transfer takes place. If we want good-quality public services, we should remember to respect and support the people who work in the public sector and give them decent conditions. We must invest properly and cheaply and get ourselves better, democratically accountable public services rather than handing them over to those who have proved that they cannot provide them.

11.41 am

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): We are all in debt to the hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) for this debate, because PFI is an important part of the debate on public services that will, I am sure, play a huge role in this Parliament. I apologise to him, to the Minister and to you, Mr. Cook, for having to leave before the end of the debate to attend a memorial service for the late Reg Prentice in St. Mary's Undercroft.

I want to contribute briefly to the debate because I was responsible for the PFI in the Department of Health in the last Conservative Government. I am sure that the Minister will point out that PFI has at least enabled a lot of new hospitals to get under way since the beginning of the last Parliament. That is to the credit of PFI.

At the same time, there are severe problems with PFI, which I want briefly to adumbrate. First, as the hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire said, every penny of PFI comes from the public purse and the taxpayer. It amounts to spending now and paying later, which builds up a huge problem for the future. In the March Budget it was revealed that £79 billion of PFI project finance would have to be financed in the future. Later figures suggest that another £16 billion have been added to that sum. That money will have to be provided by our children and our children's children in 30 or 40 years.

David Taylor: Even those costs understate the true impact because of the asset and land sales to which the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor) referred, which tend to be invisible in the equation advanced by advocates of PFI.

Mr. Horam: I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

With PFI, one is over a barrel with the finance houses, which are in a position to exact a hard deal. Governments under the pressure of public opinion are naturally anxious to get a move on with building hospitals, and so on. Therefore, one is always a demandeur—as it were—and the finance houses, companies and consortiums that finance the PFI can sit and wait until they get what they want. One must eliminate as much risk as they want, and it goes on from there. That is a problem.

I agree, too, with the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) about transparency. I hope that the Public Accounts Committee will investigate the matter thoroughly, because we still do not have the facts on PFI in anything like the detail that the House should have before it commits itself to further billion-pound deals.

We should take the point that the Prime Minister always makes in Question Time—there are always huge overruns with traditionally financed public sector projects such as the Jubilee line extension. That is true, and it is equally true that, because of the responsibilities of the PFI contractor, projects finish within budget. Contractors are responsible if projects are not finished on time or within budget. The difficulty is that one tends to get cheap, short-cut solutions when projects run up against budget. One can end up with poorly finished hospitals such as those in Carlisle and Dartford—of which I have personal knowledge—and that is a tragedy. We may therefore have to face the fact that some large infrastructure projects are not easy to finance or estimate costs for. We must either finance them traditionally from the public sector and finish them properly or suffer the results of an inferior product.

The existence of PFI causes huge problems for the management of large infrastructure projects, especially hospitals, which I am interested in. Such projects are extremely complex to negotiate. The piles of documents are enormous, as is the amount of time that senior executives of the hospital have to put in to negotiate them. During that period, their eyes are inevitably off the ball when it comes to running the hospital. I frequently found such examples when I ran the PFI in the Department of Health. The standard of service deteriorated during the two or three years in which senior executives were negotiating the PFI, even though they had a contract team to deal with the matter, but it is enormously complex. One or two people had heart attacks and their health seriously deteriorated during the time that they were involved.

The end results of such projects are also extremely inflexible. The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor) made that point about beds. One may have fewer beds in a new PFI hospital and one may find oneself in the situation that we face in Bromley, where rising house prices have resulted in developers converting nursing homes. There are fewer nursing spaces in the area and fewer beds. The budgets of the local authority and the social services department are under pressure and the result is that far fewer people can find nursing care, which is a real problem for the local authority.

To get public services on their feet Governments of all persuasions—this is a non-political point—should give primacy not to financial considerations but to the management of the resulting utility and its employees. The hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire rightly said that one cannot have a satisfactory public service without motivated employees who can come only from properly structured management. Wherever possible, one should not get involved in complicated financing deals. One should keep the management—whether public or private sector, which I support in many cases—simple and uncomplicated so that it can do the job that it is meant to do.

11.48 am

Mr. Tony Colman (Putney): I declare an interest in being the founding chair of the Public Private Partnerships Programme Ltd., which is a PFI local government company. I remain an unremunerated director, appointed by the Local Government Association.

When I became a local authority leader in 1991, I was appalled by the public squalor that I saw around me; the result of approximately 50 years of under-investment.

[Mr. Tony Colman]

I was pleased that my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister, listened to a number of people, including myself and, as a party, we adopted the policy of PFI in 1992. It is a Labour party policy alternative to privatisation.

My experience is not in the health service but in local government, dealing with schools, social services, housing, police, the fire brigade and transport. In each case, PFI has been the result of a choice—one in five of the investments made since 1987 have been PFI—made by local politicians. Unions are consulted and there is full TUPE and pension transfer. It works: the finance is almost as cheap as Government borrowing, buildings are built on time or earlier and long-term maintenance costs are agreed so that no future local authority leader inherits the squalor that I inherited. The staff will remain in comparable pension arrangements and significant savings to the public purse—from 5 to 12 per cent.—are made on schools alone. I was surprised that the IPPR report did not fully analyse what was happening in local government. In each case, because local politicians are involved, PFI must be proven to be better value than running the project under any other basis.

I am not an expert on the national health service, but I believe that it can learn from local government. My constituency has one of three trials in which facilities management stays with the NHS. The trial is at Queen Mary's hospital, and I await developments, because I understand that all other PFI arrangements for the NHS are waiting for the completion of those trial projects before they go any further.

Mr. Edward Davey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Colman: No, I shall not give way because I am short of time.

I understand that the maximum delay is about six months, so we should deal with the protection of workers' rights, which to me is the nub of the implications of PFI. PFI provides much better value than other arrangements, but the key is the protection of workers. I suggest three alternative ways forward for the NHS. First, if there is staff transfer, there should be full TUPE rights including full pension entitlement for existing staff. That is what happens in local government. Any new staff should be recruited on the same basis as those transferring, and there should not be two-tier pay and conditions. The Minister should examine how Lincolnshire county council has dealt with PFI—it balloted its staff three times—and Middlesbrough council's work on the matter.

The alternative is that if staff stay in the NHS, the operational side of PFI should remain in the public sector. When I first set up the Public Private Partnerships Programme in 1996, I met the right hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), who agreed that direct service organisations could act as the operational section of the design, build, finance and operate contracts, which are in PFI. That has been done by Cornwall county council, where the catering staff remain council employees, and by Cumbria county council, where the architecture department is part of the council.

The third option is for staff to stay fully in NHS employment. It is interesting to note what happened yesterday in Liverpool, where a joint venture has been set up with British Telecom for the corporate services. Some 900 members of staff have been seconded to BT but remain employees of Liverpool city council. Those different projects are all worth examining.

The phrase "build and disappear" was used by Digby Jacks at the launch of the IPPR report in terms of the situation, which he describes as the bad old days. All public infrastructures have been built by the private sector for a profit. It built them and disappeared, creating the squalor that I inherited. On the other side, we must protect workers' rights. Last weekend, I saw the excellent film by Ken Loach called "Bread and Roses". In fact, I saw it twice because I was so moved by it. We must ensure that justice for janitors—what that film is about—also means justice for public sector workers as they move forward with any new arrangements.

11.53 am

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I want to join colleagues in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) both on securing the debate and on giving such a brilliant demolition job on PFI.

PFI has been analysed extensively in the past 45 minutes and I want to make only a few points. In the first part of the Labour Administration, our slogan was "what works", and that is still the slogan of Labour Back Benchers. However, people are regarding with increasing horror the doctrinaire belief that the private sector has a magic answer to the problems of the public sector.

Mr. Andrew Love (Edmonton): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms Abbott: I am sorry but I must make progress.

Nobody on the Labour Benches is opposed to any private sector involvement in the public sector; there has always been private sector involvement. Indeed, some public sector projects, such as toll bridges, are suitable for a PFI. Any public sector project with a natural revenue stream is probably a suitable candidate for PFI. However, once we move away from such projects, PFI becomes much more problematic, and hon. Members have explained some of the issues.

Ministers in previous Governments and the current Government have extolled the virtues of private sector management and talked about how it can achieve value for money. The truth is that it achieves value for money in highly labour-intensive public sector operations such as hospitals and schools mainly by bearing down on employees' wages and conditions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Leicestershire said, most of those employees, particularly in the health service, are women. In the inner city, many are working-class white, black and Asian women who are the sole wage earners in their families. If my right hon. Friend the Minister is still uncertain about what working under private sector contractors is like for those women, he can go to

Harlesden with me any day of the week and talk to them about their experiences in cleaning, catering and other areas.

As a Member of Parliament for an inner-city area, I have seen what happens to employees when they have to work for private sector contractors. An important issue of PFI schemes is what happens to staff and at whose expense the savings are really extracted. I make no apologies for repeating that point, made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Leicestershire.

All too often, private sector contractors obtain supposed increased efficiency, savings and output by the simple rigging of the public sector comparator that is used. We have tried to debate the virtues of the PPP proposals for the London underground with Ministers, but for a long time they would not reveal the public sector comparator, because they knew that if they did so, we would see how rigged it was. The improvements and savings that the private sector is supposed to produce are often the result of rigged comparators and management's bearing down on wages and conditions.

All that Labour Members want is to return to the Government's earlier mantra—"what works". Time and again, we can point to PFI schemes that have not worked and have produced a worse service and worse conditions for workers. These include a host of schemes for hospitals and the administration of housing benefit in local authorities that have not produced the outcome that the public wanted. If PFI schemes were so wonderful, we would not be sitting in this Chamber with the independent hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor).

I congratulate all hon. Members who have spoken. I urge the Government to move away from an excessively ideological approach to the so-called magic of the private sector and to adopt a more pragmatic approach, building on experiences with PFI schemes and listening to the informed contributions that we have heard this morning.

11.58 am

Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): I apologise in advance for having to leave before the end of the debate.

Recently, there has been a big debate about privatisation or the role that private companies will play in public services. Some people give the impression that that is a new debate about a third way, but we all know that that is not the case. The United States went down the road of privatising public services many years ago. I was reminded of that and the role of money for companies when I read a book about the so-called privatisation of public services in the USA. It mentioned that the chair of Kentucky Fried Chicken had decided to resign his position to join the new Hospital Corporation of America because the growth potential in hospitals was enormous; even greater than Kentucky Fried Chicken. I do not know how many hon. Members have tasted Kentucky Fried Chicken's product; those who have will be justifiably concerned that the quality of that product will be transferred and affect the quality of our public services.

That is already happening. As Professor Allyson Pollock pointed out, four out of the five trusts that control 10 hospitals are the same trusts that are responsible for the dirtiest hospitals in the United Kingdom. Even some in my own party tell us that there is no reason to worry, that the Government have announced a pause to privatisation and that as long as we retain a Labour Government, we shall avoid privatisation of the public services. Almost in the same breath and the same sentence, such commentators proceed to extol the virtues of PFI and are willing to debate with former representatives of the Tory Government who implemented the most PFI projects in the shortest period.

If we are to believe the Government, there is no contradiction between opposing privatisation and supporting PFI. We are told that they are totally different creatures. As a party, we certainly did not hold that view a few years ago. In 1995, a Labour party document stated that PFI was "creeping privatisation". The Solicitor-General, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), proclaimed that when the private sector builds, owns, runs and manages a hospital, it has been privatised. I agree, and so does the Trades Union Congress, which instructed its council to campaign for the end of PFI.

The public services are an integral part of my socialism. Whatever the leadership has dumped from the party's past, our constitution still commits us to democratic socialism. I am supporting the party constitution in opposing PFI; those who support PFI are opposing the constitution. Some people have a lot to learn from the 1945 Labour Government, who developed a pact with the people to expand the public services, which were to be owned by and accountable to the people.

If we go down the road of privatising services and implementing PFI, our pact, some 50 years later, will no longer be with the people, but with the multinational companies that are making so much money from these initiatives. For them, the public services are simply another opportunity to make a profit. A financial analyst estimated that expanding trade in the public services could yield the private sector £30 billion extra revenue a year. Those companies will end up controlling not just the expenditure but the policy.

For the vast majority of people, public services are not about profit, but provide an opportunity to make life more decent and dignified. Without public services, many opportunities would be absent. We must respond to need, not to private profit. We must view people other than according to how much money they have in their pockets as consumers.

I have the privilege of representing the constituency of Blaenau Gwent, the birthplace of the national health service, which is the jewel in our crown and the finest piece of socialist legislation of the past 100 years. When Nye set up the national health service, he intended it to respond to people's health needs. He was not concerned with how much money those involved had in their pockets.

Sadly, another hospital has been built through PFI in the neighbouring constituency of Chepstow. We were told that it would cost between £13 million and £14 million. The sale of the land brought in £12 million, so the hospital could almost have been self-financing. Instead, the people in authority opted for PFI, which has proved incredibly expensive. The hospital could

[Llew Smith]

have been built by taking money from current taxation or by borrowing. Governments can borrow money at a far lower rate than the private sector. We know that Governments pay the money back in the end and so the interest rate is that much lower. The project can be produced far more cheaply.

We have obviously run out of time but, unlike in 1945, there is no shortage of money. If Nye Bevan were alive today, he would remind the Government that their current account in 2001-02 was in surplus to the tune of £23 billion, while PFI capital investment deals signed between 1997 and 2001 amounted to £14 billion. There is £9 billion to spare for further investment. It is an act of madness to go down the road of PFI. People who want to do so should have the courage to admit that they are going down the road of privatisation. My constituents and I could never accept that and one of my predecessors certainly never accepted it when he introduced the NHS.

12.6 pm

Mr. Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton): I congratulate the hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) both on securing the debate and on his initial remarks. He has done the House a service. We have heard today a great deal of hostility to PFI; much of it understandable, most of it well made. The key problem with PFI is that, in too many cases, it has been the only game in town. The capital could not be obtained from other sources in other ways. The decision to go down the PFI route has not been made for value for money considerations—the real test that should apply—but because it is the only way for the hospital to get its improvement. That is a poor way of making capital decisions, whether in the private or public sector.

We should now decide, across parties and across Government, that the PFI is not a way to find new money. The accounting analysis that the hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire gave us in his opening remarks makes that clear. The public sector still has to pay the annual unitary payments for privately financed projects. Unitary payments to the private contractor are equivalent to interest payments on the debt that the public sector will have taken. There is no real difference in accounting or economic terms, so the PFI should never be considered as bringing new money into the game to provide better public services. That is a false argument that should be dismissed for good.

What the PFI can do—here I may disagree with some hon. Members—is produce better efficiency in certain circumstances. That is where the Government's value for money test should be applied. Indeed, it should not be called the private finance initiative but the private management initiative. PFI brings in private sector know-how and may well provide a service to the public. There may be private sector managers who can provide us all with a good service. There may not be enough public sector managers, or they may not have the qualifications or experience to manage a project efficiently. By bringing in private sector know-how, we can perhaps improve efficiency and get a better result for the taxpayer and our constituents, but a much tighter test would apply.

The question that Ministers must ask is how they can improve the quality of public sector managers as well. If the whole argument behind the PFI were about private sector management know-how, surely we should say to ourselves, "Let's see if we can also improve the competences within the public sector." Much can be done in that regard.

The Liberal Democrat approach to the issue comprises several key principles. First, there should be a level playing field. The public sector, whether at local government or national Government level, should be able to contest those tenders with the same financial framework behind it, as should not-for-profit companies and the voluntary sector. That would increase competition and diversity, which would in turn lead to great innovation. A level playing field gives the best of both worlds. To create it, we have to improve public sector competences.

The development of resource accounting of budgeting will give public sector managers the information and the accounting techniques to put forward bids that can equate with ones from the private sector. We should consider giving local government borrowing powers that are equivalent to those of national Departments. We also need to ensure that PFI has tougher tests applied to it.

The public sector comparators that the hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire mentioned are our highest objective. However, we need much greater openness in terms of the information that goes into them. The PFI contracts that we specify need to be more output-based so that the contracts tendered to public and private sector suppliers are based on quality of service delivery. That is often easier to specify than an input-based contract. We need to ensure that if the provider of the contract makes windfall gains, there is a clawback. The clawback and penalties that have existed in PFI contracts have been lamentably lacking in bite.

We need to consider alternatives to the way in which PFI has been developed. A proposal that has much merit and should at least be piloted is open book procurement. That would allow a private sector company to provide the service, using the money raised by the public sector. The open book would be the key to ensuring accountability. The managers and the public sector auditors would have full access to the information, ensuring that the private sector provider is properly monitored. Such a system might enable us to gain the benefits of extra private sector know-how and the potentially better competences of the private sector, while ensuring cheaper capital costs, a better deal for the taxpayer and accountability.

I have talked about a level playing field, but accountability is key to the way in which we should approach the question. In so many PFI deals we have seen a complete lack of accountability. There has not been a full analysis, in the House or in Whitehall, of the deals before they have been signed. The deals have been pushed through with political drive and the issue of whether they are good for the taxpayer and the user of that service has been neglected. We need to build accountability before the deals are signed, while they are going on and afterwards; that would involve a radical change in the way in which Whitehall and some of the private sector contractors approach the issue, in regard primarily to openness of information. We must ensure

that as we explore new ways of providing public services, information, financial planning and management are available. That might cause problems within private sector companies, but they must meet the tests of openness and transparency if they want to get involved.

12.14 pm

Mr. Howard Flight (Arundel and South Downs): I congratulate the hon. Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) on obtaining the debate at an important time. It is important to look back over the 10 years in which PFI has developed to learn from the mistakes and successes, and it is also important to look forward. This is an occasion when the Government could set out their PFI intentions with regard to the health service. I believe that most citizens do not understand them; nor do I. I have been advised that certain NHS trusts have been notified of a new policy that all non-medical arrangements in PFI-financed hospitals must be PFI-subcontracted. Is that the case or not? People want to know.

The problems with PFI were well commented on by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), who has been involved with it from day one. There has been a lack of accountability; there have often been cost discrepancies and overruns; there have been problems such as poor cleaning services in hospitals and so on. In my constituency, the results of subcontracting the street lighting maintenance have been appalling. However, the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Colman) made a good point about why PFI developed. It would be disingenuous for anyone to claim that the record of capital investment, management of capital investment and, in many cases, general management of the public sector was so wonderful that we did not need PFI.

I was particularly struck by the inefficiencies of the operational side when, as a young man of 17, I worked as a hospital porter for three months one summer. I was one of two students who basically ran the hospital for three months, while 10 extremely nice porters sat and enjoyed themselves. They were good people, but they subscribed to an ethos that was not about doing the job efficiently but about doing the minimum work for maximum money. As has been mentioned, efficiency and accountability are crucial.

If PFI is to work properly, first, there must be good contracts. Woolly contracts have been a problem; the public sector has not been good at contracting. Secondly, there must be an adequate and competitive supply of subcontractors and investors. That situation did not always exist as PFI developed, and sometimes profitability was too great for that reason. The National Audit Office pointed out that no provision existed for refinancing. The public were not able to share the benefits when interest rates fell and sometimes PFI profitability was excessive.

There is a crucial difference between PFI, which is about subcontracting the operating risks to the private sector, and many public-private partnership deals, which are about trying to pull in public money but leaving the risk with the poor old taxpayer. That is my concern about the London and Continental deal and the potential arrangements for the London tube. Without that discipline, the public are likely to be ripped off.

The subject of bond issues that are not implicitly or explicitly Government guaranteed has not come up. However, from the experience in the United States, non-recourse bond issues for projects within the public sector have brought some of the disciplines of the private sector. A chief executive or politician whose bond defaults is dead; there is no escaping it. A situation in which Government debt is shrinking and the marginal cost of potential public sector bond issues above gilts is not nearly as great as it was should be considered.

There has been criticism of the unsatisfactory results of PFI in technical work for the Passport Agency and social services. The main problem in both cases was that the contracts were inadequate. In the private sector itself, there have been few computerisation programmes that have not been subject to glitches. A major problem in the national health service is that patient records are not computerised; it still uses an incredibly archaic system of cards, which get lost and delay operations. That is not good public management. When I speak to friends at the sharp end of NHS management, they say that such problems are the real practical issues, and that there are restrictive practices in many parts that are not being addressed. Whether the system of reform is called PFI or something else, it is those issues that need to be tackled.

Finally, I repeat that we are at a crucial point. The Government have made noises about their intentions for PFI in the health service, but it is time to find out what their policies are. There must be a thorough appraisal of the policies in the light of the failures, as well as the successes, of PFI to date.

12.20 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Paul Boateng): This has been a good debate, with passion and commitment, and one for which we owe my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) a debt of gratitude. There was passion and commitment on both sides of the argument. One side was ably put by my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Colman), who brought a considerable body of experience as a local government leader; the other was put by my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Leicestershire, who brought his experience as a trade unionist and public accountant.

We have a duty as a Government and party to reverse the record of decades of decline and under-investment in and undervaluing of our public services and our nation's infrastructure. That was seen under the Government who were supported by the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Mr. Flight). Our recently refreshed mandate will allow us to reverse that record of decline and deliver to people better public services and value for money. That is a task in which we are entitled to take pride. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday:

> "There can be no greater crusade for a centre-left government than to invest in and reform our public services. We should embrace it and build it with every bit as much zeal and commitment as the Attlee government built the welfare state".

Several of my hon. Friends referred to that post-war Labour Administration and have done so with approbation, commending them for their zeal and passion. I am here to show that this Government have an equal zeal and passion.

[Mr. Paul Boateng]

In our first term, our first task—on which we delivered—was to deliver economic stability and strong public finances. Having secured the fundamentals of our economy, we can now make the sustained investment in our public services and infrastructure that we on the Labour Benches all want and for which we have all campaigned throughout our political lives. We will deliver that in the context of public-private partnerships, which as my hon. Friend the Member for Putney said, originated during our long period in opposition. It is important that my hon. Friends and hon. Members understand that PFI is but one part of public-private partnerships. They, too, must be seen within the overall context of increased investment in our public services, because PPP is but one part of the wider investment in our public services.

We must get the debate in proportion, and understand the extent to which we are investing in our public services. There is an additional £4 billion of capital spending this year and a doubling of net investment by the public sector over the next three years to £19 billion in 2003-04. The scale of the investment in infrastructure that we plan dwarfs the investment of recent years. Total investment has increased from £24.4 billion in 1996-97 to nearly £35 billion this year, and that will rise to £41.9 billion in 2003-04.

We are carrying forward a major programme of hospital building, which is the biggest in the history of the NHS. In England, 68 major hospital developments worth over £7.3 billion have been given the go-ahead since 1997. The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) shared his experience of PFI, but he did not deliver a single hospital under PFI. That was the Conservative party's record, but we are in the business of delivering on our commitment to the NHS. However, the matter does not end there. We are carrying forward a £180 billion 10-year modernisation of our transport infrastructure, and the replacement or refurbishment of 650 schools.

Public sector investment is growing rapidly, and we must show that the public sector can spend money well and efficiently to create the infrastructure and services that people want and value and that are delivered on time, at best value and to budget. Public-private partnerships, including PFI, are one of several tools that will allow us to deliver our ambitious programme of investment, and the PFI should be seen in the wider context of a Government strategy to revitalise the nation's infrastructure and to deliver quality services.

Our approach is not dogmatic or ideological, but pragmatic. We want public-private partnerships to be used only when they offer value for money. It may be appropriate where projects are complex or long term, or where on-going maintenance and upgrade requirements are significant. The rationale for using PFI is straightforward: it is to ensure that there is a clear discipline on the public sector stating its output requirements, and to build on incentives for the private sector to deliver specified services on time and to the right standard, otherwise it does not get paid. Risk is transferred to the private sector, and its management skills are brought to bear to deliver value for money.

Of course, people are important and no one should pretend that we do not recognise that. We have made major improvements to TUPE to safeguard the transferring of employees' terms and conditions. We are prepared to innovate with Partnerships UK, which was set up to develop new approaches to PPPs. We are piloting new approaches in NHS-PFI deals with ancillary staff remaining in the public sector but being managed by private sector partners.

We are not saying for one moment, "Private is good, public is bad." However, neither are we saying that public is good and private is all bad. We must recognise that the responsibility that we have to the public is to deliver value for money and to ensure that we make the necessary investment to build infrastructure and to deliver higher-quality services. The PFI should not be seen simply as a device to bring about more investment. We are always concerned to improve the quality of investment, and we want better investment when it is appropriate and delivers value for money.

This has been an important debate and we can all learn from the points that have been made. We make a commitment to the public to deliver better public services and better value for money, with PFI and private-public partnerships being but one aspect of that mission.

Police (Hertfordshire)

12.30 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise a subject of particular interest to my constituents, as it is to the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Prisk), who will say a few words after I have spoken. A recent public opinion survey in the borough of Hertsmere revealed that the maintenance of law and order was the No. 1 concern of local residents. As my constituents have made clear to me and others many times, they regard that as being linked intimately to the provision of sufficient numbers of police officers to provide a visible police presence in the borough, to respond to crimes and emergencies and to be available in police stations when the public need them.

The Hertfordshire police force has had particular difficulty in attracting the number of new recruits that it needs. Before I refer to those recruitment difficulties, I wish to make it clear that I do not intend any criticism of the Hertfordshire force. My feelings are quite the opposite. I hold the Hertfordshire police force and its leadership in high regard. Its recruitment difficulties are not of its making. It has done its best to overcome such problems and to recruit as many new members as it can, and to overcome the consequences of not having sufficient police numbers. For example, it has done as much as it possibly can to put police officers on the front line when they can be of assistance to members of the public.

However, the Hertfordshire police force is not attracting the number of recruits that it needs. An apparent increase in police numbers in Hertfordshire in the past year has to be put in the context of an extension of the boundaries of the Hertfordshire force and the secondment of Metropolitan force officers to areas such as Hertsmere, which were policed formerly by the Metropolitan police. Hertfordshire is falling behind its target for recruiting enough officers to police the county. The recruitment target per year for the Hertfordshire force is 250 recruits. That is made up of 25 recruits in each of the five-weekly intakes of new recruits. Until recently, the number of recruits coming forward has been about half of that target—about 13 new recruits in each intake—whereas 25 recruits were needed to meet the force's target.

In response to that deficiency, the Hertfordshire force launched a recruitment drive last February. That was a sensible decision, but it has cost £250,000. As a result, recruitment has increased to about 18 in the most recent intake, but that is still well below the number needed. Overall, the force is about 145 officers short of its establishment target of 2,049 officers, excluding the crime fighting fund.

Such matters have serious consequences for Hertfordshire constituencies. Following changes in the governance of London, Hertsmere was transferred from the Metropolitan force to the Hertfordshire force on 1 April 2000. The Metropolitan officers who served Hertsmere were temporarily seconded to the Hertfordshire force. However, the secondment began to come to an end at the beginning of this year. Since 1 April, Metropolitan police officers have been returning to the Met from Hertfordshire at the rate of between eight and 12 a month. I understand that 31 have already returned and the remaining officers will return between now and March 2002.

Metropolitan officers who return to the Metropolitan force from Hertsmere are replaced by Hertfordshire officers, which is why the recruitment difficulties of the Hertfordshire force are of such direct relevance to my constituents. The Hertfordshire force has made it clear that the problems caused by the shortfall in recruitment will be shared throughout the force area. Hertsmere will not suffer alone. Nevertheless, Hertsmere's share of the recruitment problem will have consequences for policing the borough.

The number of police officers in Hertsmere is already below strength. The target for the Hertsmere division is 105 officers. The number in place is 95 and it may fall even further as Metropolitan force secondees continue to return to that force.

In Hertsmere, there is a widespread perception among local residents that the thin blue line is getting increasingly thinner and that, through no fault of its own, the Hertfordshire force cannot always provide the visible policing or response to crime that the public want. With some justice, Hertsmere residents feel that there are simply not enough police officers in Hertsmere. At the same time, there is also a perception that in various parts of Hertsmere there is a rising tide of antisocial behaviour, especially on the part of youths—it is low level in some cases, but local residents should not have to put up with it. Examples include gangs of youths in Grosvenor road in Borehamwood terrorising residents; a particularly unpleasant attack by vandals on the Threeways community and old people's day centre in Borehamwood, resulting in graffiti and damage; and harassment of shopkeepers, mess and vandalism by youths in the Harcourt road area of Bushey. Those are just some examples of the antisocial activities perceived to be taking place.

Sadly, in several instances the police have been unable to respond promptly to criminal activity, despite their best efforts. A recent and well publicised local example involved the theft of belongings from the clothes of participants during the installation of a new incumbent clergyman in the parish of Elstree, conducted by the Bishop of St. Albans. According to reports of the incident, on the evening of 11 June thieves entered a room in which members of the visiting clergy had left their clothes, and stole jackets, handbags, wallets, cash, credit cards, keys, diaries and personal documents belonging to about 12 clergy, while the new clergyman was being installed in the church nearby. The police could not attend that evening, as they were dealing with other calls and simply did not have enough officers. I understand that the police subsequently attended, but no one has yet been arrested in connection with the incident, and they could not respond on the evening that the offence took place. That is just one of several cases that have come to my attention.

Against that background of wide-ranging anxiety about the number of police officers available to police Hertsmere I met the Minister then responsible, the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Clarke), on 3 April and representatives of the three major political parties from Hertsmere. On 22 June, the present Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs wrote to me following that meeting. In that letter, the Minister drew attention to

[Mr. James Clappison]

some of the measures that had already been taken to deal with Hertfordshire's recruitment problems, but he could not offer anything new to deal with the recruitment circumstances that I described. More needs to be done. As far as Hertsmere is concerned, the situation is unsatisfactory and could get worse. Residents of Hertsmere, local councillors and I are not prepared to allow that to happen without doing more.

I invite the Minister to look into three issues that may help. First, I invite him to consider reducing the pay differential between the Hertfordshire and the Metropolitan forces. It is true that the recommendation of the Police Negotiating Board for a £2,000 allowance for Hertfordshire officers was implemented on 1 April this year. However, Metropolitan force officers had already received an even bigger allowance in the previous year. Therefore, in recent times, the pay differential between the Hertfordshire and the Metropolitan forces has widened. A young person considering a police career in my constituency can make the short journey to London, join the Met and receive £4,000 more than if he or she had joined the Hertfordshire force. That is a substantial differential in terms of a police officer's salary.

Secondly, will the Minister consider the arrangements for concessionary travel for Hertfordshire officers, to bring them into line with those enjoyed by Metropolitan police officers? The latter enjoy free rail travel within a 70-mile radius of London. I believe, and the Minister may be able to confirm, that some Home Office funding has gone into that. Hertfordshire officers have some free rail travel as a result of agreements negotiated locally, but it is not as extensive as the travel arrangements enjoyed by Metropolitan officers, which are much more extensive and advantageous.

Thirdly, will the Minister consider the rate of return of Metropolitan force secondees from Hertsmere back to the Met? Any slowing in that rate could help Hertfordshire tackle the consequences of its recruitment difficulties. If the return of secondees continues at its present rate, Hertsmere and other parts of Hertfordshire could be left with fewer officers than are needed to give residents the service that they want.

More generally, I invite the Minister to consider the position of counties such as Hertfordshire in the overall framework of police pay and conditions. Will the Minister also take on board the fact that what is needed to recruit and retain officers in a high cost of living area such as Hertfordshire may be different from elsewhere. What provides a good standard of living in, say, the west midlands or the north of England, may not necessarily do so in Hertfordshire.

Those are matters of real concern to my constituents. It is not sufficient to say, as some sometimes do, that Hertfordshire is a relatively safe place with a low level of crime relative to other areas. There is a growing problem in Hertfordshire. Hertfordshire residents pay their taxes, both local and national, and look for a police service to be provided for them. Currently, through no fault of the Hertfordshire police force, it is difficult to provide that service to my constituents. They should not have to put up with not having the number of police on the streets, the police response to incidents and emergencies, and the general level of policing that they would want in their borough. I am sure that the same goes for residents in the rest of Hertfordshire.

Today, we are looking for constructive help and I am anxious to hear, after my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford has spoken, what the Minister has to say.

12.43 pm

Mr. Mark Prisk (Hertford and Stortford): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) on taking the initiative in this debate. Like his constituents, my constituents regard this matter as one of the critical issues affecting the quality of life in Hertford and Stortford. We face the daunting prospect that by Christmas the number of police officers may have declined to 250 fewer than the establishment level that the chief constable has advised me is required for full and effective policing.

My constituency differs slightly from that of my hon. Friend, as it encompasses four market towns and several attractive villages, and has no real centre. It is true to say that some districts in my constituency have some of the lowest historical levels of crime in England and Wales. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been a consistent and growing level of violent crime. Coupled with that is a strong recognition by all my constituents that the profile of police officers has declined year on year.

To see the consequences of that, I took the opportunity, earlier this year to go on patrol with officers and gain experience of the practical issues. It was a Friday evening shift in Bishop's Stortford. It showed me that a town such as Bishop's Stortford, which has 32,000 people, is often served by a shift of approximately seven officers. Clearly, that is inadequate and will lead to further problems in the town. I was also struck by the quality of the professionalism and commitment of the officers in Hertfordshire, to which my hon. Friend referred. I want to put on record my respect for the commitment of Inspector Radwell and his team in Bishop's Stortford and the officers in the rest of my constituency. The truth is, however, that those officers are overstretched and overworked.

The recruitment crisis in Hertfordshire is generating problems with retention because, inevitably, experienced officers who are stretched beyond their limit tend to leave earlier and earlier. Of course, that compounds the problem.

As my hon. Friend emphasised, the root of the issue is that the Government's attempts to solve the problems of the Metropolitan force and improve the situation in London—by changing the pay, and so on—have led to a worse situation in Hertfordshire and other home counties. That financial gap of £4,000 is clearly significant to new recruits, let alone existing officers, and it has led to a ridiculous situation whereby police officers resident in Hertfordshire towns almost invariably work for the Metropolitan police, because Hertfordshire police officers cannot afford to live in the communities that they are responsible for protecting. That is why I endorse my hon. Friend's recommendations and analysis and look forward to hearing what the Minister says in response.

12.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Bob Ainsworth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) on obtaining the debate, as it gives us a useful opportunity to air some concerns that have been raised about police recruitment in Hertfordshire and to set out the Government's actions in helping that recruitment. I hope that my response will deal with the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Police strength in Hertfordshire increased by eight between March 1997 and March 2000. That strength grew by a further 155 between March 2000 and March 2001, to a total of 1,922. The force has set a target strength of 2,049, which is 127 officers higher than the force strength at March 2001. As the hon. Gentleman said, the growth in strength in 2000-01 was as a result of boundary changes with the Metropolitan police in April 2000. Following those boundary changes, more than 180 Metropolitan police officers were seconded to Hertfordshire. Some 170 Metropolitan police secondees remain with Hertfordshire at March 2001, but all are due to return to the Metropolitan police force by March 2002, as that force will naturally need those officers back.

Hertfordshire police are therefore faced with the triple challenge of recruiting to cover natural wastage, to replace the departing secondees and to reach target strength. It would be unrealistic to expect the force to achieve that within a single year and the strength of Hertfordshire constabulary may fall this year before starting to rise when the exceptional drain created by the returning Metropolitan secondees is over.

Hertfordshire constabulary recruited 110 officers in 2000-01—fewer than the number recruited before, but well up on each of the two years before that. To counter the difficulties experienced in attracting recruits, the force has made a substantial investment in recruitment advertising. That is reflected in the forecasts provided to monitor the crime fighting fund, in which the force suggested that it would take on 214 officers this year, excluding appointments on transfer.

I have been advised by the Hertfordshire constabulary that the measures taken by the force to boost recruitment include setting up a recruitment website—it has received more than 9,500 visitors since it went live in February—and making other innovative uses of high-tech advertising, for example, the distribution of CD-ROMs in the form of business cards to enable potential recruits to connect to the website. There is a widespread poster campaign, as well as cinema advertisements and open days for potential recruits. The Hertfordshire constabulary is trying to ensure that its recruitment is targeted at the whole population by reflecting the make-up of the area so that it does not miss out on potential applications.

The Government are supporting police recruitment, including recruitment in Hertfordshire, in several ways. The crime fighting fund is enabling forces in England and Wales to recruit 9,000 officers over and above their previous plans in the three years to March 2003. With the help of the CFF, forces in England and Wales recruited 7,415 officers—64 per cent. more than in the previous year. The increase in police strength of 1,349 was the largest annual increase since 1988-89. We expect police strength to reach record numbers by March 2003 and to have 130,000 officers by March 2004. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that when police strength reaches that number he will set a new target to take police force strengths higher.

Hertfordshire has been allocated 107 CFF recruits in the three years of the scheme. The force was unable to recruit any of the 40 CFF recruits allocated to it in 2000-01. In recognition of the difficulties that the force has had in attracting recruits, we have allowed it to carry over the 2000-01 allocation to next year. Hertfordshire will be able to recruit up to 70 CFF-funded officers in this financial year. Monitoring returns submitted by the force show that it expects to take up the full allocation of the crime fighting fund recruits. If the force recruits as planned it will qualify for just over £1 million from the CFF this year.

Mr. Clappison: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, as the matter concerns many people involved in policing in Hertfordshire. If, for the sake of argument, one accepts that the money is available to fund new police recruits in Hertfordshire, even so, new recruits may not come forward because the pay and conditions in Hertfordshire are not attractive enough. Will the Minister take those sentiments on board?

Mr. Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman should be patient and allow me to move on to that point. If he does not interrupt me too often, I shall get there.

In August last year, to help forces to achieve the extra recruitment enabled by the crime fighting fund, the Government launched the first ever national recruitment advertising campaign for the police service. There were more than 150,000 responses to the campaign and 32,000 expressions of interest have been forwarded to forces. The next phase of the campaign will begin in August and will have a regional element. We shall focus some of the advertising in areas where forces are in need of greater support, including Hertfordshire.

Officers in Hertfordshire may benefit from the starter home initiative under which £250 million will be made available in the next three years to help key workers to purchase homes. A bid from Ridgehill housing association, targeted particularly on police officers in Hertfordshire, has gone forward to the second phase of the bidding process. We are reviewing entry requirements and standards for police recruitment with a view to ensuring that unnecessary barriers to recruitment are removed. The review is exploring a range of criteria, including age, nationality, medical, eyesight and fitness requirements as well as the police initial recruitment test. We intend to develop new recruitment standards and requirements that are job related and non-discriminatory, and they will be applied nationally. That should help to ensure that potential recruits are not unnecessarily excluded and help all forces to recruit. We are also considering the way in which candidates can apply for the police service, so that potential recruits might be directed to apply to those forces with the greatest need rather than have them wait until there are vacancies in their local area.

[Mr. Ainsworth]

The pay and allowances available to officers in the Hertfordshire constabulary have a bearing on the force's ability to recruit. Officers in the constabulary who were appointed after 1 September 1994 and are not in receipt of a housing allowance are, since 1 April this year, entitled to an additional £2,000. My right hon. Friend the previous Home Secretary approved that new allowance, following a joint recommendation by the official and the staff sides of the Police Negotiating Board on 8 February, in recognition of the special recruitment and retention difficulties associated with the high cost of living in Hertfordshire. The hon. Gentleman said that that is not good enough, although when his party was in government, it did not take any such action. He claimed that there is a major problem with the Met living next door, a matter that I am more than happy to look at with him.

However, my figures show no evidence of a drain of police from Hertfordshire to the Met. In the past two years, the figures—I am happy to make them available to the hon. Gentleman—show that there has been movement in the opposite direction. In the year 2000-01, 15 Met officers moved to Hertfordshire and so far this year there have been five, whereas 10 officers moved in the opposite direction last year and five officers moved this year. My figures do not support the evidence that there is a great drain of police constables from Hertfordshire to the Met.

I was pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman say that Hertfordshire was not a high crime area. However, he said that after considerable comment along the lines of "The thin blue line is getting thinner and thinner" when he gave details of crime problems in the area. It is true that Hertfordshire is a low crime area. It does not do his argument any good to paint the picture in the way that he does. Let us consider violent crimes per 1,000 people. There are five violent crimes per 1,000 people in Hertfordshire compared with 11.6 crimes throughout the national scene. The clear-up rate of violent crimes in Hertfordshire is 69 per cent. compared with 45 per cent. throughout the country.

Thus, Hertfordshire is a low crime, pleasant area in which to live, which is different from the picture that the hon. Gentleman tried to paint. If he is not willing to accept my argument, I refer him to the annual report of the local force, the salient point of which is:

"Despite the increase in territorial size, overall crime is down by two per cent. and violent crime has also fallen."

The situation is Hertfordshire is a lot better than that in many other parts of the country.

Mr. Clappison: It is an historical fact that Hertfordshire has a relatively low crime rate. If the Minister is saying that residents should be expected to put up with a lower level of policing and police response, an insufficient number of police officers and recruitment problems, I shall take issue with him as will many people in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Ainsworth: I was not attempting to say that at all. In the majority of his speech, the hon. Gentleman painted a picture of a rising tide of disorder, which led me to think that we were talking about the more serious problems in one of our inner-city areas and not one of the more pleasant parts of country, in which there are relatively low levels of crime. There are recruitment difficulties that are caused partly by the Hertfordshire police force trying to replace the metropolitan secondees at a time of substantial recruitment elsewhere. I do not underestimate those difficulties and I am happy to talk about the situation.

Housing (Birmingham)

1 pm

Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): There is a lot of excellent housing in Birmingham but that is not what I intend to talk about today. The Minister and I were supposed to have attended a reception organised by the National Housing Federation, formerly called the National Federation of Housing Associations, to launch its housing checklist. I now have the chance to bring forward my checklist for investment in housing in Birmingham.

A few weeks ago, there was a debate on housing in London. In replying to that debate, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions admitted that, as leader of Southwark council, she was responsible for some of the worst housing in the country. Therefore, I know that she feels deeply about some of the issues that I shall raise today.

Between 1984 and 1987, I was chair of housing in Birmingham and I, too, was responsible for some poor housing. Throughout that time, I was passionate about campaigning for additional investment in housing stock and a more responsive service to tenants, to get away from some of the paternalistic attitudes of the past.

In the 1985 stock condition survey, each local authority had to report the condition of its housing stock to the Department responsible. Birmingham's submission was independently audited and it was concluded that approximately £750 million worth of repair work was needed to secure the condition of council housing stock. There was also a problem in the private sector, but my main purpose today is to discuss council housing stock.

Despite that conclusion, during the years that I was chair, the amount allocated under the housing investment programme averaged £56 million a year compared with our bids of approximately £160 million a year—the amount that we knew was needed. I still have the officer's calculations, which I requested, that compare what would have happened had the investment in Birmingham's housing stock been maintained at the levels set by the previous Labour Government for 1979 and 1980. Had those levels been maintained, an additional £300 million of resources would have been invested in Birmingham's housing stock.

At the same time as we fought to improve investment, we realised that we needed a more responsive housing service. Therefore, the council created new devolved services and opened neighbourhood offices. All housing services were devolved from the central housing department to local offices, and the housing department was streamlined, with housing managers at constituency level given authority and responsibility for devolved budgets.

I was proud of my work and sad to see it turned upside down almost overnight, when new people came in and, in my opinion, returned to the previous failed system. I had inherited a system in which few responsive repairs were carried out. Planned maintenance took place, but in between that tenants could not get work done. The new regime introduced responsive repairs and a reduction in planned maintenance. We never seem to get a happy medium, but go round in circles.

At the same time that we did not get investment in our housing, social trends meant that the poorest and most disadvantaged people were concentrated in particular neighbourhoods. Those were mainly council estates and inner-city older housing stock where the tenure was owner-occupation, but by very poor people, mainly from ethnic minorities.

The stock continued to deteriorate. In 1993, Birmingham's house condition survey showed the need for investment of £1.3 billion in council housing and £700 million in the private sector. It found that there were 47,000 unfit private dwellings, with 80,000 other houses in the private sector on the borderline of being unfit. There were 27,000 privately rented homes, of which 6,500 were unfit.

The council's 1995 housing investment programme submission made the case for an annual investment of £220 million per year, with £83 million of that going to the private sector. That was not forthcoming, and a meagre £38.6 million—even less than I received during my tenure as chair of housing in Birmingham—was allocated. Things went from bad to worse and in 1997-98 the housing investment programme allocation was down to £28.4 million. I emphasise that that was not money given by the Government, but the council had permission to raise the resources to meet the costs through the housing revenue account.

At the same time, a new subsidy system meant a net loss to Birmingham of £17 million of revenue per year. Birmingham's housing revenue account—the council housing account—has paid more in rent rebates than it receives in rent rebate subsidy. In other words, council tenants paid to subsidise the social security benefits expenditure, which should be paid by the Government. In other tenures, housing benefit is fully covered by the Government. Over that time, council housing was subsidising social security to the tune of £34 million. The lack of investment in housing and the sheer daylight robbery of resources from council tenants' rents demonstrate the previous Government's discrimination against council housing and council tenants. Sadly, this Government have only now changed the system: over the past four years we have lost £34 million.

The dire situation includes deterioration of the housing stock and the increased dissatisfaction of tenants, as well as massive problems in the private sector that need to be dealt with. However, local authorities are blamed for the inadequacies of the services that they have been able to provide to their tenants and other people in need. The situation is so bad that the latest stock conditions survey, which was carried out by FPDSavills on behalf of the council, indicates a maintenance liability of £3.75 billion over 30 years in council housing stock alone. It says that £1.5 billion will be needed in years one to five, yet the council projects that only £315 million will be available during those years. In year one, the investment gap is £187 million.

Faced with that hopeless position, the council is now considering transferring its stock to registered social landlords under the Government's stock transfer programme, and the Government have held out a place for Birmingham. Ministers' letters say that additional investment is possible because registered social landlords can raise private finance outside the borrowing constraints to which local authorities are subject, but why are local authorities subject to that

[Lynne Jones]

kind of constraint? The same housing and people are involved, and by and large they will need help in the form of housing benefit in paying their rents. That is not fair, and is yet further demonstration of the discrimination against council housing.

What is now proposed? Apparently, the Government are prepared to write off £650 million of overhanging debt. The new registered social landlords will be released from borrowing constraints. That will enable them to invest more money, and the money that would have gone into debt payments will be released for new investment. However, we must ask whether that is a good way to get a better deal for council tenants. The overhanging debt may be paid off, but the council will face early redemption penalties of £240 million, the cost of carrying out the transfer is £38 million and, on top of that, the improvement work will be subject to VAT.

Why do we have a system under which £240 million will be spent to pay off the moneylenders, but not a penny of that will go into bricks and mortar or improving housing? A total of £38 million will go into the pockets of well-paid consultants for their advice. I remember a time when local authority housing officers in Birmingham were invited by august bodies to provide advice. For example, the deputy city housing officer worked with the Audit Commission and the previous city housing officer sat on the Duke of Edinburgh's inquiry into housing. It now seems that we have to hire consultants at a rate of £1,000 a day to tell us how we should deal with our housing stock.

It is clear for all to see that the problem is a lack of investment. Even if that situation improves, the resources released will be woefully inadequate for the task in hand. As I mentioned, we need £1.5 billion over the next five years. It is unlikely that that level of resources will be released. It is something like a third of what will be required after the stock transfer.

A comparison already exists with one small stock transfer in Birmingham, when 2,636 properties were transferred to the Optima housing association. Funding to finance improvements in that housing equated to £89.9 million over five years. If that was scaled up for the whole of Birmingham's council housing, some £3 billion would be needed for the whole stock.

Ironically, one of the beneficial aspects of the proposals is that the management of the stock will be devolved to 10 registered social landlords, which will be locally based under the aegis of one citywide trust. Those proposals are similar to the kind of devolution that I was trying to bring about back in the mid 1980s. That demonstrates that it is not necessary to have stock transfer to have responsive management. I share the Government's desire to empower tenants so that they have more control over the day-to-day decisions that affect their lives, but I question whether stock transfer will achieve that.

Elections have been held in Birmingham for the shadow board for the proposed new landlords. Sadly, many tenants' representatives were elected unopposed. I have not yet been able to find out the turnout from the council. I wrote to the council in May and sent a reminder in June, but have still received no response. My guess is that it would be rather low considering how little information was given to tenants about the candidates. There have already been two resignations of successful representatives who objected to having to sign what they regarded as a gagging order. The feeling in Birmingham is that the council is not being open about what is going on.

The council has set up housing liaison boards that are, unfortunately, often poorly attended and have not galvanised tenants to participate. However, there is an active leaseholders board, to which I was invited to speak about stock transfer and the Government's proposals for the reform of leaseholder laws. The council no longer seems prepared to allow the board to use council facilities for meetings with an elected Member of Parliament. The chair of the board says that the council's attitude is obstructive.

If we genuinely want to empower tenants, they need to deal with officials who are themselves empowered. One of the problems with the involvement of the housing department is that there are so few clear lines of accountability. Officers on the ground have little power to determine the sort of services that their tenants want.

For example, I recently received a letter from the local neighbourhood housing manager in response to correspondence about the repairs complaints of a constituent who has been waiting several years for a chronically blocked drain to be cleared. Although a promise was made that work would be carried out, the department did not get round to doing the work before it transferred its direct labour organisation to a private organisation known as Accord. The housing officer tells me that Accord is now solely responsible for the inspection and issue of that work and has apparently decided that it will not be carried out because of the cost. Ultimately, Accord controls the work and the budgets, and the housing officer has no authority to insist that it carries out the work.

Housing officials who have to deal with tenants have no say in the repairs that are carried out, and such decisions are made by private contractors who owe no allegiance to the tenants whom they are supposed to serve. I do not believe that that is how to achieve tenant empowerment. If we genuinely want to empower tenants, we need to re-examine the housing benefit system. How can tenants be genuinely empowered if they cannot pay the rent themselves? Many have the rent paid direct, and no customer service contract is involved. If we genuinely want to empower tenants, we should consider that.

The Government, and no doubt the Minister, will tell us that resources for housing have substantially increased. That is true, but such matters are relative, and we must consider the low base from which we started in 1997. In comparison with total investment over the seven years to 1997 under the previous Administration, the average is about £3.3 million a year. The projected average for the first seven years of this Government—the first seven of many to come, I hope—is £2.6 billion. We inherited £1.7 billion; to the Government's credit, it has gone up to £3 billion but it is still woefully inadequate.

The Government are committed to ensuring that all social housing is brought up to a decent standard by 2010, and a third to that standard by 2004. The question

Birmingham council tenants will ask is, "Will the necessary resources be made available, whether or not we vote for stock transfer?"

1.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Ms Sally Keeble): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Lynne Jones) on securing the debate. I am well aware that she has had a close interest in housing issues in Birmingham for a long time.

I shall deal with the important issues raised in the debate and put them in the context of the Government's wider policies for housing, which were so effectively taken forward by my right hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Mr. Raynsford) during his term as Housing Minister. The housing policy statement last December made it clear that the Government are committed to the aim of offering everyone the opportunity of a decent home, thus promoting social cohesion, well-being and self-dependence.

The breadth of our agenda is extensive by any standards and I shall set out just a few points. We have underlined the role of local authorities as strategic housing authorities and they have extra powers in that regard. We will raise the quality of social housing; our target is to bring all social housing up to a decent standard by 2010. We are providing new, affordable housing, and increasing investment through the Housing Corporation to more than £1.2 billion by 2003-04, almost double the level of 2000-01. We want to move towards a fairer system of affordable social rents and we are committed to bringing greater fairness and coherence to the structure of social rents. We are also determined to strengthen the protection available to the homeless, in respect of which our main provisions were set out in the Homelessness Bill.

Against that wider background, I shall turn to the position in Birmingham. It has long been recognised that the city council, as the strategic housing authority, faces problems which, given the size of the city, are inevitably on a massive scale. Chief among those problems is the poor physical condition of housing in all tenures. In the council sector, recent stock condition survey information shows that expenditure of nearly £3.5 billion is needed. Some registered social landlords operating in the city report significant problems with regard to stock condition and obsolescence. The private sector also has an estimated 48,000 unfit properties. Those problems can have a particular impact on black and ethnic minority communities in the inner city.

Another major issue facing Birmingham is the relative unpopularity of some of its council housing—for example, some maisonettes and high-rise flats—and low demand for social housing in some parts of the city. The council also faces the problem of failing neighbourhoods and social exclusion. There is an increasing concentration of social deprivation in particular areas, principally in the inner city, but also on some outlying council estates. There is also a close correlation between social deprivation and the social exclusion of particular groups such as black, ethnic minorities and women.

I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises the importance of housing in the agenda for tackling social exclusion and urban regeneration. She will therefore also recognise that—apart from policies on housing—the work being done through my Department and the neighbourhood renewal programme will be extremely important in dealing with some of the problems and the issues that she identified.

The city council will submit its housing strategy and business plan for 2002-03 at the end of this month. However, the documents provided last year clearly show that the council had already given careful thought to the issues it faces. The city council has gathered information, set out priority issues and explained options for dealing with them.

The city has examined several options for its council housing, including arm's-length companies, securitisation, the private finance initiative, partial and whole stock transfers and retention of stock. The council explained how all the options were assessed against a list of objectives, including the need to secure sufficient investment, to modernise all homes in the least possible time across the whole city and to maintain the improved properties in the long term. It also had to consider how to guarantee affordable rents and increase housing choice for all tenants. Housing management issues and how best to promote community regeneration were also relevant considerations.

The council carried out option appraisals in 1999-2000 and its tenants were consulted throughout. As a result of the process, the council concluded that the whole stock transfer represented the best means of enabling it to secure its objectives for council housing. The council also intends that the new community-based successor landlords will play a major role in wider regeneration initiatives in partnership with other organisations and across all tenures.

My hon. Friend pointed out that over the lifetime of the last Administration the Birmingham housing sector effectively lost £300 million in subsidies for repairs and she will recognise that such figures cannot be made up overnight. Different methods and different sources of financing are needed to make up the shortfall.

Lynne Jones: I recognise that we need to make up that loss, but I am asking why it cannot be made available from straightforward public sector borrowing and why the council cannot be given the same freedom to borrow as registered social landlords.

Ms Keeble: I take those points and I will deal with them, but I suspect that we shall be debating this matter for some time. The Government have invested substantial extra money in Birmingham's housing. The housing investment programme allocation for 1999-2000 was £26.5 million; for 2000-01 it was £80.885 million. A drop is projected for 2001-02, but on the basis of a stock transfer. An allocation for major repairs allowance will continue to allow the council to address other housing matters. Even after a stock transfer, the council would still be required to deal with other housing issues.

My hon. Friend asks why the total amount cannot be provided out of public funds. The pressures in Birmingham are replicated across the country because

[Ms Keeble]

of the lack of investment in infrastructure during the last Conservative Administration. The council has taken decisions to make it possible to pay off the overhanging debt and to secure extra finance based on the rental stream.

I assure my hon. Friend that the Government are committed to ensuring that every council tenant and every tenant of social housing will be able to enjoy a decent home by 2010. It remains up to each local authority—in this case, Birmingham city council—to produce a housing strategy that will secure more say for tenants as well as providing them with good-quality housing. Every local authority should consult widely and decide which investment option it wishes to pursue. Birmingham city council is a forward-looking authority, so I am sure that it will aim to improve the quality of housing as well as its management. We must deliver not just on quantity, but on the quality and choice agenda that is central to the Government's strategy for housing.

Manchester Airport

1.29 pm

Mr. George Osborne (Tatton): I am grateful for this early opportunity in my parliamentary life to raise an issue that blights the lives of many of my constituents in Knutsford, Wilmslow, Mobberley and elsewhere. It is easy for those who do not know what it is like to be woken night after night by the roar of aircraft engines, to be unable to open windows on a hot day and never to be able to sit peacefully either indoors or in the garden, to dismiss aircraft noise as a small price to pay for the great expansion of our airports and aviation industry. For my constituents, however, who experience the daily misery of planes using Manchester airport's second runway, aircraft noise is central to their quality of life.

I spoke to a meeting of several hundred Knutsford residents on Friday night and I have to tell the Minister and, through him, the authorities of Manchester airport, that they feel that their voice and their concerns are often completely ignored. They are angry and bitter and today in this debate I speak for them. I am not asking for the impossible. I know that Manchester airport is crucial to the economic development that I and other hon. Members from the north-west want. It employs, directly and indirectly, several thousand people who live in Tatton and in the constituencies of other hon. Members who are present in the Chamber. I know that whether or not the second runway was necessary—I believe that it was not—it cannot be unbuilt. It exists, it is operational and it will be used. I also know that there is little point in trying to reverse the huge growth in the number of air passengers. We all use aeroplanes more and more in our lives and will go on doing so.

We need to find an acceptable balance between the demands of the aviation industry and its passengers and the impact on the lives of many hundreds of thousands of people who live around airports. In that context I look forward to the Government's promised White Paper on air transport. I also welcome the fact that they have consulted widely on how best to control aircraft noise. I recognise that some of the most important steps needed to reduce the impact of aircraft noise have to be taken at an international level through the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the European Union. I look forward to the phasing out of chapter 2 aircraft next year and I urge the Government to press for further international pressure for quieter engine technology and, for example, the introduction of chapter 4 status for aircraft.

However, I know my limits. Attempting to rewrite global aviation agreements is one of them. Instead I shall focus on three practical steps that would make a huge difference here in Britain and to my constituents. The first and most important step is the enforcement of so-called preferred noise routes, or PNRs. When planes take off from Manchester airport's second runway in an easterly direction they are supposed to follow an agreed track that takes them to the right, skirting around the town of Knutsford, over the Tatton estate after which my constituency is named, and avoiding built-up areas, before turning south towards London. The technology that enables them to do that is straightforward. As a pilot confirmed to me on Friday, there is no reason for any plane taking off from Manchester to fly over

Knutsford, yet every day planes do precisely that. Indeed, Manchester airport itself confirms that last year 6,624 aeroplanes did not stick to the agreed noise routes. That is almost 8 per cent. of all departures.

The reason is simply because some pilots cannot be bothered to follow the tracks and some airlines cannot be bothered to insist that they do so. There are some excellent operators, such as British Airways and Continental Airlines, which keep their planes on track, but others, including major airlines such as PIA, Swissair, Cathay Pacific and Iberia, are repeat offenders. It is hardly surprising that that goes on when all that happens when they deviate from the preferred noise route is that they get a letter from the airport ticking them off. Most of the time they do not even reply and the airport does not chase them up.

I shall read a letter that my constituent, Mr. Barry Scott, received on 15 June from the airport, when he complained about an off-track aeroplane over Knutsford. The airport says that

"in the case of extreme track deviations the airlines are corresponded with and offered the opportunity to comment. I must state that unfortunately not all airlines are forthcoming with replies".

The airport says that it does not

"chase around after replies as this is very time consuming and prevents other more proactive development work from taking place."

Clearly, the only way in which to enforce the preferred noise routes and keep departing planes on the tracks that keep them away from people's homes is by changing the law, so that the people responsible, instead of receiving a warning letter that goes straight in the bin, are given a stiff fine that comes straight out of their bank account. Manchester airport, to its credit, is also pressing for the power to levy fines. I welcome that, but I disagree with the airport's opinion that the power should be voluntary and used at the airport's discretion. The fines should be automatic, unless a good excuse is provided on safety grounds, for example. If the law were changed I am sure that every departing plane would stick to the agreed route.

The Minister will no doubt tell me that the last Conservative Government said that they were in favour of new primary legislation to achieve those things that I have outlined, but failed to find the necessary parliamentary time for it over an 18-year period in office. The present Government say that they are in favour of that legislation, but in the last Parliament failed to find parliamentary time and did not accept the necessary amendment. I urge the Minister to find time to introduce the much-needed change to the law.

The second practical step that we can take is to make existing fines for aircraft that break the noise limits much heavier and apply them to planes that are landing as well as to those taking off. At present, the fine for an aircraft that breaks the noise restrictions around Manchester airport is £500, plus £150 for every decibel unit above the limit. That is barely more than the cost of a club class ticket and hardly a powerful incentive for airlines to change their practices and improve their technology.

As with off-track aeroplanes, it is striking how a great proportion of planes breaking the noise limits come from a very small number of operators. Of the 173 infringements reported last year at Manchester airport, more than 100 were caused by planes operated by either Virgin or PIA. If those airlines consistently fail to meet acceptable noise limits and will not respond to heavy fines, they should be banned from using the airport. We would all be presently surprised at how quickly they cleaned up their act, with that threat hanging over them.

The fines and the threat of a ban should also apply to planes that are landing as well as to those taking off. I spoke to the airport on Friday and the excuse that it gave was that pilots could do little to reduce the noise when coming into land. I do not believe that that excuse any longer holds true. Pilots living in my constituency have told me that new technology, piloting techniques and new profiles of flaps and wheels can make a huge impact on noise. Those things should be insisted upon.

The third practical step that could be taken is to ban night flights at Manchester airport. That is perhaps wishful thinking—it is certainly the most difficult of the steps that I propose. However, night flights make up only a small proportion of Manchester airport's daily activity, yet they are the greatest source of misery for people living around airports, as they deny them the basic right of a decent night's sleep. A single noisy aircraft at 4 am can ruin the night for literally tens of thousands of people in Cheshire and Manchester. The track and noise fines that I propose will help, although the simplest solution would be to ban all night flights, as has been done by many major United States airports and in Canada. In the past, night flights often offered the only opportunity for some people to go on holiday abroad. These days, however, cheap flights are available throughout the day, so there is no reason to travel in the middle of the night.

If the Government or Manchester airport will not ban night flights, they should at least extend their night restrictions from 6 am to 7 am, when most people get up—although, as a father of a four-week-old son, that does not apply to me. Many of my constituents find it most irksome that the main daily flights begin at 6 am rather than 7 am. That simple change would make a huge change to many of their lives.

Many other things could be done to reduce the detrimental impact of Manchester airport on the environment around Knutsford, Mobberley, Wilmslow and Handforth. For example, the Government could finish the long-awaited Manchester airport link road, which would stop heavy airport traffic going through Wilmslow and using completely unsuitable country roads in Morley and Styal.

Today, however, I have concentrated on aircraft noise. Instead of demanding changes to international conventions that I have little chance of influencing, or grandstanding about the growth in air traffic, which I cannot alter, I have focused on three practical steps that we could take.

First, we could fine aeroplanes that do not stick to the preferred noise routes. Secondly, we could increase and extend the fines for those that break noise limits. Thirdly, we could stop night flights at Manchester. I should be grateful if the Minister would respond to each of the three proposals, as those small steps would greatly improve the quality of life of the many thousands of people whom I represent.

1.40 pm

Paul Goggins (Wythenshawe and Sale, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne) on securing what I believe is his first Adjournment debate and I thank him for allowing me to make a short contribution. Clearly, his constituents have lost little time in making him aware of some of their concerns. It is worth recording, however, that people who live in what the boffins call the 69 LEQ contour in the Woodhouse Park ward in my constituency suffer the highest levels of noise from Manchester airport. That is why I warmly welcomed the airport's announcement more than a year ago that it was introducing an enhanced soundproofing scheme.

I support the hon. Gentleman's call to give the airport greater powers over track keeping. As long ago as 1997, when I came to the House, I was a member of an all-party delegation that included his predecessor, Martin Bell, and the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale, West (Mr. Brady). We met the then Minister for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Glenda Jackson), who seemed to indicate that the Government were moving in that direction. Since then, there has been consultation and I hope that the Minister will tell us more today. Greater powers on track keeping would put more pressure on airlines and ultimately reduce noise levels still further.

As a supporter of runway 2 throughout the inquiry, its construction and now that it is in operation, I have never pretended that the development at Manchester airport would have no adverse impact. However, we must always balance any such impact with the benefits and the other arrangements that have been made. The airport signed a section 106 agreement as part of the planning consent, which included many detailed commitments such as a major environmental management plan at the airport and important commitments on noise levels. It is important to record the fact that noise levels from daytime and night flying are now lower than in 1992. The expectation is that they will remain lower.

A myth seems to be going around the airport that there has been more noise from night flying since runway 2 opened. That is hard to understand, as all night flying is done from runway 1. The arrangements for night flying are therefore exactly as they were before runway 2 opened.

Many other benefits flow from the expansion of Manchester airport. New routes are opening up to places such as Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul and there are direct flights to Washington and Chicago. That increases access for north-west passengers and could relieve the great pressure on the London and south-east aviation system. Major improvements in the ground transport system around Manchester airport are being introduced. A new interchange is under construction and we hope that it will not be too long before metrolink trams arrive not only at Manchester airport, but at Wythenshawe hospital and town centre.

The crucial point is the impact of the expansion of Manchester airport on the economy and jobs: 19,000 people work at the airport and 70,000 jobs depend on it and the activity there. That activity and those jobs simply could not exist without aircraft taking off and landing and therefore producing some noise. On balance, the people of the north-west support the expansion of Manchester airport and runway 2, because of the prosperity that it brings to my constituency, that of the hon. Gentleman and the whole region.

1.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Mr. David Jamieson): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne) on securing the debate so early on in his time in the House. We look forward to hearing him speak on many more occasions. While he was making his speech, he was being doughnutted by two of his hon. Friends. I might write a note to the Whips Office to say that he is already keeping bad company.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he introduced the debate. I am aware that he had a public meeting on Friday and I am sure that some of the issues that were raised then were repeated today, which is a job that all good Members of Parliament undertake. Unfortunately, he will find out that good Ministers have to explain sometimes why actions supported by hon. Members cannot be undertaken instantly.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe and Sale, East (Paul Goggins) for his contribution to the debate, which was somewhat in counterbalance to some of the points made by the hon. Gentleman. My hon. Friend has obviated the need for me to refer to certain matters in my response. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Stringer) is in the Chamber, too, showing an interest in the debate.

Aircraft noise can have an impact on people who live near airports, particularly on departure routes. Many people in the constituency of the hon. Member for Tatton and those of other hon. Members appreciate the prosperity that the airport and the second runway have brought to the north-east region. Manchester estimates that it generates about £1.7 billion for the local economy. By 2015, we expect there to be about 40 million passengers per year and the contribution to the local economy to be about £4 billion, which is not an insubstantial amount.

As the hon. Member for Tatton said, an acceptable balance must be found between the economic benefits and some of the problems that clearly occur in his constituency. There is no doubt that one of the least desirable consequences of airport growth is aircraft noise. It is suffered by far fewer people than the number who share in the prosperity, but that is probably of little consolation to the people of Knutsford and those who attended the meeting on Friday night.

I will try to put the debate into context and then move rapidly to the important points made by the hon. Gentleman. Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports are designated under section 80 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 for the purposes of section 78. That means that my Department is responsible for setting noise mitigation measures for those airports. Elsewhere, circumstances vary greatly between the large airports and the many small local airfields. The policy of successive Governments has been that aircraft noise is a local issue and is best resolved locally. From time to time, there have been calls for Manchester airport to be designated

for the purpose of section 78 of the 1982 Act, most recently in 1995. Each request was carefully considered, but was rejected as unnecessary in view of the noise mitigation arrangements that are in place in Manchester.

On the immediate effect of aircraft noise on the Tatton constituency and on Knutsford, in particular, the new runway at Manchester, which was opened earlier this year, lies closer to Knutsford than the previous runway. As a result, there is no doubt that the town has suffered an increase in noise. The International Civil Aviation Organisation rules for the use of staggered parallel runways state that aircraft should utilise the first available runway. That means that, during the day, when the wind is from the north or east, aircraft on approach will be using the new runway and will be approximately 300 ft lower over the town than when approaching from the original runway. When the wind is from the south or west, aircraft will take off towards Knutsford. There, aircraft will be lower and, on the revised departure routes, they will bring more traffic to the north of town. I regret that that is the case.

The second runway at Manchester was the subject of a public inquiry in 1994-95, which carefully considered the issue of air noise. The inspector recognised adverse impacts on Knutsford, for example. A package of mitigation measures was crucial to the granting of planning permission to build the second runway. The measures are subject to an enforceable agreement with Cheshire county council and Manchester city council under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.I will take the opportunity to explain some of those measures, as they are important for the understanding of the House, and so that the hon. Gentleman can pursue some of the measures on behalf of his constituents.

The airport has undertaken not to use the new runway for night flights other than when it would be unsafe to use the existing runway or when it is undergoing repairs. In the light of what the hon. Gentleman said, he might want to pursue that matter with the appropriate authorities. That obligation and the whole night flight regime at Manchester are to be reviewed in 2005. I dare say that his constituents will want to be part of that review. The current night restrictions at Manchester are based on the Department's night quota—the quota count scheme at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted. The airport has a noise points budget, based on the quota count classification. In addition, it has night movement caps. If the hon. Gentleman wants more details on those, I am sure that my Department will be happy to assist him.

Enlarging further on the matter may be beyond the scope of today's debate. Manchester sets noise limits for departing aircraft, which are 92 decibels during the day—2 decibels lower than the new daytime limit at the London airports—and 87 decibels at night. Aircraft that exceed those limits are subject to a surcharge of £500, with an additional £150 for each perceived noise decibel by which the limits are exceeded.

Noise penalties in 2000 totalled £154,300 and the money is used to support community and charitable organisations close to the airport. Manchester has preferred noise routes that keep aircraft as far away as possible from built-up areas. Although that is of little comfort to the people of Knutsford, it benefits other communities in the area. I understand that, during 2000, the total number of track digressions represented 7.8 per cent. of all standard instrument departures.

The Manchester airport noise and track information system is a computerised system that allows the airport to monitor aircraft within 20 km of the airport, up to a height of 12,000 ft. It is interesting that we measure along the ground in metric and upwards in imperial; I have yet to discover why that is the case. The system also enables the airport to identify aircraft that break the noise limits, investigate and record complaints from the community, measure the effectiveness of the noise reduction programme and provide statistical information to allow assessment of effectiveness of new procedures. The airport has operated a noise insulation scheme for many years. Under the present scheme, it contributes between 50 and 80 per cent., depending on the glazing specification, towards the costs of sound insulation and glazing to those properties within the scheme boundary.

Since 1999, an inner zone of almost 1,000 properties has been created, which allows the properties to be eligible for repeat grants, loft insulation and higher-performance double glazing. Manchester airport operates a policy of surcharging the chapter 2 aircraft, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, for use of the airport, in an attempt to encourage the use of the chapter 3 aircraft prior to the phase-out deadline. Daytime engine tests are normally carried out within the engine test bay and there are tight restrictions on the number of night time engine tests.

As part of the Department's air quality monitoring automatic urban network, an air quality monitoring station is located under the main approach flight path. It continuously monitors nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone. There were no exceedances of the national air quality strategy objectives at the station in 1997, 1998 or 1999.

The airport is continually working to reduce the impact of its operations. It has invested over £100,000 in additional mobile transformers to enable more aircraft to use fixed electrical ground power facilities rather than their own auxiliary power units, which helps to reduce emissions and noise on the ground by providing power for jet aircraft while they are parked. The airport has also developed an airfield infringement fine system that includes a provision to levy fines for vehicles left running while unattended within the airport's boundaries.

Section 38(1) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 states:

"an aerodrome authority may ... fix its charges by reference, among other things, to any fact or matter relevant to—

(a) the amount of noise caused by the aircraft in respect of which the charges are made; or

(b) the extent or nature of any inconvenience resulting from such noise."

The hon. Gentleman may wish to follow that through.

Mr. George Osborne: Will the Minister respond to the point that I raised about changing the law to allow airports to fine planes that deviate from tracks? That is a huge problem in Knutsford, and the airport would support such a change. Although we disagree on the extent to which the fines should be used, we all agree that

[Mr. George Osborne]

the law should be changed. Will the Government include that in the forthcoming White Paper and the following legislation?

Mr. Jamieson: That can certainly be considered. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make that point during the consultation, I am sure that he—and many others—will do so. We look forward to receiving his comments.

In July 2000, the Department issued a consultation paper entitled "Control of noise from civil aircraft". Paragraph 27 of the paper suggested that

"section 38(1) might be amended to make it clearer that charges could relate, for example, to compliance with 'noise preferential routes'."

Manchester airport has long supported the idea of improved powers to ensure compliance. The consultation has now closed and the responses are being considered.

Manchester airport has a committee that actively consults with four local environmental groups—the Knutsford and Mobberley joint action group, the Heald Green and Long Lane Ratepayers Association, the Styal Action Association and the Wythenshawe Combined Tenants Association—to discuss the concerns of those living around the airport, in addition to the local authority representatives. I welcome the involvement of those groups and trust that local people, particularly those from Knutsford, will make good use of that opportunity to air concerns and possible solutions with the airport management and other interested parties. It may be helpful for the hon. Gentleman to discuss with some of those organisations and the consultative committee the degree of involvement that they may or may not have had on particular matters. That might be a good avenue for making his views known at the local level to those who have some influence over the policy.

The airport is the terminus of one of the new Manchester metrolink extension lines, which will improve access to employment for the large non-car owning section of the population in the Wythenshawe area.

The hon. Gentleman raised several other matters that I wished to cover, but there may not be adequate time. If at some time he draws those matters to my attention, perhaps in a note, I will be happy to write to him. He may wish to follow through on some of the legal detail to form a better understanding of the issue. Perhaps when he has done that, he might come and have a chat with me so that I understand it as well.

I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman raised these important and sensitive matters on behalf of his constituents. I, too, have an airport in my area, and I know that the issues are difficult to resolve. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe and Sale, East said, sometimes we must balance the problems of our constituents with the wider aspects of economic regeneration, which are also important in our areas.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Two o'clock.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 18 July 2001

[SYLVIA HEAL *in the Chair*]

Credit Unions

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—[*Dan Norris.*]

9.30 am

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas (Harrow, West): I am delighted to introduce the debate on credit unions today and will begin by declaring my membership of the Rainbow Saver credit union.

There has been much focus since the general election on the modernisation of services used by our constituents and the possible role of the private sector in that process. I have long thought that the third sector of the economy—the mutual and co-operative sector—could have a key role in improving those services, on which our constituents rely. Developing the credit union movement throughout the country offers just such a solution. At some time, all our constituents will need a loan and a facility to save. Developing the credit union movement—thus helping to continue the process of reforming the financial services industry—is one way to help support that key service.

I sought today's debate for four reasons. First, I wanted to impress on the House the need to establish a central services organisation to help drive the expansion of the credit union sector. Secondly, it will highlight the case for further deregulation of the rules governing credit unions. Thirdly, I will highlight our disappointment at the lack of effort so far by regional development agencies to expand credit union coverage in their regions. Finally, I believe that the Housing Corporation and key housing associations could be much more proactive in helping to extend access to a credit union.

Credit unions throughout the world have an open and voluntary membership. They are run on the basis of one member, one vote. They cannot discriminate within the terms of their common bond, and they help to create a sense of belonging and responsibility in the communities or the workplaces that they serve. They seek to provide high-quality, affordable, ethical financial services. They distribute any surplus that they create to their members. They provide continuing financial education for their members and support co-operation among co-operatives. The key attraction of credit unions is their affordability. They also encourage self and mutual responsibility—it is impossible to borrow without saving.

The Minister's predecessor attended a conference on financial exclusion before the general election, at which the Consumer Credit Trade Association outlined the cost of a loan from a home credit company. It gave the example of a £400 loan, repayable over 24 weeks. It indicated that a person borrowing that sum would have to pay £160 in interest. In comparison, a credit union is allowed by law a maximum annual percentage rate of only 12.68 per cent., so the loan of £400, again repayable over 24 weeks, would incur interest of just £11.62—resulting in a considerable saving when compared with a loan by the home credit company route.

We can consider the impact, too, on a particular community. For example, 500 people, each with a £1,000 loan from a home credit company, would spend £775,000 on credit over a 31-week period. The same loan over a 26-week period with a credit union would cost those 500 people £515,725, resulting in a considerable saving for their community. A local authority making a capital investment of £250,000 to establish a credit union would, within six months, have helped to keep more than £259,000 in its community, and in the pockets of those 500 people. That financial investment by the local authority could make a real improvement to the financial position of local people.

It is arguable that credit unions are, internationally, the most successful co-operative structure on offer. There are more than 37,000 credit unions in more than 85 countries, with more than 100 million members. There are 680 credit unions in England, Scotland and Wales, with almost 300,000 members and assets of almost £200 million. I am told that the growth rate of credit union membership is 10 to 15 per cent. a year. That may sound impressive, but that membership is drawn from a relatively low base. In London, for example, there are only 44 credit unions, with 25,000 members and just £20 million in assets.

Workplace credit unions have been the most successful type in the United Kingdom to date. Nicred, which serves the employees of News International, is one such example. It has 1,000 members and assets of £1.3 million. The London Taxi Drivers Association is perhaps the most famous credit union in London. It has existed for 22 years and is one of the oldest credit unions in Britain, with more than 2,100 members and £3 million in assets. It has been proved to offer an excellent service to taxi drivers, helping them to obtain loans to undertake repairs to keep their taxis on the road. Taxi drivers can also use loans to pay for insurance.

Credit unions that serve the boroughs of Newham and Lewisham are being explored. Three existing credit unions in Lewisham would have to merge, and anyone who works or lives in that borough could join and benefit from the service provided by a single credit union.

The new work-live model for credit union development has perhaps been best demonstrated by the Southwark credit union. That credit union, which is also long established, began life serving the employees of Southwark council. It expanded two years ago to provide services to the 250,000 people who live in the Southwark borough.

Another example of that model for credit union development can be found in the neighbouring borough of Tower Hamlets. A brand new community credit union serves the 250,000 people who live or work in the borough, and the staff of the Financial Services Authority, which is based in Canary wharf, could join it. The Tower Hamlets credit union has produced bilingual publicity and information material to address the language difficulties that the substantial number of Bengali speakers in the borough face. It has also ensured that volunteers who speak Bengali help to provide the services that the credit union offers. That is an example

[Mr. Gareth R. Thomas]

of a credit union that has provided—because of its size, local responsiveness and position in the community—a specific solution to address the needs of its community.

Credit unions provide access to affordable credit. They promote a regular savings culture that embraces even small deposits and they actively work to improve the financial literacy of their members through educational programmes. Credit unions are based around their members' financial needs. Some members will need a savings facility and others will need to borrow. Credit unions help to match members' savings needs to other members' credit needs. As credit unions offer local community-based financial services that are owned and controlled by the people who directly benefit from them, they provide a service that meets their members' needs, not the requirements of private shareholders or external stakeholders.

Since the publication of a research report in 1999 by Liverpool John Moores university, credit unions have sought to strengthen and modernise themselves. They have merged, opened high street premises, employed more staff and actively sought to improve their image.

Credit unions now provide a professional service. They have formed partnerships with other organisations, such as local housing associations, trade unions or local authorities. Leeds City credit union has 8,000 members, who are mainly public sector employees, and it provides services to more than 1 million people who live or work in Leeds. Telford and Wrekin council offers a similar service.

The Social Enterprise London project, now in its third and final year, is funded by the single regeneration budget, and has sought to equip credit unions in London with the professional tools and marketing material that they need in order to expand. We need more local authority initiatives, such as those in Tower Hamlets and Southwark, to make credit union membership available to everyone who lives or works in London.

Other examples of strategic programmes specific to particular areas and designed to strengthen credit unions include the work done by the National Assembly for Wales to extend credit union coverage to all the people of Wales. The Scottish Executive are developing a Scottish credit union partnership to deliver a strategic plan for credit union development in Scotland, and to that end launched a document called "Unlocking the Potential" in March.

Well financed strategic initiatives in London, Scotland and Wales demonstrate what a sustainable credit union can achieve if it has sufficient capital. Credit unions should receive capital from direct funding. Recent developments in Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Telford have shown that it costs about £300,000 to capitalise a credit union—to provide staff, premises, information technology and operational systems—so that it can provide financial services to the community that it serves.

Once a credit union is properly established, it requires no further financial support from outside sources. Members of the Scottish Parliament have demonstrated both political and actual support for credit unions; all MSPs can now join Capital Credit Union, which has 7,000 members and assets worth £5 million. It pays a 4 per cent. dividend on savings. Members of the National Assembly for Wales and the Assembly's staff are also seeking to join or establish a credit union. Members of Parliament might wish to enjoy the benefits conferred on Scottish and Welsh colleagues—and on American congressmen and senators, who also have a credit union. The leading credit union trade association has approached the House authorities; perhaps the Minister will shed light on how that initiative is progressing.

Credit unions provide a powerful model for the delivery of core financial services. In the United Kingdom, however, it is still difficult to gain access to a credit union. There has been a series of problems, some of which remain to be addressed. When our party came to power in 1997, a series of regulatory issues needed attention in order to make credit unions more attractive. We needed to develop a central finance facility and, crucially, the Government needed the will to expand the credit union sector.

The Government have taken many positive steps since they came to power. From 1 July 2002, the Financial Services Authority will regulate credit unions as well as the other financial services industry players—the banks and building societies. Credit unions will have access to the same compensation scheme as those organisations, so that money deposited in a credit union will be as safe as that in a bank or building society.

The credit unions are concerned about the nature of the FSA's regime, because future regulations must be affordable and proportionate, and should provide safety for credit union members, while enabling growth and an increased range of services. To date, the credit union movement has had a positive response to the FSA's attitude. I hope that the FSA continues to work in partnership with the credit union movement to implement the regulations governing credit unions.

A central services organisation is needed to help to drive the expansion of the credit union sector. A visible demonstration of the Government's political will to establish such a body would be welcome. The taskforce on credit unions recommended a central services organisation. That taskforce was established by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland during her time as Economic Secretary to the Treasury. The Government accepted that recommendation, and it has been highlighted consistently in Government policy.

Today, I hope that we shall discover the time scale for the establishment of such an organisation, its financing, and an outline of its possible work programme. A central services organisation could be the Government's way to provide national strategic support for the credit union movement, which would result in a larger and stronger credit union sector. That could provide credit unions with a central finance facility, which would enable them to pool their liquidity to get a better return than they do currently. Moreover, such an organisation could make arrangements with the banks to ensure a lender of last resort for the credit union. It could focus on helping credit unions to combat financial exclusion through a challenge fund, so that they could contribute to financial inclusion. It could also support credit union development, for training and for business planning.

The Treasury taskforce's idea of a central services organisation did not just emerge out of thin air. In the international credit union movement, there are several similar bodies. Canadian Central is the Canadian equivalent of a central services organisation. Its priorities for the next 12 months include: developing the capability of credit unions to deal with e-commerce; launching a national branding and awareness campaign for credit unions; developing the liquidity efficiency of the Canadian credit union movement; and looking for further efficiencies in the handling of payments and clearing. A similar body in Australia provides business services to credit unions, including information technology support, financial management and planning. New Zealand has a central banking fund for the credit union sector. Even in South Africa, where the credit union movement is smaller than in Britain, a central finance facility has been established; its main objective is to put money back into credit unions.

Throughout the world, the credit union sector benefits from central services organisations. Such an organisation, providing expertise and resources for credit unions to rely on, would clearly be an enormous benefit. I hope that my hon. Friend will outline whether the Government intend to deregulate credit unions further.

Three particular changes would be welcome. First, the ability to declare a dividend more often than just annually and to offer variable dividend rates on different savings accounts would be beneficial. That would enable credit unions to attract more savers and thus meet other members' credit needs, and it would specifically help credit unions to meet the new liquidity requirements set by the Financial Services Authority.

The second key change would be to allow borrowing from external sources, such as housing associations or local authorities. Borrowing from sources such as other banks and credit unions is currently allowed, but additional flexibility would benefit the credit union sector and enable it to raise the capital that it needs. The regulators require new credit unions to raise that capital, as has been demonstrated by the practicalities of getting large projects such as the Lewisham and Tower Hamlets credit unions off the ground. Both have required approximately £300,000.

The final welcome change would be the ability of credit unions to charge for additional services—to pay bills to utility companies, for example. I understand that the consultation period for deregulatory change usually takes a year. That one-year period usually includes the time for a consultation document to be issued, and a three-month consultation period to allow responses, which have to be collated and assessed. Only then can a deregulation order be drafted and come into force.

The Financial Services Authority is due to increase its responsibilities to credit unions in July 2002. It would make particular sense, therefore, to allow the deregulation of the rules that apply to credit unions in those three areas in line with that time scale. I hope that my hon. Friend will outline her view on that, and say whether the Government will move in that direction. I also hope that she will be able to give a clearer steer to regional development authorities, so that they work in partnership with housing associations, the newly established central services organisation and local authorities to increase access to credit unions.

I was surprised that no mention was made of credit unions in the economic strategy that was published by the London Development Agency. There was, it is true, mention of the need to develop the wider social economy in London. Mention was also made of the excellent Social Enterprise London, to which I referred earlier, which has been doing work with credit unions. Given the need to expand access to available financial services in many London communities, the absence of a specific commitment to develop the credit union is disappointing.

The London Development Agency and other regional development agencies could provide a clear strategic lead to develop credit unions in their regions. London boroughs or other local authorities could then take up that lead. Such a strategy could include encouraging the boroughs, other partners and local employers to become involved in establishing and developing credit unions at a rate of knots. The London Development Agency could have a role in ensuring that any funds or assistance for credit unions are applied in an appropriately sustainable way. In London, for example, who could better lead approaches to the more traditional financial services community—the banks, the insurance companies, the pension funds and the building societies—to find and secure resources to help establish credit unions?

Mr. David Drew (Stroud): I apologise for missing the start of my hon. Friend's remarks. I was at the opening service.

Does he also agree that there is a role for the universal bank in relation to the postal network? In rural areas there is no better way for people to have access to savings facilities. Could the Government explore that angle in opening up the real possibilities for credit unions?

Mr. Thomas: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. The universal bank, once established, could help credit unions to provide further services or access to their members.

There is a need for the Housing Corporation and local housing associations to be more active in helping credit unions to develop. Richard Newcombe, writing for the Housing Corporation in March 2001, emphasised that direct attempts by housing associations to set up credit unions had generally been unsuccessful and that, given the need for a more professional and more heavily resourced set-up, housing associations were unlikely to be the key appropriate agency. Why cannot housing associations, in partnership with a central services organisation or with regional development agencies, be part of a coherent strategy to develop credit union coverage in their area that their tenants can afford and that is properly thought through?

The credit union movement offers excellent services around the country. Those who are lucky enough to have access to a credit union in this country are generally offered an excellent service. People are enthusiastic about the services that credit unions can provide. The tragedy in this country at the moment is that too few people have access to a credit union. The Government have made a series of positive steps towards developing credit union coverage, but I hope that my hon. Friend

[Mr. Thomas]

the Minister will give that development a further sharp push so that, by the end of our second or third term, there will be far greater coverage of credit unions throughout Britain.

9.54 am

Mr. Paul Truswell (Pudsey): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Thomas). He is establishing quite a reputation as an assiduous advocate for the credit union movement. I declare an interest as a founder member of what is now Leeds City Credit Union Ltd.

I became involved with credit unions as a Leeds city councillor in the mid-1980s, when I was asked to chair a working group to consider how the city council could promote the development of credit unions in the city. We made two recommendations: first, that we should provide financial and other support to council employees to enable them to set up their own credit union; and, secondly, that we should appoint a credit union development worker to support the establishment of credit unions, particularly in deprived parts of Leeds.

We were fortunate to have an extremely supportive leader, whom we now know and love as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie), and we pursued both initiatives. As my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West said, the first initiative has been a huge success, but the second—the development of credit unions in small deprived communities—has had a more chequered history. I shall return to that.

The great advantage of credit unions is in respect of people in deprived areas who have difficulty accessing credit and who all too often, especially in cities such as Leeds, fall victim to loan sharks. The credit union for Leeds city council employees was registered in August 1987 and it grew slowly but steadily for about four years. Since 1991, its membership has been sustained and currently stands at 9,000 adult members and 600 junior members. The latter group is the result of an extension of the union's common bond.

Leeds City credit union is the largest in England and Wales and the third largest in the United Kingdom behind two Scottish credit unions—I do not know whether the affinity of Yorkshire and Scottish people with their purses, wallets and sporrans has anything to do with that development or whether it is pure coincidence.

The common bond of the Leeds City credit union was changed in 1996 to reflect the fact that compulsory competitive tendering and the removal of further education colleges from city council control had changed the nature of the people who had worked for the city council. That is one aspect of the way in which that credit union has developed organically and responded to changes in the needs of its members and potential members. As I said, membership was extended in 1996 to include families and junior members, which helped to boost the union's size. To reflect the changes in its role, its name was changed to the Leeds City Credit Union Ltd.

More recently, the credit union was granted a further extension to its common bond to include anyone living and working in the city of Leeds. That crucial development gives the union a target audience of about 800,000 people and makes it, I think, the largest common bond in the country by far. With the assistance of core grant funding from the city council, the union employs a development manager to take forward city-wide expansion of credit unions.

In December 1999, the union assumed responsibility for the support of other credit unions in Leeds. The new support officer conducted an extensive review of how smaller community and church-based credit unions were faring in the city. Unfortunately, it was found that some unions had great difficulties. They had the usual difficulties of finding a sufficient number of people to form the board to carry out the nuts-and-bolts mechanics of running the union. The unions also had difficulty generating a sufficient number of members to provide the assets that are essential if they are to provide the services that my hon. Friend so graphically described. It was also obvious that, although Leeds was a successful pioneer in developing credit unions, far too many people there still lacked access to the services that such a union can provide.

Five existing credit unions merged with the Leeds City credit union, but it was not a takeover or financial aggrandisement. The situation was more like that of an adoptive parent providing support and succour to orphans of a storm. It reflects what has happened in many other parts of the world. My hon. Friend demonstrated clearly how credit unions have caught on and developed over decades in other countries. There is absolutely no reason why that cannot happen in this country, particularly if the Government support the credit union movement.

I have tried to paint a picture of the experience in Leeds. It is fair to say that Leeds has been an effective trailblazer in promoting credit union development. As such, the lessons that have been learned there and the views of the people who are involved in running the credit union in Leeds are worthy of serious consideration. I do not intend to go into great detail; my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West made the case coherently and cogently, and it does not need repetition. However, as someone who has been involved with the credit union movement for many years, I associate myself with everything that he said in support of the measures that are needed, particularly on the part of the Government, to ensure that credit unions develop more effectively.

I have had discussions with people who are involved more closely and in more detail than I am with the Leeds credit union to ascertain what they regard as the major priorities that will enable the movement, not only in Leeds but generally, to progress further, reach out to more people and become even more relevant to potential members. As such, my hon. Friend's comments came as no surprise: first on the list is the establishment of a central services organisation as recommended in the Goodwin report. In particular, a central finance facility must be established to allow credit unions to pool their resources. I join my hon. Friend in pressing the Minister for an indication as to how speedily she anticipates that process taking place.

Along with everyone associated with credit unions in Leeds, I accept that organisations, particularly financial organisations, must walk before they can run. To some extent, Leeds is an exception—it is already up and

running. However, established credit unions such as the one in Leeds should be allowed to broaden the scope of their activities to make them even more attractive and relevant to existing and potential members. They could be given the ability to offer tax-free savings accounts—the son or daughter, one might say, of individual savings accounts. They could be given opportunities in the development of the new baby bond accounts, as they are colloquially called. Credit unions could be allowed to offer fixed-term deposit savings accounts to help them generate more share capital, and approved credit unions—perhaps this is a very ambitious suggestion—could be given permission to conduct mortgage business.

As my hon. Friend said, the Government could do a great deal towards generating enthusiasm for, and spreading the word about, credit unions and, where necessary, directly or indirectly providing some of the essential pump priming that is necessary to get them up and running. The experience of Leeds is worthy of wider promulgation. Organisations such as the Association of British Credit Unions do a fantastic job, but the more organisations that recognise the work of credit unions and encourage their growth by exhortation or, perhaps, with pump-priming cash, the better things will be.

The intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) touched briefly on the part that credit unions can play in the development of the universal bank, which I endorse from my knowledge of the Leeds experience. Broadening out the evangelical approach—I hesitate to call it that—there may be ways of instigating discussions and learning about credit unions in schools; that would be a helpful development.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take all of those ideas on board but, in particular, will pursue with some urgency the issue of a Central Services Organisation. The Leeds experience clearly demonstrates that credit unions work, but support from the Government and other agencies is needed to make them work even better and to extend their services to more of our fellow citizens.

10.4 am

Mr. Andrew Love (Edmonton): I too congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Thomas) on securing the debate. We all recognise his expertise and commitment to the credit union movement. Like him, I should declare my membership of a credit union and the fact that I benefit from a small loan at a low interest rate.

Credit unions are unique community-based financial services organisations that are owned and controlled by their members. Perhaps most importantly, they foster both self-help and thrift. They share a community and collective responsibility in the form of a common bond that brings people together for their mutual benefit. There are two common misconceptions about the credit union movement. First, we must understand that their function is primarily to promote thrift and savings. People often talk about the attractions of low interest rates, certainly for those who suffer from being financially excluded from the marketplace. However, people must save before they may take out a loan. Secondly, credit unions are prudential financial institutions, not a social service or an anti-poverty strategy.

Credit unions did not originate in this country. They came primarily with immigrants from Ireland and the Caribbean, and it was some time before there was a legal framework, which eventually emerged with the Credit Unions Act 1979. Since then, we have seen steady, if modest, growth, which has been disappointing. However, growth has increased since the 1997 election, and I was pleased to see that there has been a 30 per cent. increase in membership since then, which shows some progress at least. The penetration of the movement is still insignificant compared with that in some other countries. In Ireland, more than 40 per cent. of the population are members of credit unions, while the figure for Canada is 15 per cent. Sadly, Britain does not compare to them in any way, with credit union membership totalling only 1 per cent. of the population.

There are many reasons for those figures, not least the contribution of other mutual financial services organisations, which have traditionally attracted the savings of the people who would most benefit from credit union membership. Certain factors are important in the context of the growth of credit unions and their attempt to address financial and social exclusion. The first reason is the fragmentation of the leadership of the credit union movement. Since its inception, there have been disagreements about its role, ethos, objectives and even its values. Many believe that small is beautiful and that growth in itself is almost a bad word, while others would like the movement to expand and develop.

We have ended up with a disparate movement, with some large and expanding credit unions that offer a wide range of services and other smaller community credit unions that seem to take pride in not expanding or being able to offer so much. That has bedevilled the movement's ability to act in unison and, perhaps more importantly, to speak with one voice. I therefore strongly support the recommendations of the National Consumer Council, the Treasury taskforce and the financial services organisations that there should be one national representative body. The movement needs to consider that carefully if it is to respond to the need to develop and expand the movement.

The restricted legal framework in which credit unions are currently set has already been mentioned. There have been two recent deregulations measures: the first was in 1996 and the second will be implemented mainly through the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000. Nevertheless, we still have the most restrictive regime in the world for credit unions. If they are to grow we must be able to provide a broader range of savings, lending and financial services to compete with the high street organisations. Of course, even if we have those changes they may not lead to any spectacular growth along the lines of what has happened in other countries, but they would boost both the membership and, perhaps more importantly, the asset base of the credit union movement. I certainly endorse the deregulation measures that have been carried out, in particular those increasing the flexibility of the common bond. That is an area where further deregulation could assist growth.

I should like briefly to comment on a couple of areas that are critically important if credit unions are to grow and develop and play a part in addressing social and financial exclusions—which the Government are seeking to do. First, both previous speakers mentioned the need for a central services organisation, which will

[Mr. Andrew Love]

be the main body that could sort out some of the shortcomings of the credit union movement. There is a need for more professional provision of services. All reports on the movement have commented on the need for premises, qualified staff, management skills and new technology, or back office services, as they are commonly known. Everyone needs to work together. Growth is extremely difficult to achieve. A centrally-based organisation to foster that growth, along with the member organisations and the development agencies, would go a long way to sustain and perhaps increase the recent growth.

Small and community-based credit unions face considerable difficulties in this respect. That was commented upon by both the taskforce and the recent report by John Moores university. Many credit unions are far too small in membership. They lack the dynamism to grow. They have reached a plateau and are not really going anywhere. We need to intervene to assist them to develop the services that their communities need. I am greatly attracted to the idea of a challenge fund set up for CSO to help it tackle some of the problems of community credit unions.

The CSO is an ambitious business plan and it is on an ambitious time scale. If that is to be implemented, as I think would be the Government's wish, it needs the Government's support and assistance. I hope that the Minister will tell us what measures she intends to take to get the CSO up and running.

The second issue is further deregulation. As I have already mentioned, the current framework is perhaps the most restrictive in the world. I support the Treasury's decision to bring credit unions within the regulatory regime under the supervision of the Financial Services Authority. That is the right way forward; it provides a compensation scheme for depositors and an ombudsman scheme for those who may feel they have been hard done by in their dealings with a credit union. I hope that will increase consumer confidence and promote greater trust in credit unions. We must ensure that the regulatory regime is robust, as that will offer an opportunity further to deregulate the legislative regime in which the credit unions operate.

Credit unions are worried about being supervised by the Financial Services Authority because of concerns about affordability and about having a regime that is proportionate to the risks that are faced by their membership. However, I am pleased that the FSA is responding to both those concerns, so matters can proceed. If the problems in relation to regulation have been solved, it should give credit unions the opportunity to develop the wider range of affordable and accessible services that are necessary if credit unions are to grow and respond to the issue of financial exclusion. Further deregulation measures are being considered, which I very much welcome, because it will help to stimulate future growth.

With FSA regulation kicking in in July 2002, it would be appropriate and sensible, if there are to be further deregulation measures, to consult on the issue and for implementation to take place at the same time so that when the credit union movement is taken under the wing of the FSA, it is also encouraged to develop a wider range of services. That would produce a positive response to the movement.

Credit unions are not the only solution to financial or social exclusion but they are the only self-help, co-operatively owned and run financial organisations that promote thrift and savings. Credit unions present a unique opportunity to end financial exclusion and provide affordable and appropriate financial services, but they need Government support and help to achieve that aim.

I look forward to the Minister's response to what I have said this morning.

10.18 am

Mr. Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich, West): I join my hon. Friends in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Thomas) on securing the debate, and endorse many of the arguments that have been advanced in support of my hon. Friend.

I want to pick up one or two points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Mr. Love) about the nature of a credit union. He said that it was not a financial social service but rather a financial institution designed to encourage thrift and savings. The perception that credit unions are a social service has been extremely damaging to the movement's development.

Before becoming a Member of Parliament, I was a member of the Sandwell Credit Union Development Agency, an organisation introduced in the borough of Sandwell with the specific objective of promoting the development of individual credit unions. It may be a reflection on the success—or lack of it—of that body that I have never been a member of a credit union. The lack of success of credit unions in this area highlights the need for our debate and explains why we are asking the Treasury for changes.

Sandwell is a traditional black country inner-city area with relatively low incomes, low car ownership—only 50 per cent.—and relatively low membership of any financial institutions. The Government's attempts to promote social and financial inclusion should be targeted to make savings and thrift part of a wider culture of regeneration.

The financial deficit has been aggravated in recent years by the closure of bank and post office branches, which is a big issue in urban as well as rural areas. Combined with low car ownership, it makes it difficult for some people to gain ready access to financial services.

I mentioned earlier that credit unions are not a financial social service. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West said, they are able to take in savings from people not targeted by the major financial institutions and can offer loans at a much cheaper rate. They are by definition appropriate for people on low incomes in urban areas, so they have a potentially important role to play in such areas.

The Government are anxious to promote the culture of financial management among lower income people. On the surface, credit unions would seem an ideal vehicle to promote such a culture, so why are only 300,000 people in this country members of a credit

union? In the United States 25 per cent., in Ireland 50 per cent. and in some Caribbean countries 70 per cent. of the population are members.

David Taylor (North-West Leicestershire): My hon. Friend makes a valuable point and I apologise to him for not being present at the start of the debate. Ireland has been very successful. Our credit union in North-West Leicestershire—I declare an interest as a member of the Money Tree credit union—has been twinned with Ballinasloe credit union in southern Ireland. Picking up the threads of its ideas and suggestions has led to a new lease of life and a new period of expansion for our credit union. Perhaps that arrangement could be replicated in other areas.

Mr. Bailey: My hon. Friend makes a valuable suggestion, which should help us to develop credit union policy further. It has sometimes been difficult for other areas to develop the kind of policies that have proved appropriate for North-West Leicestershire.

I was commenting on the small number of people who are members of credit unions in this country. Given the enormous potential for development, it is obvious that that lack of growth is the result of cultural, financial and other obstacles. I hope that the Government will tell us how they will break down those obstacles.

As other hon. Members have done, I give credit for the progress that has been made. Changes in regulation enabling the relaxation of the common bond have undoubtedly been a major step in that progress. Prior to that, work-based credit unions in this country had most members—people with a secure income—and facilities to carry out the necessary financial functions; community-based credit unions had relatively few members. Extending the common bond has made it much easier to have larger, geographically based credit unions that can incorporate a far wider section of the community and far wider income bands. That is a positive development.

However, there are three obstacles. First, there is a lack of trained and confident personnel who are capable of understanding the credit union movement, promoting it and carrying out its day-to-day administration. During my years as a member of the Sandwell Credit Union Development Agency, we made strenuous efforts to find volunteers in local communities who would be prepared to put in the time to undergo training. We found some.

The poor public perception of credit unions and the lack of confidence in certain low-income and traditionally deprived communities are undoubtedly major obstacles. Tying credit unions into the regulatory framework of the Financial Services Authority and having a central services organisation that is highly professional in its approach to training could play an important role in removing one of the main cultural and institutional obstacles to their development.

Another obstacle is the status of credit unions as a social service geared only at poor people. The irony is that if one is on a low income, saving is much more difficult and one is less likely to choose as a safe haven for hard-won savings an institution that appears to be just a social service and does not have the safety and regulatory framework of an established financial institution. Credit unions have therefore been missing some of the people who might benefit most from them. That obstacle could be removed by incorporating credit unions into the regulatory framework and by having a training and promotional body for them.

Mr. Drew: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the biggest difficulties with training is the amount of time that credit union staff—who are volunteers—are expected to give up? Anything that can be done to support people during their training period is important. Could my hon. Friend comment on that?

Mr. Bailey: My hon. Friend makes an important point. As my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton said, some £300,000 of investment in the financial infrastructure is needed to get a credit union going. My own experience substantiates that. One must have appropriate premises and staff to generate the image of professionalism necessary to encourage people to invest their savings.

That brings me to my final point, which is the difficulty that credit unions have with a lack of premises and inadequate security. The somewhat romantic notion promoted by some of the credit union evangelists is of people starting a credit union in someone's front room, with volunteers totting up the money, banking it and so on. In my experience, that approach is a great deterrent to those who want to invest their money. Potential investors want to see proper offices, proper security and properly trained staff, and the Government or other financial institutions need to invest in the system to guarantee that they are available.

For those reasons, I support the move for a central services organisation. The credit union movement needs to be tied into the existing financial structure so that those who might benefit from its services have confidence in it. It offers a distinctive additional means of providing financial services to people who otherwise would not have access to them.

David Taylor: I am interested to hear my hon. Friend's argument. I accept that the minimum number of people required in a credit union to justify a shop-front approach of the sort that he recommends and to ensure its viability is quite high. Will he comment on the possibilities opened up by the era of the internet, although I acknowledge that a good number of those who may benefit from credit unions may not have ready access to the internet?

Mr. Bailey: My hon. Friend raises a valuable point. Promoting the internet should be part of the package of training, promotion and investment that the Government and allied financial institutions need to introduce, although it would not be accorded the highest priority in inner-city areas such as mine. However, there must be considerable potential in that direction in the long term.

The institution of credit unions potentially conforms to a number of Government objectives: first, it deals with financial exclusion; secondly, it promotes thrift and good financial planning—certainly, the proposed baby bonds would be well within that sort of financial framework; and, thirdly, it has a potential for

[Mr. Bailey]

community and urban regeneration. By working together to save and invest in the locality, local communities have the potential for expanding community activity, which benefits the area socially and financially.

10.33 am

Mr. David Drew (Stroud): I shall keep my remarks deliberately short, so that the Opposition Front-Bench Member and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary have the chance to make a good summing up. I shall concentrate on one perspective.

Like other hon. Members, I declare an interest: I am a founder member of the Stroud credit union. I want to speak about the difficulties of running a credit union in a rural area. Although I agree with everything that has been said by my hon. Friends, they represent more urban parts of the country. It is good to see my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Leicestershire (David Taylor) here; however, mine is a slightly different perspective.

The key problem in rural areas is access. Important though it is to talk about bulking up numbers and about increasing the financial base of credit unions and the services that they provide, in rural areas the key issue as regards the common bond is maintaining the local strength of credit unions by making them as accessible as possible while keeping the financial position as sound as possible. That is why I want to reiterate a point that I made in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Thomas), who did an excellent job of explaining the value of credit unions. There is a synergy with the opening up of the universal bank in the postal system. As part of the negotiations on that, we could—I am looking directly at the Minister—ask the postal network to consider making available sub-post offices, particularly in rural Britain but also, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, West (Mr. Bailey) said, in urban Britain. If we make sub-post offices places where people can access savings and if we open up the network—as I am sure we will—so that we keep sub-post offices open and make them useful for people, the need to be able to access savings from them will be all too obvious.

David Taylor: Does my hon. Friend support my request to the Minister carefully to consider what is happening in Leicestershire? The pilot scheme for post offices—the linking in of the network in the county's numerous post offices—could be twinned with the potential for expansion of, and access to, credit unions. That is true in particular of rural areas and not least of the monetary union in the town of Coalville.

Mr. Drew: I thank my hon. Friend, because he has taken my words from me. He gives an excellent example. Given all the initiatives in the postal network in Leicestershire, we could, with a push, have a win-win situation. The Government are the only people who can provide a real push.

I ask the Minister, not necessarily in direct response to today's debate and to my pleadings, but certainly over the course of developments, to understand, along with her colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry, which will obviously be the lead Ministry, that the issue could open up. So many advantages can be gained by giving people access through the universal bank to the savings network that I do not need to keep going on about it. However, unless someone provides the drive and a reason to act, we shall not take that opportunity and we shall all rue the day when we failed to do so.

10.38 am

Mr. Howard Flight (Arundel and South Downs): May I add my congratulations to those already given to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Thomas) on securing this debate on an important subject? I also note the valuable contributions made by the hon. Members for Pudsey (Mr. Truswell), for Edmonton (Mr. Love), for West Bromwich, West (Mr. Bailey) and for Stroud (Mr. Drew).

The objective of the debate has been to push the Government to get a move on with establishing a central services organisation, which was proposed four years ago. I cannot resist noting that I have lived through three Economic Secretaries to the Treasury waxing lyrical about how credit unions would solve the problem of social exclusion, but little has happened. Something has been made of the legislative changes, which are necessary and arguably just as important as a central services organisation. Those changes would make credit unions much more useable and viable financial services providers than they are at present.

The objectives of a central services body are perfectly sensible. The pooling of liquidity management is important if credit unions are to be competitive and professionally run. There is a need to train people in an area where there are many potential problems. The provision of automated teller machine cards for the payment of bills will be important. The legislative changes would involve arrangements to pay interest—called dividends in credit unions—in a regular way, analogous with other bodies, and to permit credit unions to borrow from other bodies so that they could constitute capital by subordinated loan. A number of those changes will be necessary when the new regulatory regimes begin this time next year. I understand that some credit unions cannot start operating until those changes have happened.

That all seems very sensible, and I congratulate the Association of British Credit Unions and Shaun Spiers, its chief executive, on the vision and leadership that they have provided. The Conservative party supports mutuals, as it supports diversification and a wide choice of financial services providers. Over the years, many of us have supported friendly societies and mutual building societies. However, so far, credit unions are immaterial in a wider UK context. With assets of only £180 million, they are tiny—as has been observed, only 0.4 per cent. of the population belong to them, compared with 25 per cent. in the United States and 50 per cent. in Ireland. The main reason is not just that credit unions are a fairly recent import from Ireland and the Caribbean, but that we already have building societies and friendly societies. Let us not forget our other mutuals when we wax keen on this new form.

Credit unions that have succeeded materially, both here and overseas, are those that are tied in with employment, particularly those provided by large

employers—British Airways is the main example, although Leeds, Birmingham and the taxi drivers' credit unions are employment-oriented. They are a low-cost and convenient benefit for an employer to offer to staff. If the credit union movement takes off in this country, as I think it will, that will be the main area in which it will succeed.

However, the movement is not the solution to the lack of financial services in deprived areas. It will become—as it has substantially in the United States—predominantly a middle-class movement. There is nothing wrong with that, or with the fact that it can help in deprived areas, as it plans to do in Leeds and Tower Hamlets, but it is much more important, as has been said, to keep post offices open. Friendly societies have an important role and banks could, too, if they would return to areas from which they have withdrawn. Worthy though the cause of credit unions is, it is mistaken to think that they provide a solution in deprived areas.

That brings me to the central services organisation. I assume that the Government have dragged their feet because it is difficult to justify providing taxpayers' money for one type of mutual and not for others. Why should friendly societies or even the many worthy remaining building societies not have similar funding? To the extent that taxpayers' money is to be made available, it should, if at all possible in the long-term, be on a self-liquidating basis—potentially by loan to be repaid by the movement, rather than by the provision of a grant.

In conclusion, the aims are excellent; the Conservative party supports mutuals and I am pleased to see some oomph behind the credit union movement.

David Taylor: If the Conservative party is as supportive of mutuals as the hon. Gentleman says, why did it stand by and let them be targeted by corporate raiders and others, the result of which is that the mutual sector has been enfeebled during the past 10 to 15 years?

Mr. Flight: We are not debating building societies. As the hon. Gentleman knows, a protection against that problem was built into the original proposals, but it proved not to work on two scores. When building societies and mutuals were liberalised, the intent was to create a fair and level playing field. However, members' ballots came to be important and building society management noted them when it need not have done. Also, methods were used to get round paying out to people who had not been members for long, some of which have been changed. The Conservative party intended to create a fair and level playing field, while offering choice. What developed was not caused by the then Government.

The regulatory changes to credit unions have mainly been sensible, and the FSA has responded to concerns that they would be over-tight on liquidity requirements. I do not see how the arrangements for money laundering and credit unions can be any different from those for any other financial intermediary. That presents a problem in deprived areas, which are essentially cash economies. I do not know how that circle will be squared. There will be a major issue about whether credit unions can be helped by larger parentages, such as Tower Hamlets, to achieve success in providing services in deprived areas.

Credit unions will grow enormously, but people should not be blind to the fact that most of their success is likely to be related to employment, as in the United States. They will probably provide services to the great rump of people in the middle of society, and will not be the key solution to increasing financial services in deprived areas.

10.47 am

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Ruth Kelly): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Thomas) for securing the debate. He and other hon. Members aired issues of real importance to the credit union movement, to the people who benefit and to others who could benefit from the services that credit unions offer. He is an extremely active champion of credit unions and their work, and I hope to work closely with him and other interested hon. Members on the issues in future.

Credit unions have an important role to play in the campaign to reduce financial exclusion. They make a real difference to the people and the communities that they serve, not only by providing financial services to which communities would often otherwise have limited access, but through their ethos of self-help and thrift, which plays a valuable role in educating people about managing their finances, bringing greater independence and security.

I assure hon. Members that the Government share their support for credit unions and their hopes for a large and flourishing credit union movement in our country. The Government have already been involved in several initiatives to help credit unions grow to realise their full potential in the United Kingdom, and we shall continue to support their further development.

There are more than 700 credit unions in Britain, with around 300,000 members and assets of about £200 million. As several hon. Members have pointed out, the development of credit unions in the UK is much smaller than in other countries. Fewer than 1 per cent. of the population are members of them, compared with around 20 per cent. in Australia, 30 per cent. in the United States and 45 per cent. in Ireland. The small size of the membership of the credit union movement in this country has arisen for several reasons. It is partly because it is relatively new here. Nevertheless, it is important and clearly has the potential to grow.

With that growth in mind, the Treasury set up the credit unions taskforce in July 1998, bringing together stakeholders from the credit union movement, along with those from the wider financial services community. The taskforce was asked to explore ways in which the banks and building societies could work more closely with credit unions to increase their effectiveness. It also looked at ways of expanding the range of services on offer from credit unions, and expanding the credit union movement as a whole.

The taskforce recommended the establishment of a central services organisation, or CSO, which in addition to offering the facilities to manage resources, would create a central pool of expertise on which credit unions could draw. The taskforce also felt that such an organisation would be a straightforward way for the banks and building societies to play their part in helping develop credit unions as complementary institutions in the financial services sector. I shall say more about that later in my speech.

[Ruth Kelly]

The Government's approach to neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion acknowledges the central importance of improving access to financial services. The social exclusion unit was set up by the Prime Minister to develop integrated and sustainable approaches to the network of problems faced by people in our most deprived neighbourhoods. The SEU established 18 policy action teams—PATs—bringing experts together with people living and working in deprived areas, to take forward an intensive programme of policy development. One of those action teams, sponsored by the Treasury, focused on issues relating to financial exclusion.

That team reported towards the end of 1999, making 44 recommendations under five headings: credit unions, banking, insurance, regulation and education. The team's recommendations reflect the complexity of the issues that make up financial exclusion, and it suggested a number of joined-up solutions. It called on central and local government, the banking and insurance industry and many other organisations to work together to deliver greater financial inclusion.

In January 2001, the SEU published a report that audited progress against the recommendations, and I am pleased to say that we are making significant progress on all the report's key recommendations, including those covering credit unions. For example, the Local Government Association has issued a good practice guide to all local authorities concentrating on the development of sustainable credit unions. It is now up to local authorities to act on the guidance, but the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions is continuing to lend support in what is, of course, an on-going process.

The Treasury's role is to help create the right conditions for credit unions to expand. Earlier this year, we introduced two changes to give credit unions greater freedom. We increased the maximum loan repayment periods that credit unions may offer borrowing members, and we increased the amount that junior members may save with a credit union, bringing it into line with the amount that adults may save.

We shall also be introducing a further package of three deregulatory changes, when the relevant sections of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 are brought into effect on 1 July 2002. The forthcoming changes will abolish the maximum limit on the number of members a credit union may have, and abolish the statutory distinction between the large credit unions that are able to take advantage of the additional powers conferred by a section 11C certificate, and other credit unions. They will also abolish the requirement on credit unions to dispose of repossessed collateral as soon as possible.

We also plan to consult on a range of further measures aimed at relaxing some of the restrictions on credit unions' operational powers. This exercise will include a number of proposals that have been put forward by the sector, many of which remove or reduce legislative constraints, and which will also include some of the proposals that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West made today.

I know that these measures are eagerly awaited in the movement, and I am keen that we make progress with the assembly of a package of measures for public consultation as soon as possible. I am also aware that it would be helpful to introduce those deregulatory changes that consultees consider desirable at the same time as the Financial Services Authority commences its regulation of credit unions, next year. A great deal of work still needs to be done before we can release the consultation document, but I hope that we shall be in a position to start the consultation process before the end of the summer.

The movement is known for its diversity, so I hope that when the time comes as many credit unions as possible—large and small, community, associational and employee based—will respond, to enable us to take account of all the different perspectives and needs before we come to take decisions about how to proceed.

The Treasury has also used the Financial Services and Markets Act to bring credit unions under the rule-making powers of the Financial Services Authority. In future, credit union members will be given similar protection to that afforded to depositors with banks and building societies.

The Government received strong support from across the movement in November 1999 when we decided to transfer the regulation of credit unions to the FSA. Since then, the FSA has been working to develop a regulatory structure that is proportionate to the nature and scale of the risks that credit unions face. As several hon. Members have pointed out, the response has been overwhelmingly positive, despite some concerns about whether the degree of regulation would be proportionate to the credit union sector. The FSA has been paying close attention, and responding positively, to such concerns.

All hon. Members mentioned the need for a central services organisation. The taskforce and the policy action team both pointed out how establishing such an organisation would be to the advantage of the credit union movement in this country. That has always been a project for the movement to take forward, and the taskforce felt that the banks and building societies could usefully support it. However, the Treasury has maintained regular contact with the Association of British Credit Unions, which is finalising its business proposals in consultation with other key stakeholders.

Under the latest plans, a CSO would offer all credit unions—regardless of the representative body to which they might be affiliated—a finance facility that should be able to achieve better rates of return on deposits, assistance with liquidity management and help with training and development. It would, however, remain a matter for each credit union to decide whether to use any or all of the facilities on offer, which means that the take-up, or otherwise, of those services would rely exclusively on their overall desirability and cost.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West, among others, questioned me about the timing and financing of a CSO. I hope that the organisation will be set up soon, but, as I said, it is primarily a matter for the movement to take forward.

Mr. Flight: Have the Government worked out how the proposal will be financed? Many hon. Members are aware of discussions taking place with banks and, not unreasonably, many banks have taken the view that it is not fair, when they are being leant on to finance the universal bank, to be asked to finance a future competitor as well. The crucial issue seems to be where the money will come from.

Ruth Kelly: My view is that the crucial issue at present is how the movement will take the matter forward and finalise its plans. After that, it will be possible to examine funding arrangements. However, I think that banks and building societies have a duty to support any organisation that is set up.

Mr. Love: Will my hon. Friend undertake today to bring the parties together, to try to find an effective and quick way of setting up a central services organisation?

Ruth Kelly: I certainly will undertake to try to facilitate those discussions. I am interested in any proposals from hon. Members that might advance the process. I would also seriously consider representations about the future work programme of the CSO. I hope that, once it is established, credit unions throughout the movement will want to support it and take advantage of the services that it offers. I believe that a CSO would provide an important foundation for a stronger credit union movement in the future, and I fully intend to keep in touch with developments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West mentioned the role that regional development agencies, the Housing Corporation and housing associations could play in developing the credit union movement. That is primarily a matter for my colleagues at the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. However, I understand the significance of the points that my hon. Friend raised, and I shall consider the matter in the hope that progress can be made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Mr. Truswell) and other hon. Members considered the role that credit unions can play in their localities. Clearly, they have an important role in the development of local community life, as well as in encouraging the virtues of thrift. There is clearly much scope for the future expansion of credit unions, not only in size and membership but with respect to their products. However, quite a lot of flexibility exists in them already, and I believe that some credit unions already offer facilities such as mortgages. When the relevant powers are finally transferred to the FSA in July 2002, large credit unions will be able to offer mortgages or loans over a period of up to 15 years. I am sure that some will want to take advantage of those facilities.

Credit unions make a significant contribution to tackling financial exclusion. I am keen for them to bring the benefits of their unique approach to many more of those who lack access to mainstream financial services.

The Government support credit unions, and on the Government's behalf I should like to thank all the dedicated people who run them, many of whom are volunteers. They do valuable work for their members and for all the people of this country, which is why we have, and will continue to encourage, a strong and flourishing credit union movement.

Upland Farming

11am

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): Thank you, Mr. Winterton, for chairing this morning's proceedings. I am pleased to have the opportunity to initiate a debate on an issue that is of critical importance to my Northumberland constituency, to that of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—I am pleased to see him here today—and to those of all Members who represent upland areas of the north. Naturally, there will be considerable discussion of the foot and mouth epidemic, which is still very real, particularly in Yorkshire, where there is a regular stream of new cases. Today, however, I want to focus on the legacy of foot and mouth and the crisis facing upland hill farmers in the north.

Some of the legacy of foot and mouth is glaringly obvious to anybody who journeys in Cumbria or in Northumberland: empty fields, generations of breeding wiped out, and ruined lives. My right hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), who I am pleased to see in his place, will have witnessed that at first hand. His constituency continues to suffer the live effects of foot and mouth. In mine, there has not been a case for several months, although a couple of weeks ago a renowned flock of sheep was slaughtered as a precautionary measure.

What is not obvious to the public is the impending welfare crisis looming in the upland areas, as our farmers ponder the fate of hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of unsaleable sheep. Nor is the further fall in farm incomes obvious. Before the foot and mouth epidemic, farming incomes, particularly those of hill farmers, were historically low. Some estimated their annual incomes just before the epidemic at about £4,000, although others would describe that as extremely optimistic. Since the outbreak, incomes have fallen even further, and I shall say a few words about the recent effect on prices.

A third important aspect that is also not particularly visible is that, in respect of dealing with the aftermath of the crisis and the future of farming, we are suffering from a lack of political leadership. I do not mean to be aggressively critical of the Minister. Decisions on the future of farming are extremely complex and detailed, but the Government must establish their promised foot and mouth inquiry. They should also set up the policy commission that I believe was promised in the Labour party manifesto, so that the future of farming can be examined. We are just two days away from the recess, but that commission has yet to be established.

The matter is urgent, given the problem of unsaleable sheep and the fact that we are about six weeks away from the deadline for decisions. Traditionally, in six weeks' time the sale of light lambs from the high hills begins. In my own constituency, the Hexham and Northern marts will sell tens of thousands of light lambs—Herdwicks, Swaledales and Blackfaces—during August and September. Normally, they are exported to Mediterranean countries. Southern France, Italy and Spain in particular delight in these small, tasty lambs, which the UK market has rejected. We import most Mediterranean food and eat it with great enthusiasm, but the traditional light lamb of the hills of

[Mr. Peter Atkinson]

Northumberland, the Lake district and Yorkshire, which number about 2 million, are rejected by the market. Given that we cannot export a single lamb, the crisis in those areas will be considerable.

It is interesting to recall that before the foot and mouth disease epidemic, we exported 30 per cent. of our lamb crop. At best estimate, the epidemic has taken out 3 million lambs or 15 per cent., which leaves about 3 million lambs that cannot be exported and will have to be absorbed into the UK market. That has caused the price to fall and it will fall further. A 20 kg Suffolk-cross lamb currently fetches around £27, which is about £12 less than last year, and the main sales have not yet started. It costs around £30 to put a lamb into the market, so hard-hit farmers will lose around £3 per lamb.

A solution to the problem of light lambs might be to extend the welfare slaughter scheme to them, but if the meat is sold in supermarkets, it will displace meat from normal fat lambs that would have been sold instead. A more palatable alternative might be a slaughter scheme and long-term store. However, at some stage the meat will have to come out of cold store and enter the market. There would also be a huge logistical problem because slaughtering 2 million sheep is a huge task and abattoirs in the north-east would be unable to cope.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Gentleman will be aware of a further problem if animals are sent to abattoirs on the other side of the border in Scotland because, despite earlier help from the Scottish Executive, there is a ban on the movement of animals across the border for slaughter—even clean animals from clean areas.

Mr. Atkinson: I am aware of that and the Minister may be able to explain the mystery. We were told originally that animals from Northumberland could go for slaughter in Scotland but, as the right hon. Gentleman said, that is not happening. There has been a breakdown in communication between the Scottish Department with responsibility for agriculture and our own Department.

Apart from light lambs and surplus fat lambs, a third problem to add to the general misery concerns breeding ewe lambs, of which the north of England is a major producer. They are traditionally sold for breeding to farmers in the south, Yorkshire and the west country, but they cannot be sent there because of movement restrictions. Farmers in the south do not want to buy stock from infected areas and prefer to buy from non-infected areas for the sake of safety. One cannot blame them, but there will be a considerable surplus of breeding ewe lambs on the market. Farmers in Cumbria, Northumberland and Yorkshire who have been hit by foot and mouth disease and had their flocks slaughtered may buy some and opportunist farmers with spare grazing may also buy them, but there will be a considerable surplus.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred to the problem of moving stock to Scotland for slaughter, but an additional problem for Northumberland in particular is that many of our beef cattle are sold to Scotland as store cattle and that trade has been stopped, so there will be a problem at the back end of this year as those calves come to market.

The Minister could help by sorting out the confusion concerning the movement of fat lambs which cannot be sent to market because of movement restrictions. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced in the House recently that the movement restrictions were being lifted. That was welcomed as good news because it meant that we could sell fat lambs from the north to the large abattoirs in the midlands and the south. A problem has arisen since then because the Department insists that the transporter carrying the livestock makes the journey from farm or collection centre to abattoir non-stop, but the drivers' hours regulation specifies that they cannot drive for more than four hours—it may be four and a half hours—without a break. That effectively means that a livestock transporter can go no further than it could drive in four hours; for the sake of argument, that would be about 160 miles. The big abattoirs in the midlands are therefore out of reach for our fat lambs. Farmers in Northumberland have to sell their lambs to local abattoirs, which are accustomed to cope with 3,000 or 4,000 lambs and are largely in the butchery and industrial trade. At this time of year, however, the Hexham mart alone would be selling about 8,000 or 10,000 lambs. Clearly, that is a problem.

I mentioned a political vacuum at the top and that needs to be addressed urgently. As we know, the system of funding hill farmers has changed from the hill farm compensatory allowance to what is called the hill farming allowance, but it is still unclear how it will affect farmers in upland areas, particularly in respect of their income. It may place onerous and unreasonable inspection and environmental burdens on farmers who have already suffered a huge drop in income.

We need a proper announcement about the foot and mouth inquiry, and the policy commission to be set up so that it can begin to take evidence and consider how farming might develop in future. I did not hear the Secretary of State speak yesterday, but I have seen a press cutting or two. It seems to me that she said nothing that indicated to farmers Government thinking on the future of farming. The German Agriculture Minister made some suggestions about less intensive and more organic production. I do not agree with those suggestions at all. I would sooner side with Lord Haskins, whose recent report presented a slightly different vision of farming: the need to improve efficiency, cut costs and become more competitive. I believe that that is the inevitable future of farming.

We do not want mixed messages. We need to know the Government's thinking on how farming will develop. The Government must announce as quickly as possible whether they intend to introduce a buy-up scheme—a buy-up to slaughter scheme or a buy-up for storage scheme. Farmers need to be reassured that there is a Government out there who care about them. They have lost their Ministry of Agriculture and they want to know if the new Department will encourage and take care of them.

Finally, Northumberland, Yorkshire, Cumbria and the other upland areas have a wonderful tradition of livestock breeding. It is always said that arable farmers are trained, but livestock farmers are born. Handling

and rearing livestock to a high quality is a skill that has been passed from generation to generation in farming families in upland areas. Farmers with that skill have a future; they have a knowledge and understanding of the breed. The United Kingdom, among other European countries, has grass, so it is capable of being a major and efficient producer of meat. We must know, with certainty, what the future is, and that is what the Government must urgently address.

11.13 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am glad that the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) introduced this debate. He is right to point out that there is a crisis in northern upland farming. The boundary between my constituency and his passes through the Cheviot hills—one of the most drastically affected upland areas—and the problems that he described are ones that I, too, have experienced. It might be hard to find our constituency boundary in that vast and largely empty territory if it were not for the small number of people who maintain the hills in the form that tourists want to see. They husband and shepherd sheep flocks primarily, and hill cattle to a more limited extent, not to mention wild goats, for which a warden has recently been appointed. It is a remarkable area, but it could face a drastic loss of the qualities that visitors appreciate if upland farming is not rescued from crisis.

The crisis began some time ago. The dangers to upland farming have continued over a long period. They were, of course, exacerbated by the BSE crisis, so the foot and mouth outbreak hit an industry that was already in a very poor state. The difference between the current crisis and the foot and mouth outbreak in the 1960s is that this time it hit an industry in much worse condition.

We have had many debates and questions about the details of what the Government are doing and what they should be doing, so we do not want to go over that ground today. However, foot and mouth is a negative influence on the state of upland farming and there is continued anxiety about what will happen. Farmers report that vets are warning them of the possibility of a further outbreak due to the identification through blood testing of sheep that are carrying the disease. There is therefore a great deal of anxiety about whether it will break out again. The most drastic effects are the loss of lamb exports and the complete disruption of the trade.

As people look ahead, there is a feeling that many who have had sheep slaughtered, particularly those whose sheep either had foot and mouth or went into welfare slaughter, will not go back into the industry. Hill farmers traditionally provided lowland sheep farmers with breeding stock. The hill farmers are looking at people that they know in the lowlands and observing that they are unlikely to go back into large-scale sheep farming. There will therefore be no market for the breeding stock from the hills, and that is a major worry for hill farmers.

Hill sheep are of course an organic product in all but name. They are not registered as an organic product but the way in which they are produced—grazing naturally on our hills—makes them, in the sense that most people would understand it, an organic product, the future of which is seriously threatened.

We need to look at what is happening in the lowlands. Prices are down from 175p to 125p a kilo on lowland Suffolk lambs. I was talking to a farmer who was selling horned Blackface sheep for carcass export at 270p a kilo before the foot and mouth outbreak; after the outbreak the price is 150p a kilo because there is no export market. No business can stand that level of reduction in prices, and certainly not the frail hill farming industry. Hill farmers cannot continue taking less than the cost of production, which they are doing now and have sometimes had to do in the past. However, in the past the good times have evened out the bad times. Now there is a run of bad prices and no prospect of the situation improving.

Most hill farmers say that they would like to get their returns on livestock in the marketplace. In principle, they are looking not for a subsidised market but for a genuine one. However, they do not have a genuine market because there is an export ban. The Government must recognise that we are in an artificial situation and any intervention that they undertake is not part of a policy of market distortion. They must try to preserve the industry so that it can get back into a position where it can compete in a genuine market, which we do not have at the moment.

Some aids that are meant to help hill farmers are not helping at the moment. The sheep annual premium—the headage payment—is calculated on the price in Europe. The price in Europe is high at the moment because our hill farmers cannot get their lambs there. Their premium is down due to the combined effects of the high European price and the exchange rate. At a time when the system should be helping hill farmers, it is giving them the lowest possible annual premium. The number of ewes has decreased by 25 per cent. in about a decade. Let us consider what has happened to them since the foot and mouth outbreak: 20 per cent. have been culled and 30 per cent. used to be exported, leaving 10 per cent. of ewes from that reduced flock on the market.

We need to know what short-term measures the Government are prepared to take to try to stabilise the market and what the long-term prospects, which are especially important to hill farmers, are. Do the answers lie in environmentally focused support? That is the message that farmers have been getting for some time and we are all party to giving it to them. Given the way in which the economics of farming is going, my party believes that there must be environmentally focused support to avoid the loss of farming from the hills. That must be the way forward, but that has not yet been proved in the eyes of hill farmers because there are an awful lot of gaps and missing figures in the equation. If the answer for the future of upland farming lies in a substantial environmental contribution from the nation, there are still problems. First, livestock are central to conservation. We cannot pay farmers to mow the Cheviots and clip the grass on the Ministry of Defence ranges that cover large parts of my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Hexham. Yet the grass hillsides form the scene that the tourists expect—it is they that make the Cheviots so distinct.

Livestock, therefore, cannot be written out of the equation. There must be some way of running a viable livestock business in the hills, even at the lower levels of intensity that we now have. To make a proper contribution to preserving the traditional upland

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

environment—as the national park authorities believe that we should—there must be a livestock presence, which cannot be allowed to collapse.

On an environmental basis, help must aid smaller as well as larger farmers. I was talking to a farmer who was investigating the countryside stewardship scheme. In order to participate, he would have to get rid of three quarters of his livestock to receive £2,000 income. However, he is looking ahead at ways of keeping the farm going for his son, so that there will be a future generation hill farmer there to look after the hills. Obviously, the scheme will not work for him. It will work for a large farmer, with a big acreage, who can get tens of thousands of pounds from stewardship schemes. That is probably a sensible bargain from the nation's point of view, but it will not work for the smaller hill farmer. That must be carefully examined.

A background to the situation is the attrition of services in remote areas, which makes it increasingly difficult for people to live and work there. This week, the county council told us that it plans to charge £300 to every pupil over 16 to travel to school. What does that say to a farmer living in the hills, or even more, to a farm worker such as a shepherd living in a remote position on a modest income with a family of youngsters going to school? There are many other examples of how the attrition of services is making it very difficult to keep farmers or shepherds in the hills.

Many discussions take place on the assumption that we are talking only about farmers. Believe it or not, there are still people employed in agriculture who draw a wage and do not have assets that could contribute to their retirement. Their income is limited, but their future is absolutely vital to the hills. The whole cultural life of the Cheviots has been built round shepherds, who have included great musicians, even poets and all sorts of people of tremendous talent who have lived and worked in the hills.

The Government play a large role in the area and are vital to the equation because they, in the form of the Ministry of Defence, are the biggest landowner in much of my constituency. In many respects, they have been a conserving farming landlord. Much of the area concerned is also national park. Within the area, there is short-term despair and long-term pessimism. I hope that the Minister can dispel that despair and change that pessimism by practical proposals to make farmers realise that it is worth hanging on in there, and that there is a future for hill farming. At the moment, they do not feel that there is one.

11.23 am

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): I do not normally tune into "Farming Today", because it is at quarter to 6, which I find somewhat premature. However, when one has hayfever and catarrh, one often ends up listening to programmes when one did not intend to. I caught the back end of Lord Whitty on that programme, following which it was commented that he would make a statement in the House of Lords today that would be repeated in the Commons. I thought that that was an interesting inversion of constitutional practice, and I look forward to any enlightenment that the Minister can give about it.

The Minister for Rural Affairs (Alun Michael): Lord Whitty is responding today to a starred Question on the subject in the Lords. I think that he was asked what his response to it was going to be and that he indicated that he would make his response clear.

Mr. Curry: So we are going to hear something about the matter. I do not know what form that will be in—it does not sound as though it will be a statement.

Alun Michael: It will not be a statement.

Mr. Curry: I am glad that we have got that sorted out. I beg your pardon for the diversion, Mr. Winterton.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) because, in giving the broad picture, he has precisely set the scene for the particular cases that I wish to raise. By way of background, since the general election was called, in my constituency and the immediate neighbouring constituencies, mainly in the Ribble valley in Lancashire, we are approaching 100 outbreaks of foot and mouth disease, 400 farms culled as contiguous premises and 300,000 animals slaughtered.

I want to focus on a particular category of farmers: those who are not afflicted by foot and mouth disease, but are unable to carry on their business because they are in areas that are under heavy restrictions. I have enormous sympathy with farmers who have been culled out as either infected premises or contiguous premises. Although they receive payments for that compulsory slaughter programme, I would not wish to minimise the sheer trauma that such culling brings to a family, especially when they have built up a herd over a long period. We know about the problems to business that have come increasingly to the fore in relation to the lack of cash caused by the decrease in tourist numbers. However, the plight of farmers who are still trying to make a livelihood is too often overlooked. I therefore want to do something that I rarely do, and highlight two individual cases that illustrate the problems of those farmers, who are all in the uplands and less-favoured areas. Almost all the infected areas in my constituency are upland areas.

I start with the case of Gary and Gill Schofield, a young couple from Heber farm in Buckden, which is right at the top end of Wharfedale in the high hills. Mr. Schofield is only 33. He has been a tenant farmer for seven years and has a small family and a big overdraft, with loans on top of that. He raises 150 beef animals and has 900 ewes, which normally yield a crop of about 1,200 lambs. Because he is in environmental schemes, which are specifically aimed at reducing levels of fertility by restricting the use of fertiliser, there is not enough fertility on the land to keep the lambs over winter. He could, at a pinch, keep his breeding sheep, but nothing more, because he does not have enough lowland ground and snow covers the tops in winter. So his only substantial income comes from selling his lambs down the hill—and one cannot sell lambs at the moment.

What would be Mr. Schofield's normal pattern of business if foot and mouth had not happened? In September or October he would sell his breeding lambs down to the lowland and sell his draught sheep—ewes that have done three or four years' service breeding in the uplands—down the hill to do another three or four years in the lowland in the milder conditions, because they can no longer take the more severe upland conditions, but can still have a productive life in the kinder conditions in the south. He would also take down his male lambs—wethers—while the half-horned lambs would go to export. The mule wethers—crossbreeds—would be sold as store lambs or fattened on the lowland, perhaps until after Christmas.

What is the situation now? He has to keep his breeding lambs and draught lambs on the farm because he cannot sell them off it. He has to buy in expensive food to keep them going. They occupy the land that is needed for his normal breeding flock, which is therefore over-grazed. The land is under pressure and the stock is under pressure, so a welfare problem is looming. He wants to keep his breeding sheep—that is the heart of his enterprise—but he cannot keep his male lambs and his mules. He also has store cattle, which he is keeping on and fattening rather than selling them in July at 10 months old, which is what he would normally be doing now. That means that he needs bought-in feed, which sucks in capital, and the store cattle occupy the cattle sheds needed for his over-wintered cattle.

Mr. Schofield faces an impossible situation. He is left in complete uncertainty, with no information about what will happen, and he has had no income since February. This young couple are not dog-and-stick farmers; they are really trying to make a go of things in difficult circumstances, putting their whole life into it. His business is under pressure, his stock is under pressure and his land is under pressure. At some point there must be an intervention to relieve that pressure and make sure that he receives some income.

Another young couple, Matthew and Tracy Harrison, live at Stories House farm in Elslack, which is up the Aire valley from Skipton and close to the heart of the foot and mouth outbreak. It is in the Ribble valley, which is the epicentre of the epidemic. Tracy Harrison wrote to me. I did not solicit the letter; it just happened to come in the post when I was applying for the debate. She said that while she can appreciate the problems faced by farmers when their livestock has been culled, an income could be generated. The cleansing operation itself is remunerated and there is a payment for the stock. She wrote:

"I am bitter, and for this I do not apologise. We run a herd of suckler cows and a flock of 80 sheep. We have been placed in a D band twice, for having feed delivered so that our sheep don't starve and our lambs have a chance. Both have been lifted after the 1 month period expired. After the expiry of the last one we were able to find a buyer in Huddersfield to take last years bulls (12 in total), but the licence took 11 days to come through, even though we faxed the applications to try and speed things up. Sadly in the same post came the notice that we were in the Settle Special Area and that all licences had been retracted. Thoughts of easing the overcrowding were fading. Not to mention the money that is our income. We don't milk and therefore have no regular cheque to keep us ticking.

We are now in a D band that has no end. 20 lambs were able to be taken to the slaughterhouse".

Tracy Harrison then described the circuitous route that she was advised to take to the slaughterhouse and said that it took a two-hour discussion to prevent her from having to comply with those instructions. She continued:

"The last licence for taking 25 lambs was applied for on Friday June 22. Dates from the last infected premises were counted and a date for Thursday 28 June was arranged with the slaughterhouse and the vet who was to inspect them. Wednesday 27 June brought a call from the vets who stated the licence had not been faxed and could we chase it up...The second call was disastrous because the dates quoted back at me were different from the ones stated...The licence would not be issued.

Tracy Harrison said that the goalposts had been moved. She goes on:

"Legislation now prevents us from moving anything to slaughter. We need this income. A vet comes every two days from DEFRA to inspect all our stock and a local vet would come and inspect our lambs prior to the movement to the slaughterhouse. What else can be done to safeguard the consumer? This legislation is ridiculous and uncalled for, unless bankruptcy is the aim of the Government.

My husband and I are both under 40, with 3 children under 10 and in no rush to retire. Our standard of living was not superb in the good old days of 2000, but at least we could look forward to making things better. It's not working though, and we need help."

As I said, I do not usually quote individual cases, but these two young modern farmers are desperate to make a go of things in the dales. They may have the farming industry in their genes, but they also learnt about it through a formal education. They are receptive to modern schemes and environmental programmes. They do not believe that agriculture will continue unchanged. It may be regarded as a time-honoured tradition, but activities change with the time. The Harrisons are in a terrible situation, because they cannot farm. Farmers who have been culled out suffer such trauma, but provided that they receive their cheques, they can begin to think about how they will take forward their businesses. Although the delays in receiving cheques are the subject of a different debate, those farmers can contemplate the development of their enterprise.

We must bear in mind, however, farmers who are caught in infected areas and who have already suffered years of economic recession. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham said, they have seen the mechanisms change by which hill allowances are paid. As the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, the sheep premium is at an all-time low because it is based on the European price. Those farmers have nothing. They are stuck. An enormous welfare problem is building up with regard to the stock, as is an environmental problem because the welfare schemes will be shot to pieces. There is no choice other than for them to be shot to pieces. The only way to assist is to let some of the steam out of the pressure cooker. If that does not happen, the farmers will not be able to continue. The land will suffer, a welfare problem will result, and not merely the ecology but the business environment of such a precious area as the dales will go down with it. I hope that the Minister understands the problem. There must be an intervention to take the pressure off those farmers, or they will not be around this time next year.

11.34 am

Mr. Colin Breed (South-East Cornwall): I and my party heartily welcome the Government's intention to introduce genuine medium-term and long-term strategies and a commission on food and farming, which should specify precisely the future for agriculture in general and hill farming in particular. This morning's debate is about the short term and urgent matters.

Slightly disappointingly, we still do not know who will lead the commission or its intended timetable. A fundamental question is in the minds of an awful lot of hill farmers today: is there a future in hill farming? They are wondering whether to do whatever is necessary now and jump all the hurdles and whether, having tackled all the logistical and other problems that have been so eloquently described this morning, their upland farming ultimately has a future. That is one of the biggest questions that must be answered as quickly as possible, even though we must take evidence. One problem is that the future will relate more to environmental stewardship than to agriculture, and that will not suit everyone. It is not how many see their future in farming, but it is fundamental to what happens to people who operate on the ground.

We are talking about the short term and urgent matters. In the short-term category, it has been clear for some time that hill farm incomes have been getting lower and are too low. Of necessity, people, including those in hill farms, question the likelihood of those incomes being driven up through farming activity. Prices are still weak and seem unlikely in the short term to improve, and it is almost impossible for many farmers even to sell and therefore receive any income at all.

Hill farming allowances are being considered. That has changed the way in which support is received and created considerable alarm and despondency in the hill farming community. Unsurprisingly, therefore, many are wondering whether now is the time to give up. That will have huge implications for many different Government policies. Perhaps the Government could help in a planned and managed way by reconsidering the potential of a retirement scheme. I know that the Government have considered the matter several times and have decided that such a scheme would not be appropriate, even though common agricultural policy funding could be used for it. I urge the Government to reconsider opportunities for a relatively small-scale retirement scheme that could put some structure into how farmers organise their futures. A retirement scheme should be part of the overall broad strategy to help hill farming.

The export of so-called light lambs is such an urgent problem that we are dealing with weeks, not even months. When I heard hon. Members speak about welfare, it struck me that there is a welfare problem not only with animals but with farmers and their families. We need to consider that and what farmers want from the Government. Obviously, they know that there are huge problems in the aftermath of foot and mouth disease and so on, but we need a clearly thought-out policy to deal with the immediate situation.

It would be nice to use all the available evidence and set a policy in the context of a medium and long-term strategy. However, we do not have time to consider all the ramifications of subsidy mechanisms, problems with compensation, the logistical aspects of any welfare disposal scheme and the implications for the market. If we promote greater use of lamb and sheep meat, that might have a knock-on effect on other sectors and result in lower sales of beef and pork. It could take months to bring all those issues together into a comprehensively thought-out plan and strategy, but we may have a monumental problem in a few weeks' time.

The Government must come up with urgent short-term measures to deal with the real problems that have been described this morning. The word that everyone wants to see in Government policy and decision making is "flexibility". Inflexibility has been a feature of the implementation of decisions in the aftermath of foot and mouth in my part of the world and in the north. Having jumped over a number of hurdles, farmers have been obstructed by the way in which regulations have been implemented.

Unless there is real flexibility and management on the ground to deal with the circumstances of the dozens of individuals who have been affected, we shall have a huge problem in a few weeks' time. It will be interesting to hear Lord Whitty's answer to the relevant starred question this afternoon.

This debate is taking place only two days before Parliament rises for the summer recess, and many people will be looking to the Government to make a reasonable announcement about how they intend to tackle a problem that is likely to come to a head while Parliament is in recess. I hope that the Minister will provide at least some comfort by saying that the Government have not only considered the issues, but have clear plans for solving that problem.

11.43 am

Mr. James Paice (South-East Cambridgeshire): I declare an interest that is properly recorded in the Register of Members' Interests, although it is not directly related to upland farming.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on initiating the debate, which comes just two weeks after a similar debate that was secured by my right hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry). Two members of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and the hon. Member for South-East Cornwall (Mr. Breed) have made the same points that were made then and rightly so.

During the previous debate, which I think was the Minister's first appearance in this Chamber in his new incarnation, he rightly said that this forum provides the opportunity for a less partisan approach and a greater exploration of the issues. I agree with him entirely. I hope that he will accept that it behoves him to respond as fully as he can to the various points that have been raised and to the questions that have been asked. He has a considerable amount of time available and I certainly do not intend to encroach too much on it. He will have ample opportunity to reply to the debate.

I should like briefly to refer to the previous debate in this Chamber. The point was made, which the Minister fully accepted, that in the absence of proper information the rumour mill runs riot. All sorts of stories do the rounds in the farming world and in the farming press, for that matter. They may or may not have any

foundation, but they are bound to occur when there is no proper information. I cited the case of a flock of sheep slaughtered in Wiltshire the week before the debate. The Minister said that he would come back to me when he had received more information. I do not know whether he can do so yet. Nobody knew whether there had been an outbreak or why a flock was being slaughtered in an area that had been free of the disease for some weeks.

As my right hon. and hon. Friends have pointed out, the disease continues. Although all the epidemiologists told us that it would have a long tail, there is no sign yet of that tail shortening. It seems to run somewhere between three to five outbreaks daily, with no lessening. We are now in July, although one might not think so today, and we have had quite a lot of much warmer weather and sunshine. We were told that such weather would help to overcome the disease because the virus would be less viable and more quickly destroyed. There is a great deal of worry about what is really happening.

The other issue that was touched on in the previous debate is serological testing, which we believe is being carried out on quite a large scale. I hope that the Minister can tell us a bit more about that testing and its structure. It is obviously not just to establish where there may have been undetected infection: is it concentrating on certain areas or types of sheep or farming?

Mr. Curry: If farmers on the periphery of infected zones or within them are to be able to restock farms that have been culled out, large-scale serological testing is vital so that farmers who are being restocked have the assurance that they are not importing the problem.

Mr. Paice: My right hon. Friend is entirely right. I referred in the debate two weeks ago to the conflict that arises when some farmers opt to restock with sentinel animals and others opt to be clear for four months. If a sentinel animal goes down with the disease it can destroy a neighbouring farm's opportunity. That is a serious issue and I hope that the Minister will address it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham rightly highlighted the impending problems of the sheep and hill cattle industry, which I referred to a fortnight ago. It was widely referred to in the debate on the Floor of the House last Thursday and again today. By reciting the problems of Mr. and Mrs. Schofield and Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, my right hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon illustrated the problems in a way that simply talking about national figures of 5 million sheep cannot do. He graphically demonstrated how serious the problems are for those who desperately need to get rid of some of their stock this autumn, partly to generate cash flow and partly because they do not have the physical resources to keep them as they have neither buildings nor feed.

Some farmers sell ewe lambs down the hill, as my right hon. Friend said, for others to keep on as breeding ewes in my part of the world. It is essential that those new lambs are kept alive whenever possible, because the consequential cost to the sheep industry would otherwise be disastrous. The problem is that, even if the farmers find some tack or agistment—whatever the word may be in a particular area to describe overwintering on someone else's land—in an affected area and are allowed to move their stock, they do not have the money to pay for that.

Almost all right hon. and hon. Members have referred to light lambs that are just beginning to come on stream and the absence of a market for them. I hope that the Government will not allow the controversy over live exports to blur the issue. The question of whether lambs are sent alive or in carcass form is secondary to finding a solution to the problem. I am not suggesting that we re-open exports any quicker than would be wise, but we must work out what is to happen to those light lambs. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham rightly said, even if we could persuade supermarkets and shops to take them, they would only replace other lambs, or red meats as the hon. Member for South-East Cornwall said.

I make no apology for returning to questions that I asked the Minister in the House last week, and I hope that he will now give us answers, because the industry wants to hear them. It is being constructive about possible ways forward and, having seen its correspondence with the Minister's colleagues and officials, I know that these points have all been put in writing during the past weeks. Will the Government allow any live sales to take place outside the infected areas? Sales could take place in East Anglia, where there is traditionally one big sale per year—not of upland sheep, although I appreciate that upland sheep would not often come into it.

What does the Minister think about the Scottish highlands, which is another provisionally free area? Huge sales of sheep traditionally take place at Lairg and other places in August and September. Will the Government allow those markets to take place? We must consider also the licensing system. My understanding is that the licensing system for the transport of animals allows movement only for breeding or slaughter. Will the Government amend the regulations to allow movement for further growing and fattening, assuming that other criteria are met? There is also the issue of a welfare scheme for light lambs, as my hon. Friend mentioned.

I asked last week about corridors through infected areas, which would allow sheep to move from one provisionally free area to another. I cite all the sheep in the north of Scotland, to which I have just referred. Many of those sheep could come to central and eastern England as either store lambs for fattening or ewe lambs for breeding stock. The Government have already accepted that we can transport livestock from an infected area to an abattoir in a free area for slaughter. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham described the problems with drivers' hours on that, but the principle is conceded. The Government should designate one or two road corridors through south Scotland and northern England, so that we can move the sheep in northern Scotland to areas where they are required. That would be of some help.

Those ideas have all been put to the Minister previously, but before I give him ample time to reply, I should speak about other issues relating to the foot and mouth crisis and the uplands. I am beginning to pick up information about the clean-up process that is being undertaken on farms that are being slaughtered out. People who have gone through that awful experience have told me that the process is becoming more inconsistent. At the outset, farm tools and machinery had to be individually disinfected; cobbled floors and

[Mr. Paice]

flagstones had to be lifted and cleaned and farms were not passed if the flooring of livestock areas was impaired. When high-pressure washers are used regularly, they wear holes in the concrete. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did not allow potholes to remain and in most cases reached an agreement with the farmer that the Department would pay for the manpower and the farmer would purchase the concrete—a perfectly reasonable compromise. Now, however, farms that previously would not have been passed are being passed although the stated cleaning requirements have only been partially met.

Alun Michael: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. As he has raised some anxieties, I extend to him my invitation to hon. Members in previous debates to provide me with information—the why, when and wherefore—about anything that appears to be inconsistent or wrong. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that rural myths circulate in the same way as urban myths. A story is put about, but no one can put a finger on its origins. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall investigate anything that needs investigation and try to ensure that inconsistencies are dealt with. However, if we do not get the information directly, and have only a general account of a suspicion of a developing problem, it is difficult to take the necessary action.

Mr. Paice: The Minister makes a reasonable point. Subject only to the agreement of the people who provide me with information, I am happy to pass the details to the Minister. He referred to rural myths, which arise because of a lack of information, a point that I made earlier. The clean-up process needs to be tackled with consistency, according to what is acceptable.

The Minister will no doubt have seen a copy of last week's *Farming News*, which reports the problem of the payment of welfare cheques. I understand that 97 per cent. of farmers who put animals into the welfare disposal scheme do not receive the money within the 21-day target set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Worse still, a quarter of applicants are waiting more than 50 days for their cheques. Although I do not have the details of individual cases, the matter is reported in the press and I hope that the Minister will look into it.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will forgive me for referring to a case in his constituency—he may also have received copies of the correspondence from Northumberland Estates about problems in the uplands concerning grouse shooting. I hope for a moment that we can put to one side people's different views about grouse shooting, which is a huge economic activity and thus vital to welfare and employment in the uplands.

Mr. Beith: Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I want to say that not only have I received the correspondence, but the Minister handed me a reply to my letter on the subject at the start of the debate. The Department yesterday issued a press release indicating that grouse shooting would be open under licence in what appears to be quite a liberal regime. The hon. Gentleman is welcome to ask the Minister to repeat what was stated in reply to the debate.

Mr. Paice: I am delighted that I gave way to the right hon. Gentleman, who gave first-hand answers and stopped me pursuing an issue that has already been resolved.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. The agent of Northumberland Estates has obviously been very busy. I have not yet had my reply from the Minister but I reinforce what my hon. Friend said. In my constituency and in the north Pennines, grouse shooting is a huge and significant industry. It attracts large numbers of extremely wealthy people who stay in local hotels, which employ people for the shooting season. The proposed restrictions would have devastated the economy.

Mr. Paice: I look forward to the Minister's confirmation of what has apparently appeared in at least one letter of reply. I have not yet written to the Minister on the matter, because the letter went to my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (Mr. Yeo), who passed it to me for today's debate.

The next issue that I want to raise concerns the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs. Hon. Members may wonder why I am digressing but, in fact, the foot and mouth crisis seriously affected that organisation. In many of the hills and upland areas it plays a vital role in bringing young people together and enabling them to share skills and knowledge. In his former career as a youth worker and subsequently, the Minister has taken a great interest in youth organisations; I am sure that he appreciates the importance of the young farmers' clubs. They have lost about £450,000 as a result of the foot and mouth restrictions, because meetings, events and activities could not take place. Mr. Peter Jackson, the president, has pursued the matter diligently. He was incorrectly informed by way of a letter to the noble Lord Carter from Baroness Hayman that the Countryside Agency would deal with the funding shortfall. However, the Countryside Agency has now clearly stated that the terms of reference laid down by Government under which it is allowed to operate do not allow it to consider the claim that has been put forward by the young farmers' movement.

I am a former member of that organisation and extremely proud of it. It has missed out on the help that the Government have made available, and I hope that the Minister will respond to its concern. I believe that either he or his right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs met young farmers last week—one of the Department's Ministers certainly did.

I endorse the call of the hon. Member for South-East Cornwall for a retirement scheme. It could be introduced under the umbrella of the rural development programme and would be of benefit in some areas. However, we need a much clearer understanding of the future of agricultural policy. The Government are talking about a commission, which would be welcome, but we must avoid any regimented plan that smacks of a soviet approach. We must understand what the

Government can do within the existing constraints of the CAP to provide for payments that are connected not to production but perhaps to environmental aims.

We must balance the demands on farmers in this country with the lack of such demands on farmers in other parts of the world. Our farmers cannot operate under the serious domestic constraints that have been imposed for valid reasons—whether to do with animal welfare, the environment or food safety—if they have to compete in the British marketplace with products from abroad that have been produced where such constraints do not apply. What matters more than anything else in our long-term vision for agriculture is how we address that issue, whether by import controls or by somehow guaranteeing a premium on prices in this country. That will be the most crucial issue affecting the viability of farming in the uplands and lowlands in the years to come.

12.4 pm

The Minister for Rural Affairs (Alun Michael): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on initiating the debate, which gives us an opportunity to consider again some of the serious and complex problems that were caused by foot and mouth disease. I will try to respond to all the issues that he raised, as well as those raised by other right hon. and hon. Members. I thought that he spoiled his speech at the tail end when he accused the Government of a lack of political leadership and wrongly alleged a political vacuum. He may have been referring to his own party as that comment certainly does not apply to the Government.

The hon. Gentleman should have the fairness to acknowledge that over the past five weeks we have established a new Department. Other changes in Government structures have taken a year to complete. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister rightly said that speed is of the essence when setting up the right government structures to deal with rural affairs, the environment, food and farming in an integrated and grown-up way. It is hardly fair to suggest a lack of leadership and immediacy.

The new Department was established in parallel with other efforts to achieve a joined-up approach to food and farming, environmental issues and rural affairs. The hon. Gentleman criticised the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, but admitted that he had not read it. That speech was an early attempt to spell out the direction of policy.

We are setting up new structures and trying to look further ahead at a time when the Department's resources—not just in London, but throughout the regions—have been stretched to the utmost by foot and mouth disease and consequential issues. Some environmental issues have to be confronted immediately and my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment is displaying leadership in Bonn today, grappling with crucial long-term problems.

Simultaneously, we have invested massive time and effort with officials throughout the Department in tackling the immediate problems—direct and indirect—arising from foot and mouth disease. I chair the rural task force, which was established to respond to foot and mouth disease. It has been an instructive experience. It has proved to be a means of getting up to speed in dealing with problems across the range of stakeholders. The group has approached serious problems constructively. It met the National Farmers Union, as my ministerial colleagues do regularly, and yesterday I met several representatives of small businesses in various areas including the south-east, North Yorkshire and Cumbria.

We have all heard about the tragedy of farming families and similarly I heard harrowing accounts of how difficult it is to keep businesses going through the winter, to remain competitive and to survive into the new year. We have had to engage directly with those problems at the same time as ensuring that everyone understands the need for biosecurity to avoid the spread of foot and mouth disease. We have also tried to open up footpaths in the countryside where it is safe to do so. It is one heck of an agenda to confront in five weeks and we have tackled it with leadership and a sense of purpose. I allow the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to withdraw his criticism of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: I should like to make it clear that I was not accusing the Minister or his officials of idleness. I was able to visit the disease control centre at Kenton Bar, Newcastle and I was most impressed by the stupendous efforts made by the staff there and by the long hours that they were working.

The point that I was trying to make—in a friendly, unaggressive way—is that Ministers have caused the vacuum by, for example, not determining the policy commission. We have been waiting for some time for the policy commission to be set up; with two days to go, we still have not been given any names. The problem of upland livestock has also to be resolved. We have known about that problem, which has been raised in debate by my hon. Friends, for some time. We should have a decision by now on whether there is to be a scheme.

Alun Michael: It was worth giving way to the hon. Gentleman, first because of his acknowledgement of the hard work of the Department staff. We in the House sometimes overlook that when we visit the regions. I hope to visit several of our regional offices to see the problems directly and meet the people working there. I have been impressed by the degree of commitment that I have seen—people are coming back after having dealt with the disease, day and night, for perhaps six weeks, with their motivation intact. They say, "We must get on urgently with the farm visits and other recovery work."

Against that background of the intensity of work, I shall comment on the two points to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. There is a commitment to establish the policy commission on food and farming and for it to take a thorough look at the future. It is important to get it right. If we do not get the right people, the right structure and the right brief, the resulting inquiry may be interesting, but it will not carry us forward in the direction we want. We are determined to get it right. There will be an announcement as soon as we are sure that we have done so. The hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that a delay of a few weeks to get the right composition, structure and brief is a small price to pay.

[Alun Michael]

The comments that have been made about the need for an inquiry are simplistic. Ministers have stated clearly that their priority is to eradicate foot and mouth disease and to deal with the immediate problems. We are as seized as anyone of the need to ensure that all the lessons are learned and that the facts and issues are brought out into the open. It is always easier to say what should have been done in retrospect. Writing history in retrospect is easier than writing it as it is being lived. The facts should be brought out and the lessons learned.

We have also said that, without prejudice to the findings of any inquiry, immediate lessons can be learned from the epidemic, in regard to matters such as disease control policy for future outbreaks. The case needs to be considered for such changes as better animal identification, especially for sheep, improved movement records, controls on the movement of cattle and sheep similar to those that exist for pigs, stricter enforcement of controls on imported meat—DEFRA is co-ordinating a cross-Whitehall initiative to improve our record in that area—and better biosecurity by markets, dealers and farmers. A balance must be struck because wherever one imposes a restriction, in the interests of safety and avoiding problems, it causes problems for the industry, as several hon. Members have illustrated.

Mr. Paice: The Minister and his colleagues have resisted the phrase "public inquiry" that has been used by Opposition Members. I shall not go into that, but could he assure us that the inquiry will be in public even if it does not use the legal terminology of a public inquiry?

Alun Michael: It is not my place to take us in that direction. We want the inquiry to be open and effective. As the hon. Gentleman will know—because they have been trailed over many times—all sorts of issues are involved. A public inquiry has constraints. It has to be conducted in certain ways; it has time scales that may not please Opposition Members. The question of which discussions and hearings should be held in public requires consideration—I understand the distinction that a public hearing need not necessarily be a formal public inquiry; I have dealt with a number of decisions on establishing inquiries. One has to make it possible for all evidence to be given in as open a way as possible. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we want to have the right inquiry. I live in hope that when the nature of it is announced we shall have his enthusiastic support.

Mr. Curry: I hope that the Minister will tell us what he means by eradication before an inquiry, whatever its nature, because that could well rumble on for a long time. He mentioned drawing on the analogy of pigs in looking at movement restrictions for cattle and sheep. The proposed 20-day rule is based on what has been established for pigs. Can the Minister give us any insight into how the responses to that proposition are being analysed? When does he expect to reach a conclusion? Is he thinking of considering a different scheme from that originally set out, as it has evoked an enormous response? That is crucial to the future of the live option, for example.

Alun Michael: I understand the concern that the right hon. Gentleman expresses. The trouble with all such matters is that everyone wants an immediate decision. That is understandable—to someone trying to run a business and waiting for an issue to be dealt with, a delay of even a day or two can seem enormous.

The Government are reviewing the proposals on standstill movements in the light of responses to the consultation exercise, which my colleague Lord Whitty is examining. Our aim is to move from considering just the current foot and mouth disease outbreak to looking at future disease control—including the issues of biosecurity, animal identification and licensing. We intend to allow fuller veterinary and economic assessments to be carried out. In the meantime, the current movement licensing controls will continue. I am not in a position to go into further detail, but I shall be happy to write to the right hon. Gentleman.

This is the fifth debate to which I have responded in two weeks. That illustrates the seriousness of the problem and the sense of urgency that hon. Members have in raising matters on behalf of their constituents. However, since the previous debate, we have not discovered a magic wand that will suddenly resolve the problems and straighten out a complex set of issues. We have heard today about a mixture of short-term problems, medium-term—and in some cases, short-term—recovery issues, and many matters requiring a longer-term perspective and consideration of major changes in the way in which we do things. Some hon. Members, in making the case for their constituents, have included all three of those in one sentence. I shall do my best to respond, but I might jumble them a little, because they are interrelated, which goes to illustrate the complexity of the subject with which we are dealing.

The hon. Member for South-East Cambridgeshire raised, and the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) responded to, almost on my behalf, the problem that the estates office at Alnwick castle has identified—I am sorry if I do not pronounce that correctly, but we do things phonetically in Wales. I will try to learn.

In respect of grouse shooting, we examined the veterinary assessment of the risk of shooting parties in infected areas and took the decision, which was announced yesterday by way of news release, that grouse shooting should resume—under licence—in such areas. That means that grouse shooting will be able to go ahead in most parts of England from 12 August, through the licensing system. The veterinary assessment of the risk of shooting parties spreading foot and mouth disease resulted in a decision that the Foot and Mouth Disease Order 1983 should be amended to allow licensed grouse shooting—I stress the word "licensed"—in infected areas. No licence is required for grouse shooting outside infected areas, but it is prohibited on premises subject to form A or form D restrictions. All shooting parties should, of course, observe basic disease control precautions, as walkers are required to do.

Licences for shooting in infected areas will not be issued for premises within 3 km of an infected premise. I am sure that that will be accepted as sensible. For the first 30 days following the preliminary cleansing and disinfection of an infected premise, shooting will not be permitted within 10 km of that premise. That is consistent with decisions that have been taken on other

issues. The licences will be issued by divisional veterinary managers—DVMs— based at the regional animal health offices, once the Foot and Mouth Disease Order 1983 has been amended—something that we hope to accomplish very quickly. Licences will be subject to conditions, including a requirement that no member of the party should have handled livestock during the previous seven days. That will emphasise the important biosecurity precautions.

To be clear on the matter, licences will not restrict the numbers of the shooting party and there will be no change in the current provisions in the 1983 order that allow the occupier to shoot in infected areas with a party of up to three without licence. To avoid any doubt, separate measures will be brought out by the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland. That is part of the important job of opening up the countryside, and I hope that Members are aware of the approach that the Government have adopted in relation to footpaths.

Mr. Beith: The Minister referred to form A and form D restricted areas. If shooting can take place without a licence in non-infected areas and with a licence in an infected area, what does that mean for those restricted areas? Does it mean that no licence can be obtained for an area covered by form A or form D restrictions?

Alun Michael: I believe that that is the case. The licensing system will be for those areas that are not covered by form A and form D restrictions. I am pretty sure that I have understood that correctly. I may return to the matter later, but if I do not I shall write to the right hon. Gentleman.

Where there is no need for footpaths to be closed in order to control the disease and ensure that there is adequate biosecurity, we want to see them open. It is important for people such as the individuals from Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Devon who came to see me yesterday that there is clarity about where the countryside is open, so that they can start to re-establish their businesses. Those businesses may be vulnerable during the coming winter unless they are able to re-establish them quickly.

Such organisations are subject to collateral damage in the same way as the young farmers referred to by the hon. Member for South-East Cambridgeshire. Other organisations such as the Youth Hostels Association, with which I have been associated in the past, have experienced a massive loss of income, which will affect not just their ability to keep their balance sheet in order but their ability to invest. We will certainly examine those issues. I have received a letter from the young farmers and have agreed to meet them to hear their concerns

Mr. Curry: Barely five minutes of the debate are left. Everyone is especially concerned about whether upland farmers can sell the autumn crop of lamb. Will the Minister please deal with that crucial issue and with livestock movements in the time that remains?

Alun Michael: As I said at the beginning of my speech, hon. Members have raised an enormous number of issues.

As regards arrangements for the autumn movements of livestock, I should explain in response to the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed that an answer will be given to a starred question in the House of Lords today. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has arranged for hon. Members to be provided with the same information in a written answer. The Department has had intensive discussions with a wide range of industry interests and with the European Commission, with a view to putting in place by the end of July a strategy that would apply from 1 September. In the meantime, all possible action is being taken to eradicate foot and mouth disease as soon as possible. That will allow a return to normality throughout the country.

I was asked what eradication meant. Basically, we want to reduce the disease to a minimum in every part of the country and then to nil as soon as possible. That will be difficult, and is hard to predict exactly how long it will take. Ministers have always included in their warnings fears about the possibility of additional outbreaks—and rightly so, as I think people will agree following events in recent weeks.

Everyone involved is clear that controlling foot and mouth disease and safeguarding animal welfare must continue to be our primary concerns when considering autumn livestock movements. We are therefore proceeding on the basis of veterinary and scientific advice. Full details will be published as soon as possible, but the arrangements for the autumn will cover the following aspects: first, the possibility of holding livestock markets in counties that have been free of foot and mouth disease for three months or more and where testing has been completed—that touches on a point that several hon. Members raised: secondly, the possibility of some relaxation in the criteria covering livestock movements outside infected areas; and thirdly, the possibility of promoting the domestic consumption of lamb, in particular, and of negotiating with the European Commission for an early resumption of pigmeat and sheepmeat exports, while not disrupting the domestic food supply chain. We are formally raising with the Commission the possibility of private storage aid as an approach and have discussed with it both the possible adaptation of the livestock welfare disposal scheme to handle the disposal of surplus lambs and the possible use of quota suspension or buy-out.

I understand that hon. Members would like to hear the announcement towards which those proposals are a staging post. Quite honestly, if we could say more, we would be delighted to do so, because we are as keen as Opposition Members to be as clear as we can with farmers about the situation that is affecting them. Again, however, I am sure that it will be understood that the negotiations involve difficult decisions, and it would be wrong to rush through a decision before everything had been thought through.

The hon. Member for South-East Cambridgeshire referred in passing to a case in Wiltshire, which we discussed briefly in a previous debate. I understand that the sample has now been confirmed as negative. There has been some delay in getting that information. I do not have the full details, but I will write to the hon. Gentleman. However, it appears that the news is better than we had feared.

The right hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) illustrated the problem that we are discussing by referring to an individual farming family, and he was right to do so. Statistics do not tell the story of how foot and mouth disease impacts on a farmer who

[Alun Michael]

loses all his stock or who sees the way in which he has conducted his business for many years being totally disrupted because of movement restrictions. As I said earlier, those involved in tourism who have laboriously built up small businesses over many years see their efforts being wiped out almost overnight. They fear that they will not get through the next winter and will not be able to develop their business again. We wish to engage with all those issues.

I have been unable to answer all the specific points raised this morning, so I shall write to those hon. Members involved.

Mrs. Irene Adams (in the Chair): Order.

Operation Lancet

12.30 pm

Dr. Ashok Kumar (Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East): I welcome the Minister to his new position in the Home Office.

My main reason for calling for the debate is that I represent a constituency where one of the country's longest running police disciplinary inquiries has been dragging on. I refer to the infamous Operation Lancet. Today's debate is my third on the subject in the past 18 months. That police investigation has involved one of the country's highest profile police officers. Detective Superintendent Ray Mallon has been blocked for nearly four years from doing what he does best—the effective policing of his community and providing a high-profile public service.

The Government were re-elected on a manifesto that promised improvement and reform in our public services. I congratulate the Home Secretary and his team on their appointments. I also congratulate them on the swiftness with which they made it clear that reform of the police service would be a key part of that wider Government commitment. Such an overall approach will be applauded throughout Britain, but nowhere more so than in the Cleveland police area, where residents have had to pick up the bill for a police force that has become tainted by greed and jealousy.

If the Minister wants to see an example of how a police force should not be run, I suggest that he visit Cleveland. I emphasise that I am not making an attack on the rank and file of our police force. They have battled on in the face of extreme adversity. No; the problem lies at the top, with Chief Constable Barry Shaw and his senior management team. The problem also rests with the police authority, which is seen by many on Teesside not as a watch dog for the public but as publicly funded body armour for the chief constable and his senior managers.

Operation Lancet was launched nearly four years ago by senior officers of the Cleveland police force, who chose to believe the word of convicted criminals above that of hard-working and respected detectives. It was a matter of extreme regret that, at that early stage, the chief constable did not follow the advice offered to him by the Police Superintendents Association of England and Wales to call in a senior officer to have a simple look and see, in order to assess the strength of the evidence. I am convinced that such a move would have confirmed within a matter of weeks what the public of Teesside already knew, which is that those rank and file officers, including Ray Mallon, were all honest, dedicated and hard-working people. Instead, in a decision driven by petty jealousy and self-interest, the senior officers, with the tacit approval of a neutered police authority and the increasingly discredited Police Complaints Authority, embarked on a witch hunt. It was a witch hunt to equal that of Salem.

So far, Operation Lancet and the associated inquiry that followed in its wake have bled local and national taxpayers of as much as £7 million. The operation has demoralised the ordinary hard-working rank and file police officers on Teesside, men and women who had previously set the standard for crime fighting in the United Kingdom. The officers suspended as a result of

Lancet, and those officers who were questioned by Lancet investigators, have had to put up with an implied slur on their character.

Senior force managers and some members of the Cleveland police authority have been only too happy to peddle stories about severe corruption in the Cleveland force. It has been said that individual police officers traded hard drugs for confessions, beat up subjects and acted as a law unto themselves. Nearly four years on, we know that that was complete rubbish.

In Operation Lancet, 400 criminal allegations were levelled against 60 officers, 571 notices were served, 6,707 specific inquiries were made, 3,162 statements were taken, 2,444 separate officer reports were compiled and no fewer than 8,311 other documents were considered. After all that, each allegation having been considered in depth, the Crown Prosecution Service concluded that the evidence did not support any criminal charge. I ask the Minister to consider that. Would anyone now suggest that the spending of such a massive sum of public cash for no return was the best use of police resources?

The decision of the CPS should have been the end of the story, but it was not. The chief constable of Cleveland has instigated a new series of costly and long-running internal disciplinary hearings, which revisit all the Lancet evidence at great cost, I suspect, to manpower and resources. Public disquiet at the cost and length of Lancet led to the appointment of Sir John Hoddinott, the former chief constable of Hampshire and a respected man in the British police system, to bring order from chaos and to report on Lancet to the Home Secretary.

Meanwhile, Ray Mallon and some of his colleagues remain suspended. As well as having to run the gamut of the former Lancet machinery, Ray Mallon has been the victim of some peculiar and sinister practices. A highly respected civilian employee in the press section of the Cleveland police who could see what was happening was forced to resign in disgust at the orchestrated dirty tricks campaign directed at Ray Mallon from its senior ranks. The matter is now being investigated by another external police force, that of South Yorkshire. I hope that its report is near completion.

We also saw the selective leaking of a section of a highly confidential Treasury counsel report into Ray Mallon on the day after the CPS cleared him, the very day on which he was to hold a press conference to outline his views. On top of that, Mr. Mallon has discovered that operatives from a Government agency—he believes it to be MI5—have been following him. Will the Minister investigate the truth of that as a matter of urgency? If it is true, what justification can be given? Is a cleared detective superintendent a threat to our country's national security?

In the latest report on Cleveland police, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary warned of the need to keep Lancet focused. It stated that the inquiry should not

"float downstream, gathering pieces of disciplinary flotsam".

Surely that has started to happen yet again. There are to be no prosecutions, and the disciplinary process takes place behind closed doors and far from any public scrutiny.

Legal advisers to the police authority have recently suggested that it instigate a series of court orders to gag the local press and hon. Members from commenting on any aspect of Lancet. As everyone will expect, that suggestion was treated with utter derision and contempt by the local press, which saw it as an attempt to gag free speech and comment and as part of the murky world of spin and cover-up that has come to characterise Lancet. Thankfully, for once the members of the Cleveland police authority found enough courage to tell the authors of that piece of censorship to take the suggestion back to the cesspit from which it originated. Indeed, an air of mutiny is now apparent in the police authority, as the realisation of the results of the past four years of cover-up and concealment dawns. Just a week ago, a member appointed by the Home Office resigned. Although he kept his own counsel about his resignation, I know from other quarters that it was due to his growing realisation that the authority was both unwilling and unable to hold the chief constable to account.

During the attempts at gagging orders and the first resignation over Lancet, the latest annual report of the Police Complaints Authority was published. That had a section on Lancet, which stated:

"This investigation was, perhaps, the most complex and difficult that we have ever supervised."

It continued:

"We are compiling a special report under section 79(2) of the 1996 Police Act. These reports are laid before Parliament and published".

The passage concluded:

"We may have to delay completing and publishing this report to avoid causing any prejudice to pending disciplinary proceedings."

The relevant section of the Police Act 1996 refers to matters that emerge as a result of Police Complaints Authority activities which, in the opinion of the authority

"should be drawn to the attention of Parliament by reason of their gravity or their exceptional circumstances".

I would argue that the fact that the PCA now considers the matters in question to be of such gravity that they need to be placed before the House should outweigh the timetable drawn up by the chief constable with respect to disciplinary matters. I am deeply fearful that the sheer bulk and weight of the evidence collated for Lancet, with deliberately long and drawn-out internal disciplinary hearings by the chief constable, will frustrate the will of Parliament—which is to hear the PCA's opinions on Lancet—and will prevent a proper debate on the issue.

I am aware of the reforms promised by the Home Secretary involving the framing of new legislation to open out, democratise and speed up police complaints and disciplinary procedures. I know that he is keen for a move away from the disturbing spectacle of the police investigating the police, with the Masonic and canteen-culture echoes that arise from that. I do not believe that the framing of such new measures can proceed without our taking into account the history of Lancet and without an explanation of the PCA's concerns about the handling of the issue. It would be like trying to write "Macbeth" without mentioning the character of Lady Macbeth.

I ask the Minister for some undertakings: that he will meet the chief constable and put pressure on him to speed up the Lancet disciplinary hearings and set a date for their end; that he will ask Sir John Hoddinott if he

[Dr. Ashok Kumar]

can give a date for his final report into matters affecting the Cleveland police as a result of the Lancet years; that he will ask the South Yorkshire police for a date for the completion of their investigation into the dirty tricks operation that has its roots in the Cleveland police; and that, on receiving the relevant assurances, he will liaise with the PCA, so that a full report on Lancet, under section 79(2) of the Police Act, can be laid before the House.

The Lancet years will help to inform a better way of dealing with police complaints and disciplinary matters. In that respect, the sense of outrage felt by the people of Teesside will have done the nation a favour. However, there must still be a reckoning and a result on Teesside. The result is needed to inform root-and-branch reform of the Cleveland police and the Cleveland police authority. The people of Cleveland want a full public inquiry into operation Lancet, so that those who cannot speak now can have their say, and so that falsehood and petty jealousies can be exposed and blame apportioned. It is essential that the mistakes of Operation Lancet should never be repeated. The taxpayer and good, honest police officers, such as Ray Mallon, must never again be treated with such contempt. I ask the Minister to give serious consideration to such a public inquiry. Those with nothing to fear would have nothing to hide.

12.45 pm

The Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs (Mr. John Denham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East (Dr. Kumar) on securing the debate, and I am grateful to him for raising issues relating to the investigation of alleged misconduct in the Cleveland police, which continue to attract interest and concern locally and nationally.

It is true that Operation Lancet has been one of the longest and most complex investigations in the history of the complaints system. The investigation, which began in late 1997 as a result of serious and disturbing allegations and counter-allegations against a number of officers, has now concluded, but disciplinary proceedings continue. Some 2,000 witness statements were taken and 44 files were generated, covering various criminal and disciplinary issues. More than 500 allegations against 61 officers were dealt with. Today, eight officers remain suspended.

Public confidence in the police service rests on its reputation for integrity. When allegations of corruption or misconduct are made and the service's reputation is brought into question, it is important that there be thorough scrutiny to establish the facts and determine what action is appropriate. Cleveland acted robustly by initiating an investigation into the allegations in this case.

I share the concern of many about the time taken to bring matters to a conclusion. The investigation suffered several serious delays, some of which were the result of a substantial number of counter-allegations by officers under investigation. Those counter-allegations were brought together under a separate investigation. The senior investigating officer for Lancet, Andrew Timpson, had to be replaced because of his personal situation and eventual departure from his post as chief constable of Warwickshire. He was replaced by Lloyd Clarke, the deputy chief constable of West Yorkshire.

My hon. Friend has taken a close interest in the progress of Lancet and its related inquiries into alleged corruption and misconduct in the Cleveland police. He has asked many questions in the House about the scope and cost of the inquiries, and secured two Adjournment debates—on 10 November 1999 and 13 June 2000—on the Cleveland police. Of course, at that time I was not the Minister with responsibility for such matters, but I have taken the opportunity to read those previous exchanges, as he would expect.

From an early stage, Operation Lancet was supervised by the PCA. Its role was to ensure that a thorough and impartial investigation was carried out. There has also been close consultation with the CPS throughout the investigation. The CPS completed its work on Lancet in February, and has not pressed any charges under Lancet. Of course, responsibility for the matter rests with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

To date, the total cost of Operation Lancet is about £3.25 million. However, my hon. Friend mentioned a figure of £7 million. Having read previous debates, I am aware of differing interpretations of the figures, but £3.25 million is the figure with which I have been provided. I shall perhaps endeavour to write to the hon. Gentleman to explain why our figures differ and resolve the matter once and for all. None the less, by anybody's measure even £3.25 million is a substantial sum. The cost of the operation raises questions about the conduct of such complex investigations. Of course, a major investigation such as this can place a significant burden on the budget of a small force such as Cleveland. It was in those exceptional circumstances that the then Home Secretary, now the Foreign Secretary, authorised a contribution of £1.9 million from Home Office funds towards the investigation's costs.

As I mentioned earlier, the position today is that eight officers remain suspended from duty. The suspensions may continue either until it is decided not to bring disciplinary charges, or until the case is resolved. That is a matter entirely for the chief constable of Cleveland.

My hon. Friend invited me to intervene in some way in the handling of the affair. However, if he were campaigning in the Chamber for an investigation into a scandal that he thought had occurred, he might be alarmed to think that a Minister was intervening to tell the chief constable how to conduct the investigation. Ministers can rightly say that, in such circumstances, it is for the chief constables of police forces to conduct what is, after all, an operational matter, in line with their responsibilities and accountability.

The chief constable and the PCA have responsibility for considering the disciplinary aspects of the inquiry and for determining whether any officer should face disciplinary proceedings. The review of disciplinary matters is continuing but, to date, seven officers face disciplinary charges. One detective superintendent will face 14 charges and his hearing is scheduled to be held in mid-October. The other six officers, who have heard of their charges since April, will have their hearings early in the new year. One chief superintendent and one superintendent have had disciplinary charges found against them.

The Home Secretary, in addition to what I said earlier, has a role as the appellate authority in the disciplinary process. In the future, he may be called upon in that capacity to consider any disciplinary appeals from officers that arise from this inquiry. It would, therefore, be inappropriate for me to comment further on those matters.

My hon. Friend made several trenchant criticisms of the PCA and the current system of handling such affairs. It is true that the problems of the present system, in dealing with complex, long-running investigations, have given significant dissatisfaction within the police service. We are committed to introducing a new system, and we will have to be confident that it will be robust enough to deal with the most testing cases. If we are to build public confidence in the complaints system, there must be greater independence and openness in the way in which alleged police corruption and misconduct are investigated. We laid our plans for the system before the House in a framework document on 18 December 2000. The Government's fundamental objective is to promote public and police trust by providing an effective and efficient system for dealing with police misconduct. In the Queen's Speech, the Government announced their intention to introduce a Bill later this Session which included a provision to establish a new police complaints system.

Now that the Lancet investigation has concluded, we shall want to consider any lessons on how similar matters should be dealt with in the future. Calls have been made, reiterated again today by my hon. Friend, for an inquiry into the whole affair. We think that an independent review would help to identify the lessons to be learned from the conduct of Operation Lancet. We should then be able to take those into account in developing the details of the new complaints system.

The review will provide a detailed case study of the way in which allegations of corruption and other serious complaints against the police are investigated, by examining strategic operational decisions that were made and resources, including time management, that were utilised. My hon. Friend referred to that review as seeking to "bring order from chaos". It is important to make it clear, on the record, what the review will and will not cover. I need to be unequivocal. The review will not reconsider the conclusions of Lancet, which will continue to be the subject of on-going police disciplinary proceedings.

The terms of reference of the review were drawn up with that in mind. It may be helpful if I put them on record. They were drawn up on behalf of the Home Secretary to conduct a review of Operation Lancet and were as follows: to consider the functioning of the statutory constitutional arrangements for the investigation of corruption and other serious complaints against the police, including the roles of the PCA and the CPS; to consider Operation Lancet as a case study of how such an investigation is managed strategically and operationally and to consider the process by which decisions were taken during the investigation, and the extent of resources and time used; and to make recommendations for the future investigation of police complaints. The review will consider the issues arising from the conduct and management of the investigation and will not reconsider any of the matters of substance that were the subject of investigation. The review will not consider issues relating to the substance of allegations of misconduct about individuals or any such new allegations.

As my hon. Friend knows, Sir John Hoddinott, the former chief constable of Hampshire, has been asked to carry out the review. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for acknowledging the respect in which Sir John is held. That is helpful while we await the review.

We carefully considered the timing of the review. We listened to the police authority and the chief constable, who had expressed concerns about its timing and the risk of prejudice to on-going disciplinary proceedings. However, to learn the lessons in time for the new complaints system, the review had to start immediately. I am satisfied that the terms of reference will separate the disciplinary process from the review. Although I have not been able to give the dates for which my hon. Friend asked, I hope that I have reassured him that we will try to take Sir John Hoddinott's conclusions into account when drafting legislation later this year for the new complaints procedure.

I understand that some proposals were put to the police authority that suggested restrictions on the way in which some information would be made available. The position is that the police authority, like any other public body, considers many reports, including proposals offered by officials and advisers. However, on this occasion, the authority made it clear that it was not prepared to support any proposal relating to the consideration of court orders or media coverage of investigations. That has been emphasised in a statement issued by the chair of the authority, which underlined its commitment to the principle of open government. The authority cannot be criticised for having a paper tabled by its advisers. It has made its position on the proposal clear.

Finally, I should like to address the allegations made by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East about the involvement of the security services. He will be aware that the policy of successive Governments has been neither to confirm nor deny whether the security services have been involved in any specific operational matter. The investigatory powers tribunal, headed by Lord Justice Mummery, provides a robust redress mechanism for people who wish to complain about the activities, or alleged activities, of the security services.

Dr. Kumar: Before my right hon. Friend concludes, may I remind him of the PCA's report on Lancet? He has not commented on that and I hope that he has not overlooked it.

Mr. Denham: Given the time remaining, it would probably be better for me to write to my hon. Friend on that point.

I end by acknowledging my hon. Friend's continuing concern about the issue. We too want to find out what can be learned from Operation Lancet to ensure that we can incorporate those positive lessons in the new complaints system.

Rail Strikes (Southend)

12.59 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Rochford and Southend, East): One of the joys of these Westminster Hall debates is that troublesome Back Benchers such as myself can sit on the Front Bench—a pleasure that I have not experienced for at least 21 years. The other piece of good news for the Minister is that I do not hold the Government to blame in any respect for the issue that I am about to raise.

The issue is nevertheless serious and significant, and I hope that the Minister and his Department will take an interest in it and promote a solution. The problem relates to the c2c rail service, which links Shoeburyness near Southend to Fenchurch street station. It is a commuter service that is used to transport about 25,000 people to London every day. Sadly, the service is a shambles this morning, with only about one third of the trains running, due to industrial action by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, which is holding its third one-day strike. A warning has been given that another such strike will take place on 1 August.

It is terrible when those strikes happen. I have before me a form, which I was handed yesterday in Southend and which contains the amended timetable for the RMT strike. The Minister will see that about one third of trains are running, which means that people are going through misery. The strike is not of train drivers, who are members of ASLEF—the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen—but of guards, who are members of RMT. In most industrial disputes the onus is on both sides to solve the problem, but the circumstances of this case are unusual and their character could justify Government action.

Many local residents use the c2c service. I often use it, and my secretary uses it every day. After privatisation, it was originally called the LTS line. Before privatisation the line was unbelievably bad; its services were so spasmodic that it became known as the misery line. After privatisation there was a dramatic improvement in the service, which may have been due to the work of a wonderful manager called Ken Bird and to the new signalling that dealt with many of the problems, and commuters were delighted.

The new contract holders who ran the service were formerly known as the Prism company, which is now part of the National Express Group. Prism decided that that improvement was not enough and that the line should be made into a magnificent new railway that would be an example to the world. It decided to replace the old rolling stock with wonderful new trains called 357s, which were manufactured by a company based in Derby called the Bombardier group—like all companies nowadays it has a complex name. Both Bombardier and c2c assured us that the new trains would be a wonderful way of travelling, but when they arrived they constantly broke down. The difficulty related to computer software, but that reassured neither the public, whose services were disrupted, nor c2c, which had to bring out the old trains.

We have been trying to sort things out for about 12 months. I met a senior c2c executive for two hours in the Commons last night and he was optimistic—as the company has been for so long—that 46 of the 76 new trains would be operational soon. Of course, I hope that his confidence is justified but in the meantime the Railway Travellers' Association and the Rail Passengers' Committee have produced an angry report asking why, given that passengers travelled on the first of the wonderful new trains on 1 August 2000, those trains, of which only a handful are operational, are used only spasmodically on off-peak services. That has created many problems for the travelling public.

I have received many letters from constituents who heard that I was initiating this debate. One such letter, which summarises the problem, came by fax a few minutes before the start of the debate. It is not from one of my constituents, nor even from somebody who lives in Basildon—I see that the hon. Member for Basildon (Angela Smith) is here representing her constituents. The fax outlines the basic problem: the

"standard of service we now endure has declined significantly in the past 12 months on this line.

The many problems relating to the introduction of the new 'Electrostar' trains are well documented, and I will not repeat them in detail, but it has caused real problems with delays, short formation and over-crowding. It also means that the old slam-door stock continues to be used in a rapidly deteriorating state...Just last Friday I was in a train in which the toilet had overflowed and water was spilling through the carriage. That cannot be acceptable, nor can it be right.

I would also add that trains are now frequently late arriving into London. Most mornings recently trains have been between 10 and 15 minutes late. In the past we would have received an apology and an explanation. Now we are simply greeted by silence. I wonder if there is even an unofficial 'go-slow' in operation, as almost every day for the last two weeks we have been delayed, which is poor even by c2c's standards.

The late night service is also poor."

I could read out to the Minister seven such letters that I received this morning outlining the seriousness of the problem. The Government, either themselves or through their contact with Railtrack, may be able to help in relation to one aspect of this tragedy: lines used to test new trains. It may seem ridiculous, but in Britain we do not have a proper test rail on which new trains can be fully tested. The c2c company and the manufacturers have had to send one of their new trains abroad for testing—not to America, Germany or any of the places where one might expect superb test facilities, but to a country called Czechoslovakia. It is quite a task to transport a Southend train by lorry to that part of eastern Europe, and there may be a case for a test rail in the UK. As the Minister will be aware, the increasing emphasis on public transport means that we will probably have many new trains, and it would be a great idea if we could try them out.

What about today's crisis? As the company was endeavouring to bring in its exciting new trains—some of which were four-carriage, some eight-carriage and some 12-carriage—it decided that it should contact the unions about manning arrangements. After long discussions, the company and RMT came to an agreement that the four and eight-carriage trains would be driver-only with no guard but that, because it was accepted that 12-carriage trains were different, a guard would be provided for them alone. In exchange for that arrangement, which was of course helpful to the company, c2c agreed that there would be no redundancies of existing guards, all of whom would be offered guard duties on the 12-unit trains, or alternative

jobs. Furthermore, a 4 per cent. pay rise was agreed in addition to the normal pay increases, and the company said that it would endeavour to give more attention to the presence of staff on trains to protect the travelling public from problems or dangers.

As the agreement with RMT had been signed and agreed, the company went ahead with a pretty massive investment programme on the facilities required for driver-only trains. When I asked people at my meeting last night how much the company had spent, they would not tell me but said that it was a lot. It includes cameras and special mirrors at stations that enable the driver to check that everyone has got on and off and that everything is okay for the train to start off again.

However, all of a sudden, after the agreement had been signed and all the investments had been made, RMT stated that things had changed—it had to have guards on all trains and would be initiating strikes to secure its position. In the subsequent strike ballot, fewer than 50 per cent. of RMT members voted in favour of action—nevertheless, that provided the required majority. Ballots are very complicated things, as we in the Conservative party know these days.

The situation is difficult to understand, because driver-only trains are not a unique discovery that is being tried out only in Southend. I have been phoning around, and such systems are operated on several lines—for example, WAGN and Thameslink—with no apparent problems. Moreover, the famous Cullen report did not in any way argue that driver-only trains created safety problems. In fairness, I have not read the report in detail, but that is what I have been told.

Where do we go from here? RMT has never been regarded as one of the troublemaking unions. I have always considered it to be one of the more sensible and responsible unions, although it probably shares my basic sin of being suspicious of change. I hope that the Minister can tell us whether the Government believe that the strike is lawful, bearing in mind that it is in breach of an agreement signed by the union.

I do not want to involve the Government in controversy, but legislation is involved and it would speed up a solution if, first, they could make an assessment and say whether the strike is lawful. Secondly, bearing in mind the hardship suffered by the travelling public and the impact on the use of rail transport, there might be some merit in the Minister seeking a meeting with both parties. Although that might set a precedent inasmuch as he might find that other people want him to become involved in trying to solve other problems, it could be worthwhile in this case. I cannot see what damage would be done because everyone would be on his side. The union is not a bad union consisting of a crowd of wild or difficult people; it is worried about something and that is creating a nightmare for the company.

Although c2c has problems with the travelling public, as all companies do, it seems to consist of reasonable people who have spent a fortune trying to improve the service. Things have gone wrong with the trains, but those people are not a bad crowd. I believe that the travelling public would appreciate the Minister's intervention because they are suffering greatly, not just from today's strike, but from hold-ups and cancellations caused when employees do not work overtime. The 7 o'clock train from Southend always seems to be delayed or cancelled, and the 7.30 train, which should be a fast service, becomes a slow one and stops at every station. The amended timetable for today states that

"no c2c peak services will call at Upminster or Barking on this day."

Many people want trains to stop at Upminster and Barking, but today they did not do so. The timetable continued:

"no c2c trains travelling from London will call at Limehouse or West Ham on this day."

West Ham connects with one of the new underground lines, so it is important.

Thirdly, would the Minister feel justified in asking the union to try to resolve the problems without having to inflict so much hardship on the travelling public? We must all try to do something. Let us hope that before long the new trains will be working well and that relations between management and employees will be fully restored.

The vital issue is public transport. The Government want to encourage more people to use trains and to discourage them from using cars, as did the previous Government. I am told that even Mr. Ken Livingstone takes a similar view in London and would like everyone to travel by train. The number of people travelling on the c2c line has increased steadily and in the interests of the general public and the environment we want to encourage that. We do not want to return to the old misery line.

I have probably spoken for too long but I have two minutes left. As someone who uses the line, I know, as does the hon. Member for Basildon, that it used to be terrible. It then improved, but is now becoming bad again. Although the Government are not directly responsible, the Minister could help if he thought it appropriate. The dispute is not between nasty people who are looking for rows; it has arisen because everything seems to have gone wrong. If the Minister thought that something could be done, the travelling public and I would be very grateful.

1.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Mr. David Jamieson): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) on securing the debate. During my brief tenure in this job I have appeared often in this Chamber, and the hon. Gentleman is the most distinguished Member to whom I have had the pleasure of replying in a debate. He said that after 21 years he has reappeared, unofficially, on the Front Bench, and I am trying to weigh up whether the developments in the leadership campaign have advanced the possibility of his return to the Front Bench. I look forward, Mrs. Adams, to the day when I can call you Madam Deputy Speaker, but that may be reliant on developments in another part of the House. I, too, note the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Angela Smith) who has been a forceful representative of people in the area and has vigorously made points to me about the line, for which I am grateful.

[Mr. David Jamieson]

The Government greatly regret the problems that passengers have suffered on all lines in recent months and the further inconvenience currently being experienced by c2c passengers. I share the view of the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East that RMT is a good union, which is well represented. I shall refer to c2c's performance of its contract. It is unfortunate that passengers have been so inconvenienced.

It might be helpful if I briefly explain the background to the dispute. It relates mainly to RMT's concerns about the role of guards on trains and the introduction of more driver-only operation. The rule book lays down safety procedures to be employed in the movement of persons and rolling stock in and around the operational railway. A change to the rule book in October 1999 removed the requirement for guards to protect failed trains and requires them instead to look after passengers.

Railtrack and the train operating companies believe that the change improves rail safety. The Health and Safety Executive had no objection to the change on safety grounds and believes that it helps to clarify the respective roles of drivers and guards in emergencies. However, RMT is worried that that reduces guards' responsibility, adversely affects safety and will lead to more driver-only trains and to job losses for guards. Accordingly, RMT is seeking changes to the rule book to reflect its concerns. In addition, RMT wants train operators to give a commitment not to increase the existing number of driver-only trains.

RMT balloted the 22 operators of trains with guards and proposed industrial action. RMT members voted in favour of industrial action and 24-hour strike dates were set for Monday 25 June and Wednesday 4 July. However, before the first of those dates the dispute was settled with all train operators other than Midland Mainline and c2c. The position of Midland Mainline was subject to a court judgment, which subsequently ruled that the RMT ballot was unlawful. Leave to appeal was not granted so the strike action could not take place on Midland Mainline. RMT agreed before the first strike date that their requested changes to the rule book should first be considered by the relevant groups in Railway Safety, the appropriate body in such cases. It is important to note that, unlike previously, RMT is now represented with other stakeholders on those groups and is able to make a full contribution to the debate. It is for hon. Members to reflect on whether we would be in the present position if it had been involved earlier.

The sticking point relates to the commitment that no more driver-only services should be introduced. All operators, with the exception of c2c, were able to give the commitment sought by RMT as they had no plans to introduce additional driver-only services. However, c2c had always intended to employ driver-only operation on the new rolling stock now being introduced and believed that it had an agreement with RMT to that effect. That is the agreement to which the hon. Gentleman referred. However, RMT does not share that view and there is a difference of opinion between RMT and c2c on the validity of the agreement. The company therefore feels unable to give the commitment that the RMT is asking for on driver-only operation until the matter is resolved. The result is industrial action, culminating in a strike today and another planned for Wednesday 1 August.

Although I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's frustration and that of his constituents and others along the line with the apparent impasse, the validity or otherwise of any existing agreement between the RMT and c2c is a matter for the parties involved to resolve and not one on which I or anyone in my Department can rule. It is a contractual arrangement between the two parties, and we have no locus in the matter. Ultimately, it may be for the courts to resolve whether the agreement has any standing.

I am pleased to say that, as the hon. Gentleman points out, some services have run today. However, many services have not run, and there has been considerable inconvenience to people on the line. I note that to mitigate disruption and give passengers the most up-to-date information, emergency timetables were handed out in advance by c2c to passengers at stations and posted on the c2c website, and real-time information is available on passenger information screens at c2c stations. However, I realise that there have been difficult journeys for passengers travelling into the City on strike days. For example, trains are not generally stopping at Barking, Upminster or Ockendon, where alternative, underground links are available into the capital, as the hon. Gentleman said in relation to West Ham. I regret the inconvenience that that creates for passengers travelling from those stations and the increased pressure that results on already busy underground routes in other areas.

The roles of guards and drivers in particular circumstances on the railway are a matter for the safety authorities, the trade unions and the managements of the privatised rail companies. The hon. Gentleman may appreciate that, as the dispute does not involve contractual issues relating to the franchise, there is no direct locus for the Government or the Strategic Rail Authority to intervene.

The latest performance figures published by the SRA, which cover the six months from 15 October to 31 March, show that recently c2c has performed better than nearly all other operators, with 84 per cent. of services arriving on time. Only the Island line surpasses that level of performance. The speed restrictions imposed throughout the network post-Hatfield have not particularly affected c2c, but its performance remains 2 per cent. down compared with the previous year, partly due to difficulties with new rolling stock.

The spring 2001 national passenger survey revealed that 72 per cent. of c2c passengers are satisfied with the service overall, which is the same as the figure for the previous spring. However, only 38 per cent. of passengers believe that c2c offers value for money. That is an 8 per cent. increase on the previous spring, but it is still low. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's constituents were pleased that the standard day return from London to Southend Central was reduced from £12 to £10.60 with the introduction of the May timetable. The seven-day ticket remains £58, the same as a year ago.

The hon. Gentleman referred to some rolling stock problems. I am sure that I need not remind hon. Members that Ministers have made it clear to rolling

stock manufacturers that late delivery and poor reliability of new stock are unacceptable. Technical problems with c2c's new rolling stock caused widespread disruption and overcrowding, especially on peak services. Faulty electrics and software problems rendered the new trains unreliable and prone to breakdown.

The majority of units could not be introduced by their contractual date and as a result the SRA negotiated a package of passenger benefits with c2c to compensate passengers for the late introduction of the new stock. That included an increase in the order of new units from 44 to 46, and a commitment to procure a second tranche of 26 new four-car trains to be delivered and in service by 30 June 2002, replacing the remaining slam-door stock.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the testing of trains and about them being sent to the Czech Republic. I appreciate that he has feelings about things the other side of the channel. We are aware that the network generally and the train operators and manufacturers have limited capacity to allow the timely testing of new vehicles. The lack of a suitable high-test track makes vehicle testing time consuming and logistically difficult. The SRA is therefore looking at the feasibility of building a new test track in the United Kingdom. We are all mindful that that is important not just for train users, but for British jobs in train manufacturing.

Returning briefly to rolling stock delivery, c2c has a franchise commitment to introduce 45 of the 46 units into passenger service by 31 July 2001, and the remaining units by the end of September 2001 once winter testing has been completed. I am pleased to confirm that c2c is now in the final stages of its fleet acceptance and the introduction should be completed on time. The second tranche of class 357 units is in production now. The first units for testing are expected in the next few weeks. The company is confident that it will have the second tranche fully in passenger service by spring 2002. It is clear that there is a lot of work to be done and that will be achieved only if the rail industry works co-operatively to deliver real improvements for passengers right across the network.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether we could set up a meeting. Years ago he probably would have accused us of having beer and sandwiches, but sparkling water and canape"s may be more appropriate these days. The matters that have to be resolved concern the agreement that is said to exist between c2c and RMT. As it is so clear what the difference of opinion is about, it would be inappropriate for us to intervene at the moment, but that does not mean that we will not have considerable concern if the dispute continues, so we hope that it can be resolved soon. The Government must remain impartial, as we have no locus to intervene. Any further industrial action on the national railways would of course be regrettable, and I hope that both sides will make every effort to achieve a quick resolution, exploring all avenues for settling differences so as to avoid further industrial action and inconvenience to passengers.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the matter today; it is of considerable importance to his constituents and to all the people along that line. I thank him for the measured way in which he did so. It is a sign of our changing relationship here that these things are discussed calmly and sensibly, and I am pleased to have responded to him. If he feels that there are any matters that I have not considered in detail and if the dispute is on-going, I and my officials will be pleased to meet him to discuss the matter further.

New African Initiative

1.29 pm

Hugh Bayley (City of York): I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Hilary Benn) to what I believe is his first full debate as a Minister. I was very pleased when he was appointed to his new job. The appointment will obviously be good for him, but I am sure that it will also be good for the United Kingdom and our international development policies.

According to the Order Paper, the debate is entitled "Millennium Africa Programme". When I sought the debate just 10 days ago, the initiative had that name, but when it was launched last week in Lusaka at the 37th summit of the Organisation of African Unity, it changed the name to the new African initiative. For the sake of clarity now and in years to come, I hope that *Hansard* will retitle the debate accordingly.

I shall try to explain why we should take an interest in Africa. Politics is a pragmatic business. Its first rule is to concentrate on what matters to the people whom we represent. The second rule is to concentrate on what we can do something about and change for the better. Africa matters to Britain and its people, including my constituents, for three reasons.

First, Africa has a presence in the UK, and there has been contact between this country and Africa for centuries. Many people of African origin have settled here. Indeed, this country has many people of African origin whose families have been settled here for centuries, and for many years people from this country have settled in Africa.

Much of our music, particularly popular music, has clear roots in Africa. We can trace it back through the black music of the United States and the music that came across the Atlantic in the middle passage. Many of our artists take inspiration from Africa. Picasso and Henry Moore used to draw African carvings and so developed their art.

At one level, there is a bit of Africa in all of us: human beings first evolved 3 million or 4 million years ago in Africa. However, humans first emigrated from Africa only 100,000 years ago, when they crossed into the middle east. The first humans came to Europe only 40,000 years ago. Human beings have therefore been in Europe for perhaps 1 per cent. of the time that we have been on earth—a tiny proportion of the time of human history.

Secondly, we need to take an interest in Africa for humanitarian reasons. Churches, charities such as Oxfam and Christian Aid and campaign groups such as Drop the Debt say that we politicians and representatives have a responsibility to help people in poorer parts of the world. They are right to say so, and we should respond.

As an Under-Secretary of State for Social Security for a time, I, among others, had some responsibility for the programme to tackle poverty in Britain. It is a terrible fact that when we came to power four years ago, one child in three born in the UK was born into a household living in poverty, which is defined as one living on less than half of average incomes. That is a serious issue, and our constituents are right to tell us that charity begins at home. We need to address issues of poverty in the UK and we do.

However, charity does not begin and end at home, because we have responsibilities to other human beings throughout the world. The poverty faced by almost half the population of Africa, who live on less than US$1—60p or 70p—a day, is quite different from the poverty faced by people in Britain. As a result, many Africans do not have access to basic human needs and things that we take for granted, such as clean uninfected drinking water, an adequate diet, basic primary education and primary health care.

Thirdly, we need to take an interest in Africa for reasons of self-interest. Britain wants access to Africa's minerals and agricultural products. For example, chocolate could not be made in my constituency without the ingredients being imported from Africa.

The whole world faces enormous environmental problems such as global warming and problems caused by infectious diseases, such as HIV, but we should remember that 90 per cent. of the world's AIDS orphans live in Africa. Malaria, too, wreaks a terrible toll on Africa's productivity and may become a problem in Europe if global warming gathers pace. If malaria was eradicated, it is estimated that Africa's gross domestic product would increase by about 15 or 20 per cent. Problems such as the trade in illicit drugs and human trafficking have no respect for national frontiers. We cannot protect our interests in Europe if we ignore problems abroad.

It is in Africa's interest that it should seek solutions to those problems. African leaders must take the lead; it is their continent. But it is also clearly in our interest to work in partnership with them to look for solutions. I am especially glad that we have a Prime Minister who has risen to the challenge, who has taken a lead in the developed world in pressing for debt cancellation, and who, at the end of the present spending period, will have increased our aid budget by some 70 per cent. In 2004 it will be 70 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1997. The Prime Minister has made refocusing our aid on poverty reduction a primary aim.

The Prime Minister told the Millennium summit at the United Nations last September:

> "We need a new partnership for Africa in which Africans lead but the rest of the world is committed; where all the problems are dealt with not separately but together in a coherent and unified plan."

Speaking in Edinburgh during the general election on 25 May, the Prime Minister pledged:

> "If elected for a second term I will make Africa a major personal priority and a priority for a Labour Government."

For the first time in a generation we have a Prime Minister with a strong personal commitment to Africa, and at the same time a new generation of African leaders who are committed to thorough economic and political reform and to doing things differently, which is what is needed.

Since decolonisation, Western aid to Africa has created many development successes, but we must accept that in macro terms western aid policy on Africa has failed. So, indeed, have the economic and development policies pursued by African leaders: the average output per head in Africa is lower now than it was 30 years ago. To achieve the international development targets set by the Secretary of State for International Development, to which she persuaded

other developed countries to subscribe—one of which was to halve the proportion of people in the world in extreme poverty by the year 2015—will require 7 per cent. annual growth between now and then. That is a difficult target to meet; even the best-performing economies in Africa—the modernising, forward-looking, reforming countries—are achieving only about 6 per cent. growth. We need to go further.

The Government have recognised the need for change. Since its creation, the Department for International Development has substantially changed the role and remit of British aid, with the focus on aid to the poorest. That change of focus was explained in detail in the two White Papers that the Department published in the last Parliament.

This debate is about the new African initiative, which was launched last week at the Organisation of African Unity summit in Lusaka. That initiative is important because it comes from Africa, is led by Africans and involves Africa finding solutions to its own problems. In a speech at the Guildhall in London in June, the South African President Thabo Mbeki said:

"We accept that the buck stops with us and cannot be passed to others. But we also know that without your sustained involvement with us, we will not succeed."

I cannot summarise in a few minutes everything that is in a 27-page document, but I can tell the House why I was impressed with what I read. The new initiative talks about what Africa will do to tackle Africa's problems. It talks about strengthening conflict prevention and macroeconomic stability. One reason why African growth is low is because job creation is poor and investors are concerned about the lack of economic stability and the potential for losing their investments. We now have African leaders who recognise that they must address the economic conditions if development is to succeed.

The initiative talks about instituting transparent legal and regulatory frameworks for financial markets. I have spoken to people who want to do business in Africa but find that they do not know where their company stands in law. It is important for them to know that otherwise they find it difficult to do business. As well as speaking about basic financial structures and addressing the financial problems, the initiative discusses the basic development task of extending education, training and health care. It considers gender equality and the problem of establishing law and order, which is extremely important in Africa.

I was impressed that the initiative does not begin and end with aid. Aid accounts for some 5 per cent. of the gross domestic product of sub-Saharan Africa, while economic endeavour accounts for the rest. If progress is to be made, it must be done through home-grown economic development, albeit with support from the aid of western countries. The new initiative calls for thoroughgoing economic and political reform in Africa, but also for reform in the west. It asks us to examine the trade barriers that we impose and the farm subsidies that make it impossible for African countries to export agricultural produce to us, and to examine the terms of debt relief. Aid is included in the document, but it is much lower down the list.

We should consider trade. Africa is home to 10 per cent. of the world's population, but accounts for only 2 per cent. of world trade. In 1997, export earnings in Africa rose by 2 per cent. only to fall in the following year by 16 per cent. Why did that happen? Out of the 48 sub-Saharan African countries, 39 are dependent on only two primary commodities, with agricultural produce and minerals accounting for 50 per cent. of exports. There is a pressing need for African countries to increase and diversify their exports, but their ability to do so depends on us. For every exporter, there must be an importer and, unless we change trade policy in Europe, Africa's opportunity to meet the development targets that we set will be severely compromised.

I was extremely pleased by the response on 4 July of the Secretary of State for International Development to my parliamentary question. She listed a wide range of activities within her Department to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to make sure that their interests are properly represented at international trade negotiations. Our Government must be level-headed about the new African initiative. There have been many bold African development initiatives in the past. The Lagos plan of action in 1980, like many others, was launched with a fanfare of publicity but did not achieve real results. The new African initiative will work only if it is led by reforming and modernising African leaders, and we should work with them to make a success of it.

The Prime Minister said in an article that he wrote jointly with Thabo Mbeki in *The Guardian* on 14 June:

"The British government has committed itself to this initiative and we will work to persuade others in the international community to join us."

The Prime Minister will raise the initiative at the G8 summit in Genoa this weekend and has invited Thabo Mbeki to attend the summit and speak from an African perspective about why the initiative is necessary.

The most interesting and attractive feature of the new initiative is that it is not just about aid. It is about trade, investment, financial liberalisation, democracy, transparency and conflict prevention. It is a cross-cutting policy and, to do justice to it, we must formulate a cross-cutting response. Will the Minister ensure that his Department raises the trade issues with the Department of Trade and Industry? Will he raise African concerns about EU food subsidies with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs? Will he raise the ambitions in the African initiative for a global health fund with the Department of Health?

I know that there is already good interdepartmental working between the Department for International Development and other Departments on many issues. The Secretary of State for International Development chairs the committee for the Africa conflict prevention fund. I recognise that the machinery of Government is for the Prime Minister, but will my hon. Friend draw this debate to the attention of No. 10 so that the Prime Minister can consider how to co-ordinate in a cross-cutting way all the UK Government Departments that need to examine their policies in relation to the Africa initiative to ensure that we as a Government pull in the same direction?

1.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development (Hilary Benn): It is a great pleasure to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for

[Hilary Benn]

City of York (Hugh Bayley). He raised a most important and topical subject, and I understand that his long interest and great expertise in development matters will now be at the service of the International Development Select Committee, whose membership we were able to agree on Monday. I particularly warmed to his reminder of the patterns of migration around the globe, in which Africa played an important part, because it encourages us to reflect on our interdependence and the fact that globalisation actually started a long time ago.

As my hon. Friend said, the challenges facing Africa are enormous. He referred to the 600 million people in sub-Saharan Africa who live on less than a dollar a day. Whereas during the past 30 years Asia has significantly reduced poverty, Africa has not. Its share of world trade is just 2 per cent., and 40 per cent. of Africa's savings leave the continent. Partly as a result of that, it is short of investment. It faces trade barriers, especially in agriculture. I assure my hon. Friend that we constantly raise the points that he made about trade, not least in arguing that the World Trade Organisation should take them on board in considering topics for a new round. Above all else, Africa urgently needs economic growth. My hon. Friend reminded us that to reach the international development targets Africa has to grow at 7 per cent. a year, but it is currently achieving just under half that, which is barely enough to maintain income per head.

To complete the list of challenges facing Africa—as if that list were not enough—there are many obstacles to economic growth and sustainable development, including poor governance, corruption, unfinished or unstarted reform, conflict, debt and HIV-AIDS, in regard to which, as my hon. Friend will be aware, the Government have announced that they will contribute $200 million to the global health fund, and in Brussels last week I argued that the EC should make a significant contribution. We may have further news at the Genoa summit. On its own, HIV-AIDS is a catastrophe for the continent and is a subject worthy of debate in its own right.

Rising to such a challenge is exactly what the new African initiative is all about. Its existence as an initiative represents recognition by the countries of Africa that they must do something for themselves to change the continent's future. The initiative brings together the Millennium Africa plan, the Global Compact and the Omega plan. Some joins are visible, but through the medium of last week's Organisation of African Unity summit the initiative now has "Made in Africa" clearly stamped on it. We want more exports stamped "Made in Africa", which will be a sign that economic progress is being made. That ownership, the fact that it comes from Africa, is the most important aspect of the initiative. I agree with my hon. Friend that without that sense of ownership the necessary change will be much harder to bring about.

Like my hon. Friend, the Government warmly welcome the principles on which the initiative is based—especially the commitment to democracy and human rights, which is an essential building block of stability. We welcome the explicit recognition of the importance of investment in economic growth and trade to bringing about the requisite change. We welcome the fact that the initiative sees both the potential for poverty reduction and the need for greater equality—an objective of which we must not lose sight. The last time that my hon. Friend and I were in this Chamber we were debating poverty in the United Kingdom—the first debate on that subject for about 20 years.

We welcome the recognition of mutual interdependence and the need for global governance, global rules and an international financial institutional framework to support countries in transition. We welcome the fact that the initiative embraces international development targets and poverty eradication as a long-term objective. We recognise that it does not shy away from recognising the scale of the problems facing Africa, particularly in political and economic governance. It is candid about the fact that action needs to begin at home and it has several constructive proposals for reforming the relationship with donors to create a more equal partnership. We would all readily sign up to those principles. The question, however, is how they will be delivered. As my hon. Friend put it: what shall we do to support the initiative? In the remaining time I shall deal with that issue.

One of the most profound changes in development policy took place under the leadership of the Secretary of State for International Development, and my hon. Friend kindly referred to her leadership role since 1997. I refer to the recognition that in the long term we do no favours to developing countries by running parallel structures and delivering services through our own direct aid effort and that of other donors unless we also encourage, support and enable developing countries to do it for themselves.

Africa probably provides the greatest regeneration challenge in the world. If the effort springs from within, there is a much greater chance of success. To answer my hon. Friend's question about the first contribution that we can make, it is in fact the one that we are already seeking to make—to focus on countries with large numbers of poor people and Governments committed to the principles of change set out so clearly in the initiative. That means supporting better governance, pro-poor economic growth, conflict prevention, better health and education, sustainable management of the environment and improved infrastructure, and creating a climate in which business can do good by doing good business in those countries.

If we want signs of progress—it is always important to remember progress because that gives us the heart to rise to the next challenge—we should consider Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique. Mozambique is the fastest growing country in Africa. Where things are not working, the scale and nature of our intervention will need to be different, not least because so many countries in Africa are emerging from or still are in conflict. Stability is the essential building block of progress. Without stability, one cannot address the other issues.

Under the heavily indebted poor countries initiative, the total amount of debt relief already agreed for African countries is $25.5 billion. There is more to come for the remaining countries, provided that we can deal with the issue of conflict. In saying that Africa is a priority for the Government and the Prime Minister—in the light of the two speeches cited by my hon.

Friend—we are putting our money where our words are. DIFD's bilateral programmes in Africa have almost doubled in size, from £297 million in 1997-98 to an estimated £594 million in 2000-01 and will grow further to some £687 million by 2003-04. That is, by any measure, a substantial commitment of resources. It is particularly important when one considers that overall international aid flows to Africa are declining. Another question that we need to ask as a result of the debate is what contribution other countries will make to that process, including how we can get more private investment into infrastructure improvement in the African continent.

That brings us neatly to the dialogue that is needed to increase the momentum created by the agreement of the initiative, starting at the G8 summit in Genoa in a few days' time. We need to be honest about the fact that there will be much hard talking. Some tensions are laid bare in the initiative between different countries in Africa. We need to be realistic about the scale and timing of donor support, and we need to consider carefully how the initiative can work with existing co-operation at national and international level to spread best practice. We are particularly interested to see how the institutional framework proposed by those who have signed up to the initiative will work in practice. One needs those mechanisms to make a difference and to turn the principles into reality. The challenges are enormous but not insurmountable. Africa has much to gain from that process through increased trade and investment, better infrastructure and communications and greater access to knowledge. To reap those benefits in the months and years ahead will require much political will and commitment.

I conclude by quoting the succinct conclusion of the document. It states:

> "In proposing the partnership, Africa recognises that it holds the key to its own development. We affirm that the African Initiative offers an historical opportunity for the developed countries of the world to enter into a genuine partnership with Africa, based on mutual interest, shared commitments and binding agreements."

We agree with that. It is an opportunity that Africa, and we, cannot afford to miss.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Two o'clock.

Westminster Hall

Thursday 19 July 2001

[SIR MICHAEL LORD *in the Chair*]

Youth Justice

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—[*Mrs. McGuire.*]

2.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Beverley Hughes): It is my great pleasure to be able to speak in this debate on an important subject in which I have had a personal interest for many years. I also ought perhaps to declare another form of interest. My husband is a manager of a multi-disciplinary youth offending team and therefore I get a lot of inside information about what is happening on the ground.

I am pleased to see Members in the Chamber for the debate, although it is a great pity that the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) is not supported by more of his colleagues, because this is an important subject upon which there is potential for parties to work together to achieve shared aims in relation not only to young people in general, but to youth crime and youth justice.

Given the importance of the issue, we have placed it at the heart of the Government's attack on crime and disorder. We know that young people under 18 are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime. In London, for example, about 25 per cent. of all burglaries, and a third of car thefts are committed by those aged between 10 and 16.However, we also know that young people suffer disproportionately from crime. They are more likely to be victims of crime than offenders, often at the hands of other young people. The 1998-99 youth life style survey showed that a third of young people had experienced theft of their property.

Many of those who offend are still young enough to be diverted from crime if we can intervene at an early stage. Effective youth justice is not merely a question of protecting the law-abiding citizen, important as that is. It must also prevent the waste of young lives that have turned into lives of crime, by helping young offenders to mend their ways. It must also put victims alongside those issues in determining how we approach the problem of youth crime.

When the Government came to power four years ago, the youth justice system was failing. The 1996 Audit Commission report, "Misspent Youth", highlighted the need for radical reform. The system was not preventing offending, it did not safeguard the welfare of young people and it paid little attention to victims. Instead, the system was making excuses for itself and for the young offenders who came before it.

The then system had no focus on prevention or on victims. Young offenders were not identified and tracked in a systematic way. Supervision was weak and there was little inter-agency co-operation. That is why, right from the start, the Government made tackling youth crime and its causes one of their top priorities. We are beginning to see signs of a transformation—a new culture of joint working. A new system has had to be built from scratch.

In 1997, we made it an election pledge to speed up the time that it takes to process persistent young offenders. More broadly, we have set in motion the biggest shake-up in the youth justice system in a generation. In the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, we set out an entire new philosophy for youth justice, dedicated to preventing offending and re-offending. As an important start, we established a statutory aim for the youth justice system of preventing offending by children and young people. That has helped to refocus local youth justice agencies on the delivery of services.

2.35 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

2.50 pm

On resuming—

Beverley Hughes: I was setting out some of the principles underlying the approach that the Government are trying to develop in legislation and in setting up the youth justice system. I was explaining that we started by establishing a statutory principal aim for the youth justice system—preventing offending by children and young people. That has helped to refocus local youth justice agencies in providing services.

The approach has four important elements. It starts, first, with prevention; secondly, an important aim has been to improve the performance of the system throughout; thirdly, we want to make punishment effective—it needs to be tough but proportionate and must challenge misbehaviour and promote responsibility; and fourthly, the underlying philosophy includes recognising the impact of crime on victims and the need to make reparation a key element in the development of a new restorative justice.

I want to outline the components of our approach in more detail. Prevention is based on work with each offender, intervening early to try to nip offending behaviour in the bud. The new multi-agency youth offending teams tackle risk factors such as those associated with education, health and parenting. However, prevention of youth crime begins a long way upstream from the youth justice system. Our reforms work integrally with the Government's wider effort to combat social exclusion in all its manifestations. For example, the surestart programme begins early by promoting the physical, intellectual, social and emotional well-being and development of children under four in disadvantaged areas. By 2004, the Government will be investing almost £500 million a year, and reaching a third of poor children under four.

Similarly, the children's fund has been established as a new part of the Government's strategy to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. That fund will concentrate on supporting five to 13-year-olds, filling the gaps in provision between Sure Start and Connexions. The fund is worth about £450 million over three years. A long-term crime reduction programme entitled "on track" is aimed at children under 12 who are at risk of offending.

[Beverley Hughes]

It is part of the children's fund. The Connexions service exists to help steer all 13 to 19-year-olds through education, training and employment, and it places particular emphasis on the needs of those most at risk of under-achievement and disaffection.

Simon Hughes (Southwark, North and Bermondsey): I shall ask the Minister a question in connection with her perfectly well made point about the importance of starting early with work among disadvantaged or vulnerable children. Has she yet had a chance to be briefed on the work that has come out of the investigation into the death of Damilola Taylor, by the police and other agencies in Southwark? That has interesting information about children who have experienced, first, social services involvement at primary school age or earlier, and a history of abuse in the family, then school problems—particularly bullying and being bullied—and who end up coming to the notice of the police as offenders for the first time at about 12 or 13. In all cases, there is a pattern of activity that one or other of the agencies concerned has spotted before. It seems that a really important lesson is the need to link the agencies together, so that they can share information as early as possible.

Beverley Hughes: I am aware of some of the early findings, although there has not yet been a full report, nor have there been recommendations as to how the lessons learned can be implemented. I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of close, systematic inter-agency co-operation that does not fail at times of stress. We have learned this lesson so many times due to various tragedies or events that it is sad that we have to learn it again. We need to pay attention—it is critical.

The Government's 10-year drug strategy addresses another key area of prevention. The target is to reduce the proportion of young people using illicit drugs, particularly heroin and cocaine, by a quarter by 2005 and by a half by 2008. In addition to the broad governmental measures, the youth offending teams, the Youth Justice Board and its partner agencies are concentrating on prevention by identifying young people at risk and by focusing on vulnerable communities. The youth inclusion programme, run by the YJB, focuses on such preventive work with 50 of the most at-risk 13 to 16-year-olds in 70 disadvantaged neighbourhoods throughout England and Wales. For 2001, we have funded almost 150 Easter and summer splash schemes for young children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

I hope hon. Members will not mind my reiterating some broad Government policy—it is important to understand that we shall not effectively tackle youth crime or address the causes of crime unless we start early and pay attention to the areas of young people's lives that influence whether they are led into crime. The measures that address certain aspects of social exclusion are as important as the policies and programmes that are specifically youth-justice focused.

The second issue that I mentioned was performance. We must create a far more efficient and effective youth justice system. We have started to cut delays. I mentioned the pledge in the 1997 election campaign to halve, by 2002, the average time taken from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders from 142 to 71 days. By April 2001, it had been cut to 78 days. That is encouraging. We should remember that that is not a target for its own sake; reducing delay reinforces the link between the offence and the response to it. That is an important part of the learning process for young offenders. As well as reinforcing the link, it allows for earlier intervention. Everybody involved with young people agrees that the earlier we can intervene the better the outcome can be. That can strengthen public confidence in the system.

We have set up the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, which has been in operation since September 1998, to provide national co-ordination, and have established 154 multi-agency youth offending teams—known as YOTS—across England and Wales. These are important in relation to the point made by the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes), because they bring together the police, probation services, local authorities, health and education providers and other agencies at local level to work together with individual young offenders. YOTS are required to address all aspects of their offending behaviour, including relevant family, education, health and other issues.

From April 2000, the Youth Justice Board also assumed responsibility for the commissioning and purchase of all forms of juvenile secure accommodation throughout England and Wales, whether in the Prison Service, the local authority or the private sector, for both remanded and sentenced young people.

Julie Morgan (Cardiff, North): I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that Wales has a specific problem with young people who are remanded or have custodial sentences. Wales has limited facilities to accommodate them, which means that young people travel to Eastwood Park near Bristol from my area and the depths of west Wales, for example. Among other problems that that causes, it affects continued links with youth offending teams and families when the young people go back into the community. Also, I have been told anecdotally that the use of the Welsh language sometimes causes bullying in young offenders' institutions. I would be grateful for the Minister's comments.

Beverley Hughes: I am aware of the problem. I heard about the arrival of four young people from Cardiff at a London young offenders institution as I visited it this week. We do not want the situation to continue. The factors about closeness to home and to the local youth offending team are important in helping young people most effectively while in institutions, and also while resettling them when they are ready to come out.

The Youth Justice Board is working hard to improve the availability and spread of secure places, and the quality of regimes. It is paying special attention to the problem in Wales. I visited another establishment in Wales and, co-incidentally, the board visited at the same time to explore the possibility of purchasing some places for juveniles there. The board hopes to commission some places in the near future. My hon. Friend is right to raise the issue, as it is important and we want to tackle it.

The third issue that I shall raise—they are all emblematic of the Government's approach—is punishment. The reform system has to dispense proportionate and constructive punishment. It must focus on making young offenders face the consequences of their offending, and on diverting them from re-offending. Courts are now offered a range of sentencing alternatives. For the first time, there is a systematic process for use of information about young offenders through a new, common assessment scheme called ASSET. Importantly, it enables youth justice professionals to use a standardised instrument to try to match the causes of offending, and a specific programme of action is coming out of the assessment to stop further offending.

Many new programmes have come on stream and are available to the youth offending teams, ranging from help for parents, education and training, drug and alcohol placements, to reparation and restorative justice programmes. Some of the powers that we have given to the police and the courts are essentially preventive. The police now issue a single final warning to offenders, instead of the old system of endless ineffectual cautions.

The courts can now impose a range of orders targeted at the underlying causes of offending. For example, a parenting order reinforces parental responsibilities and provides support to help parents keep their children out of trouble. A reparation order allows offenders to make amends directly to the victim, if the victim is willing, or to the wider local community. The new orders have proved popular with sentencers. So far, more than 13,000 reparation, child safety, parenting and action plan orders have been made since they were introduced nationally on 1 June 2000.

We are trying to use new technology effectively by introducing curfew orders backed by electronic tagging for juveniles. Such orders are designed to break the pattern of offending behaviour, which if left unchecked could increase the risk of offenders receiving custodial sentences. The next major step for youth offending teams is the innovative referral order that is being piloted in 11 areas. It is specifically designed to prevent reoffending through a new approach when young people first come to court and plead guilty. The young person will be referred to community-based youth offender panels, which will decide on positive interventions in consultation with the offender, victims or their representatives and others who have a link to that young person. We plan to implement the order nationally from April 2002.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I appreciate that referral orders are still in the pilot stage and that the statistical information available to the Minister might not be complete. However, is there any evidence to hand to enable us to assess the success of the referral order scheme in deterring young offenders from committing crimes again?

Beverley Hughes: Yes. There is certainly evidence from the pilot areas, although it is rudimentary at the moment and cannot be used to compare referral orders using the standard test of the reconviction rate within two years. However, there is encouraging evidence in those areas of a reduction in the amount of re-offending compared with what we would normally expect had a referral order not been introduced.

We are also determined to tackle the problem of young people who defy the criminal justice system by committing repeated offences on bail, and I know that many hon. Members experience that problem in their constituencies. The new Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 includes provisions that will enable the courts to deal with those who repeatedly offend on bail, but who could not previously be remanded into custody because their offence was not serious enough. It will also offer the courts the option of using electronic monitoring of juveniles on bail or on remand to local authority accommodation.

This week, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary launched the intensive supervision and surveillance programme—the ISSP—for about 2,500 of the most persistent young offenders. That is the direction in which we need to go. The ISSP is a highly structured, community-based programme, which is designed to tackle the underlying causes of offending behaviour. It includes supervision and surveillance of an intensity that community programmes have not offered before. Surveillance can be for up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It can be carried out with the aid of electronic tagging and of another new technology, voice recognition, which can be used in conjunction with telephones to establish a young person's whereabouts when they phone in and their voice is recognised. Those various mechanisms can also inculcate the discipline and the response to structure and routine that are necessary for many persistent young offenders whose life styles have been characterised by lack of order, lack of discipline and chaos. The ISSP is an important measure, which will be introduced shortly and used for the most persistent young offenders.

These measures are, of course, backed by the antisocial behaviour order. Next month, we will extend the age range of children who can be covered by child curfew schemes by increasing the limit to 15. That will help local authorities and others to deal with the problem of unsupervised children out on the streets at night.

I have talked so far about the range of provisions that enable young people to be supervised effectively. These provisions deal with their offending behaviour and enable them to remain in the community. For some young people, however, the seriousness or persistence of their offending means that custody might be the only immediate answer, but time in custody must be used constructively. The detention and training order aims to achieve that by combining custody and community supervision to punish and rehabilitate young offenders. Each young offender is subject to an individual training plan, which is designed both to tackle the particular factors that are thought to precipitate their offending behaviour and to provide them with the necessary skills to avoid getting into trouble on release.

Since the Youth Justice Board took over the secure juvenile estate last year, as I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Julie Morgan), facilities and regimes for the under-18s have been transformed, and I have been to see some of them. The board has increased time out of cell and has placed a far stronger emphasis on education and training, cognitive behaviour programmes and the development of social skills. However, there is still a long way to go. By next year we will have implemented the proposals made in

[Beverley Hughes]

the social exclusion unit's report "Bridging the Gap" to increase the time allowed for education and training to 30 hours per week for all in custody who are under the age of 18.

Mr. Hilton Dawson (Lancaster and Wyre): Is it not a matter of enormous concern that we have proportionately more young people in custody than any other western country? Is it appropriate to lock away children in prison establishments, rather than in local authority establishments, where they would be under the jurisdiction of the Children Act 1989?

Beverley Hughes: My hon. Friend is very experienced and expert in such matters and he will know that the majority of juvenile offenders in custody are held in secure training units, local authority secure accommodation or young offender institutions in the juvenile part of young offender institutions. Only a tiny number are held in prison.

The latest information that I have is that only 13 are held in prison. We need to change that, but I know that my hon. Friend realises that there are sometimes competing imperatives. For example, there are fewer female juvenile offenders, but it is not always possible to provide female places in all parts of the country. Sometimes the need to keep a young woman close to her home is judged to be an overriding factor. In a tiny number of cases, special circumstances apply, or a judgment is made about a range of issues that results in someone being kept closer to home in prison instead of in a specific juvenile institution. However, I take the general drift of my hon. Friend's remarks.

Simon Hughes: I am grateful for the Minister's response to the hon. Member for Lancaster and Wyre (Mr. Dawson), but I wish to push her a little further.

Four years ago, in his first generic report, the chief inspector made clear his view that children should not be held in prison. Is that the Government's policy? Is it therefore the Government's plan that, within a short time, there will be no children in prisons in England and Wales? I do not want to put words into anyone's mouth, but the hon. Gentleman and many others believe that we ought at least to ensure that children are placed not in prison but in alternative forms of custody.

Beverley Hughes: As I have said, the vast majority of juveniles are not in prison; it is more appropriate for them to be placed in one of the three institutions that have specialist juvenile provisions. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman that juveniles will never be placed in prison establishments because, as I have tried to explain, the tiny number of juveniles in prison now are there because competing factors can sometimes mean that a prison placement is in their best interests. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman that it will never happen, but we generally support the policy that they should be placed in establishments that cater for juveniles. That is what we aim to achieve.

The fourth issue that I raised in my introduction was the underlying philosophy of our approach, which is to engender a new restorative justice with three key principles. First, young offenders should start taking responsibility for their actions; secondly, reparation by young offenders to the victim or the community should be a feature of that approach; and thirdly, as a result of the previous two principles, we aim to reintegrate young offenders back into their own communities. That is recognised as an important new approach.

The youth justice strategy reforms that I have set out represent the boldest and most thorough-going drive to reform the youth justice system and to tackle youth crime and its causes that we have seen so far.

Mr. David Drew (Stroud): I am sure that my hon. Friend knows that a lot of change has been demanded from the staff who work in such areas, particularly from those in the probation service, which has had to change its whole being. Does she agree that there is a need to bolster confidence because of links with other aspects of the Connexions service as much as anything else? Indeed, some have left the probation service to join Connexions. We need to evaluate the pressures on the service, and anything that the hon. Lady can do to bring that forward would be useful.

Beverley Hughes: I spoke about such matters at the recent national probation conference. Yesterday, I met both the general secretary and the chair of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, who also raised such issues. The new national probation service has done exceptionally well in achieving a change in not only its structure, but its culture and approach. I commend it for that. It has coped with a substantial change. As I said at the conference, we look forward to the challenges of the next few years as a result of the Halliday proposals and sentencing reforms.

Another report is being issued on courts as a result of the Auld report. I hope that that will lead to a much more informed debate on where we need to be going in respect of criminal justice, in general, and youth justice, in particular, and towards making community sentences much more effective. The probation service is well placed to play a major role—if not the major role—in achieving our desired result. Most of the people who work for it want to join the Government and other agencies in achieving that outcome. I welcome working with the service.

We must recognise that many of the changes to which I have referred have been in force for only a year. It is too early to be certain about results, but at some point we must be clear about the effectiveness of those changes. The Home Office and the Youth Justice Board have commissioned several substantial pieces of research and performance evaluation to cover all areas of the youth justice system. We shall receive a series of reports on effectiveness and evaluation this summer.

Youth crime affects young people. Indeed, it affects the whole of society. I hope that people recognise that the Government have signalled their determination to tackle the problem both constructively and proactively. It is an enormous challenge and, although I have spent some time setting out what we have done, I am the first to recognise that we still have a long way to go. Over the past four years, we have made a strong start. We must be committed to tackling the problem. By reducing the number of young people starting or continuing in

criminal careers, we can prevent young lives from being wasted. We can maximise their contribution not only to their future, but society. We can also create stronger, safer communities.

3.19 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I wish to express my apologies for being unable to stay until the end of the debate. I was asked to speak at short notice in place of one of my hon. Friends who, for personal reasons, cannot be at Westminster this afternoon. My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Randall) will be present on behalf of the Opposition Front Bench for the duration of the debate, and I shall of course read the *Hansard* reports of the speeches that I am unable to hear myself.

I share the Minister's hope that we can achieve a fair measure of cross-party agreement on this subject. It is in everyone's interest that the Government's reforms bed down and work successfully. In the nine years that I have been a Member I have learned that it is much better if people who deliver a public service can make a new system operate effectively, albeit with a little tweaking, than to have a complete upheaval every four or five years or whenever there is a change of ministry.

We can agree with plenty of the Minister's comments and with those in the Youth Justice Board's annual report, which was published a couple of days ago. My constituency is in the Thames Valley police force area, and my chief constable is a member of the YJB and an ardent evangelist for the virtues of the restorative justice approach, which was pioneered by Charles Pollard in Milton Keynes and in my constituency. I was impressed by the session of the restorative justice circle that I attended and by the enthusiasm with which the members of the Buckinghamshire youth offending team that I visited last year, who were from different agencies and disciplines, worked together for a more effective approach towards the problems of youth crime and disorder.

The test of the new system will be the extent to which it increases public safety by reducing crime and reoffending, and I look forward to the publication of the promised performance indicators. I am sure that throughout the course of the Parliament the Opposition will keep a beady eye on the Government's targets and performance indicators to establish whether what happens in practice measures up to the promises that we have been given.

I want to ensure that any critical remarks or questions that I put to the Minister during my speech are viewed in the context of wanting the new system to succeed. We need to be on the alert for a surfeit of committees and plans. We now have YOTs, which are supposed to draft strategies to prevent youth offending and reduce the incidence of youth crime in their areas and, with the police authority, to draft a policing plan for the area. Each locality, which usually represents a district council or metropolitan borough area, is required to produce a community safety or crime reduction plan. The Youth Justice Board has set national targets for YOTs, and the Home Secretary has set national targets for different police forces, which in due course we shall have for the various probation services as part of the new national probation service. There is always a danger that the time, energy and professional expertise of police officers, probation officers and others go into attending committees and preparing plans and that the sharpness of focus that we all agree is necessary is lost.

Mr. Dawson: The hon. Gentleman describes a complex social system. However, surely with YOTs and the direct line to the Youth Justice Board, we now have a simpler and more effective system than the plethora of youth justice arrangements that used to operate?

Mr. Lidington: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is right. However, YOTs depend for their funding partly on the extent to which police forces, the probation service and others are prepared to put money into a common pot. Their ability to do so and to devote staff time through secondments to YOTs depends upon each agency's priorities. It is not possible to separate the question of YOTs from broader questions about the organisation of the criminal justice system.

The concerns that I have expressed were conveyed to me by police and probation officers and magistrates. As parliamentarians, we must be aware of the risks, and through our questions encourage Ministers to guard against them.

Inherent in the system is a tension between national and local priorities. When talking to local government officers and police officers about the implementation of community safety or crime reduction plans, I find that, on the one hand, there are priorities that are laid down by the Home Office—performance indicators imposed on police by the Home Office. On the other hand, there is a statutory duty on the partnerships to consult local people to ascertain their priorities in terms of community safety and crime reduction. That tension also applies to the youth justice system, and I hope that Ministers will be alert to it throughout this Parliament.

I am critical of the Government on a number of points. The Minister referred to the Government's early pledge to halve the time taken from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders. As she said, in May 1997 the figure was 142 days and the target was 71 days. Today, she told us that the time taken is now down to 78 days, which is a reduction on the figure for March this year of 83 days—the last published figure before the Minister's comments. I hope that she will be able to say whether May 2002 is still a firm target for the Government's delivery of the early pledge made in 1996.

Will the Minister also tell us what records exist for individual police forces? When I thumbed through the YJB's annual report for 1999-2000, I noticed that it listed six police forces —Cumbria, North Wales, North Yorkshire, the City of London and Dorset—that had achieved the 71-day target or exceeded it. However, the newly published report for 2000-01 contains no such list. Surely, if the YJB had found that more than six were achieving the Government's target, it would have said so. I am suspicious about what is going on, and I hope that the Minister can deal with that in her reply or, subsequently, in writing.

My underlying question about the Government's target for reducing the time from arrest to sentence is that, throughout the Chamber, we agree with the Minister that it is a sensible objective to try to link the fact of punishment to the commission of the crime. That

[Mr. Lidington]

linkage is broken when it takes ages for someone to be brought to justice. Even if the individual criminal is not affected, common sense might tell us that an offender's peer group might be influenced by the sight of him or her receiving swift and exemplary justice.

I have also seen evidence—from studies conducted by the university of Sheffield, for example—that the Government's attempt to speed up the system has merely led to young offenders being recycled round the system more swiftly. I hope that the Minister can reassure us that the Government are putting measures in place to enable us to assess the extent to which reducing the time taken to try such cases and to sentence offenders leads to a reduction in crime and recidivism, because there is no benefit to be had from achieving the 71-days target if there is not also a reduction in crime or reoffending. We should not assess that Government target in isolation: we should also assess whether it delivers the goods to the public by producing a safer country.

I turn to the penalties that are available to the courts under the new system. The Minister's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Clarke), wrote to me on 11 May 2001, about a parliamentary question that he had initially replied to on 20 December 2000—those dates might contain a lesson about the need to speed up the system. I had asked about the number of community orders on young offenders that had been breached or revoked, because it is fine and dandy for such penalties to be made available to the courts, but it is also necessary to ask whether they are effective in practice.

In his letter, the then Minister stated that, between April and December 2000, 29,461 community orders were made against young offenders, and that no fewer than 8,573 had been either breached or revoked. That figure represents no less than 29 per cent. of all the community orders that the courts made on young offenders in that period. It is therefore a serious matter, and it is necessary to ask several questions about it.

The then Minister was unable to distinguish between figures for breach and figures for revocation, although the latter category would refer to cases about which the court had taken a serious view concerning the nature of the breach. Therefore, I am unsure whether the figure of 29 per cent. refers only to cases in which the order has apparently failed, or whether it also contains individual cases that have come before the court more than once, and when the second breach has led to revocation. I would welcome further information about that matter.

Does the evidence suggest that there is a greater risk of breaches with certain types of order? Again, the then Minister's letter failed adequately to address that. Indeed, he wrote that

"the Youth Offending Teams do not yet collect data for breaches of each individual order".

The use of the word "yet" suggested to me that the Government might have plans to introduce a more detailed reporting system, and I would be interested to hear the Minister's response concerning that. If an order has been revoked, does re-sentencing for the original offence follow, and what type of sentence is given in such circumstances? We need more information about the operation of these orders, and about breaches or revocation, to enable us to come to an informed conclusion about the effectiveness of the new penalties.

Mr. Dawson: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the use of the breach procedure on such an apparently large scale may indicate the system's health? I would be suspicious of any system of youth justice in which breach was not used. If one compares the apparent efficacy to that of custodial sentences in preventing re-offending, may this be a case in which community sentences are properly enforced to ensure that they work properly?

Mr. Lidington: Indeed. One possible explanation of the figures is that the authorities are now enforcing action on breaches more tightly than previously. We need further information; I will not denounce either the Government or the new penalties without that. However, the questions are perfectly reasonable.

I ask the Minister three other points about penalties. My first point is about not so much penalties as reward schemes of the type that the Prime Minister announced in April. The Minister will recall that the Prime Minister said that there would be a Youth Justice Board pilot scheme in London through which youngsters might qualify for vouchers for clothes, music and the like as a reward for good behaviour. All of us, at constituency level, have seen examples of effective diversionary schemes that successfully distract disaffected young men from the temptations of crime and antisocial behaviour. However, there is a fine balance between an effective diversionary scheme and a scheme that appears to reward—in the case of some young people—good behaviour that many others would regard as their plain duty and something that they get on with without reward from the state. The Minister will know that the announcement aroused controversy from many people, including spokesmen for victims' groups. Do the Government intend to follow the policy through or have they discarded the approach?

Vernon Coaker (Gedling): Was the confusion not because a majority of people, through the press, saw the scheme as rewarding young people who had committed an offence? I understood that the scheme was to try to reward young people living in the most difficult areas who, despite all that goes on around them, manage to resist temptations such as a life of crime. In that sense, the scheme was a novel way to support young people who are in the difficult circumstances that many find themselves in.

Mr. Lidington: I will be interested to hear an explanation from the Government of the nature and scope of such schemes, and the criteria on which their success would be judged.

The Minister will be familiar with my two further points about penalties. Child curfew orders were to be one of the great success stories of the previous Parliament's legislation. Of course, they turned out to be nothing of the kind. Not one local authority applied for a child curfew order. In recent legislation, the Government extended the age limits of the groups that a child curfew could be sought for. However, do the Government plan to issue—or have they issued—

guidance to local authorities and police forces about implementing the new legislation relating to child curfew orders? The police and local authorities are concerned that a blanket ban on all young people going out in a particular area would divert crime and disorder to a different estate or would disproportionately affect the interests of youngsters who are law abiding and would see the measure as an unfair punishment. Further information on that would be useful, as would be some words about the Government's approach to antisocial behaviour orders. These orders can be taken out in respect of anyone from the age of 10 onwards, and from my constituency experience—I suspect that it is shared by other hon. Members from whichever party—a great many complaints, which usually come from the decent people living on rough council estates, concern the behaviour of unruly youngsters in their neighbourhood, who are making life hell for those particular families or individuals. I know that that is a subject which the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) has taken up on a number of occasions in Parliament.

The previous Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), championed antisocial behaviour orders. He said that they would be one of the key instruments in dealing with a problem that everybody, of all political parties, acknowledged was real, harmed lives and made misery for many thousands of our constituents. He urged local authorities and police forces to get on with the job of enforcing the new laws. Yet on the most recent figures that I have seen, only 214 antisocial behaviour orders have been issued nationally in the years that these remedies have been available.

One reason for that still seems to be that the police and local authorities find it time-consuming, cumbersome and bureaucratic to get an order in place. Another difficulty concerns standards of proof. Although to get an antisocial behaviour order one needs only to demonstrate to the court the civil standard of proof, if one is seeking remedy for subsequent breach of an antisocial behaviour order, one has to prove one's case to the court up to the criminal standard of beyond reasonable doubt. It has been put to me that, for that reason, police and local authorities are reluctant to initiate the process of securing an ASBO unless they believe from the start that they have evidence up to the criminal standard of proof that would be required for any subsequent enforcement action. Cost may also be a factor. I have see one estimate from the police that obtaining an ASBO order costs up to £100,000 when staff time is taken into account. However, the penalties for breaches are insubstantial and it therefore turns out not to be worth doing.

Mr. Dawson: This is only anecdotal evidence, but I would like to say that the northern division of the Lancashire constabulary has been effective in using antisocial behaviour orders across rural and urban areas in its patch. It has used them effectively to deal with drunkenness, downright criminal behaviour and persistent burglars. They have been well supported by communities that have experienced tremendous relief and by the local media. They have worked very well.

Mr. Lidington: If that is happening in north Lancashire, it is indeed good news, although it poses an ever starker form of question as to why that apparent success has not been followed up by police forces and local authorities elsewhere in the country. I would hope that if there has been some trick that the Lancashire authorities have discovered, which enables them to use ASBOs more effectively than has been the case elsewhere, the inspectorate of constabulary and others will make that experience well known in other parts of the country.

The Minister made points about secure training places and local authority places. One of the political differences between the two sides of the Chamber is that the Opposition would continue to argue for a much greater expansion of secure training places than that proposed by the Government.

I shall raise a specific point about local authority provision, which was made to me when I visited Bradford city council last week. The council feared that one possible outcome of police and court action following the disturbances was that a number of very young people would be remanded into local authority care for secure provision pending trial for a violent offence. The council thought that it would be difficult to find and finance the places. The Home Office should consider that aspect of the matter, in case any help needs to be given to Bradford or other parts of the country where problems might be faced in the wake of recent riots.

I turn to the issue of young offender institutions. As the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) said in his intervention, that is a matter to which the chief inspector, Sir David Ramsbothom, and his predecessor, Sir Stephen Tumim, rightly devoted a great deal of attention and energy. Aylesbury YOI is in my constituency; it houses some of the most dangerous and difficult young offenders anywhere in the country. They are not simply naughty boys but young men who have committed violent and sexual offences and who need to be housed in secure accommodation.

Managing an institution such as Aylesbury or Feltham YOI is a complex and challenging business. People who serve as prison governors and officers in those establishments deserve support and encouragement for the good work that is done there. Frankly, it is not a job I would like to take on myself. However, problems undoubtedly exist in those places. The difficulties at Feltham have been in the news on and off for the past few months. In Aylesbury, there have been a series of appalling suicides; from memory, I believe that five young men died in the course of about 18 months. From the figures given for the Prison Service nationally—I am not sure whether they apply specifically to the YOI sector—it is clear that the suicide rate has recently increased. Assaults, which sometimes reflect bullying, have also risen in number.

I acknowledge the difficulties of managing such establishments and the fact that young men in their teens and early twenties are the group most at risk of suicide, but I hope that the hon. Lady and the Minister for Criminal Justice, Sentencing and Law Reform will keep that matter close to the top of their respective agendas in the years to come.

[Mr. Lidington]

I hope, too, that the hon. Lady or her right hon. Friend will spell out Government thinking on the future of YOIs. In the consultation document published a couple of years ago, the Government said that they were minded to move towards a system in which different institutions existed for offenders above and below the age of majority. That would result in a real shake-up of the present YOI system. Is that still the Government's objective? Will they give some assurance, if that is the case, that they recognise the need for institutions such as Aylesbury that will deal with the most serious offenders, who simply cannot be housed in community-based accommodation but who will require, under any foreseeable arrangement, very secure housing?

I read the report of the debate initiated by my noble Friend Lord Hurd that took place in the House of Lords a few days ago. It is required reading for anyone interested in the prison or criminal justice systems, and I hope that in this context of young offender institutions the Government will take note of the comments that were made by Members of that House, from all parties and from none. We need a prison service that not only serves the public by keeping prisoners securely, but is more successful than it has been in the past at ensuring that when prisoners are released—as almost all will be one day—they are able to lead law-abiding lives.

I appreciate the fact that both the Minister and the Youth Justice Board have recognised that effective policies to deal with young offending must include effective punishment and tackle the reasons why young people are tempted into crime in the first place. If there were time, we could debate matters such as achievement at school, exclusion from school and family background. I was struck by the statement in the YJB's report of this week that

"only 50 per cent. of children excluded from school had a father or stepfather living at home."

We know from research by organisations such as NCH Action for Children that children who have been through local authority care are disproportionately represented in youth courts and young offender institutions. I hope that the Government will try, wherever possible, to involve voluntary agencies in the delivery of services that are designed to reach out to disaffected and excluded young people. Those organisations are often able to provide a human dimension to care that a Government agency, however well intentioned, finds difficult because it is inevitably bound by a Whitehall rule book.

I welcome the fact that the Government have made time for the debate. As an Opposition, we shall continue closely to scrutinise the impact of the changes that they have introduced. It will be in the interests of all our constituents if the new youth justice system succeeds as the Government hope that it will.

3.53 pm

Vernon Coaker (Gedling): I am pleased to follow the two speakers that we have heard so far. After the Minister's thoughtful introduction came the comments of the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), who entered into the spirit of the debate that people want about youth justice—an important issue that affects us all in our constituencies. The debate gives us the opportunity to reflect on what we are doing and some of the problems that confront us, rather than scoring political points off each other.

Having had a couple of conversations about the issue over the past few weeks, I should point out that although we are talking about youth justice and reflecting on the young people that cause us problems, huge numbers of young people are a great credit to themselves and their families. They do a remarkable amount of good, including charity work and volunteering, and they contribute a great deal to society.

I shall start in the same way as my hon. Friend the Minister by examining some of facts that I took from the excellent social exclusion unit policy action team 12 report on young people. The report is now a year old and some of the facts will have since been updated, but I shall quote from it because it provides the context for our debate today. It states that

"One in three men have a criminal record by the age of 30"—

an astonishing figure—and that

"40 per cent of offenders are under the age of 21 and a quarter are under 18".

That, too, is astonishing. The report also states that there is an

"Increase in violent crime by juveniles".

An important factor that has not been mentioned so far is the increasing amount of violent crime by young women.

My hon. Friend the Minister drew attention to the victims of crime. The report states:

"In England and Wales, young people aged 16-24 are more likely to be victimised than any other group."

We often think of it as an adult issue, but young people in schools, youth clubs and on the streets are also concerned about crime and youth justice. The majority of them know someone who has been a victim or have themselves been victims because they are the most likely victims. The report continues:

"a quarter of all violent crime is committed against young men... One in six young people aged 14-25 are the victim of a violent offence each year and more than one in three 12-15-year-olds are assaulted each year."

When I read those statistics to provide the context for today's debate, I was confronted again with the enormity of the issue that we are discussing and what we should be doing about it. The classic retort, which we all make sometimes when we are frustrated, is, "Let's get tougher. We must crack down on crime and lock up more young people." I say that because I, too, am frustrated. For persistent offenders—violent and dangerous young people who are a threat to society or who simply will not respond to anything—there is no alternative because we must protect the public.

The report, to which the hon. Member for Aylesbury and my hon. Friend the Minister referred, also states:

"There are 11,500 15-21-year-olds in custody, of whom at least three-quarters will be re-convicted within two years of release. Nearly three-quarters of offenders under the age of 21 released from prison are re-convicted within two years. The imprisonment rate has risen by about 50 per cent since the early 1990s."

However, the popular myth is that offenders are getting away with their crimes. Our debate is important because those are the facts. We are locking up more young

people and, as the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) said, of the 29 member states of the Council of Europe, only Romania, Estonia and Lithuania have higher imprisonment rates for people under the age of 21 than England.

I make no apology for quoting at length from the report. We must ask ourselves whether we feel safer and whether there has been a reduction in antisocial behaviour, re-offending rates, and so on. There is an enormous amount of work for us to do as a Parliament, as a Government and as elected Members to try to improve the lot of our constituents. There is certainly a problem.

I was delighted by my hon. Friend the Minister's remarks, which the hon. Member for Aylesbury supported. We seem to be entering an era in which we are determined to confront some of the difficult facts. We must ensure that persistent and dangerous offenders are locked up and kept away from the community so that they are no longer a threat. I am interested, however, in the various other measures that the Government are examining to try to turn young people away from crime. It is early days, but I am pleased that we now have young offending teams to bring together different people and agencies. The matter is not just for the police, although, of course, they are involved. Social services, housing agencies and others need to come together to support young people and their families. The Government are making progress in putting the restorative aspect in place as well as ensuring that we clamp down on those who persistently offend.

It is more helpful to discuss practical matters rather than to have a purely intellectual debate. As well as introducing new measures, we must ensure that existing laws and regulations are enforced. Where youth justice is concerned, there is nothing more frustrating for people than the introduction of a new initiative that they thought they had heard all about a couple of years ago. We need to enforce existing laws and to ensure that new ones work.

There has been a problem with antisocial behaviour orders. I accept the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster and Wyre (Mr. Dawson) made about north Lancashire, but there have been problems in other parts of the country. Not as many orders have been passed as expected. I was delighted—as, I am sure, were many other hon. Members—by the introduction of the orders, because at last there was a civil, rather than a criminal, sanction for a problem that was driving us all mad—antisocial behaviour by young people on our streets.

We all hear about those problems in our constituency surgeries. Of course, serious crimes are brought to our attention there as well, but a large number of my surgeries—and this seems to be true for other hon. Members—are taken up with people complaining about what seems to be quite trivial antisocial behaviour, but which is driving them stark, raving mad because of what they have to put up with in their own houses and on their streets. When antisocial behaviour goes unchecked in our communities, there is a sense that the law is not being properly implemented, and that can lead to other things. I would like antisocial behaviour orders to be examined to see whether they can be toughened and tightened up.

Many people say that existing laws on the sale of alcohol to young people and tenancy agreements with councils are not properly enforced. People who take on council properties are supposed to ensure that their children are properly supervised, but no one enforces tenancy agreements with the necessary rigour and thoroughness. My first plea to the Minister is that antisocial behaviour orders and acceptable behaviour contracts be made sufficiently rigorous.

I am pleased that the number of police is being increased because that is important for our communities and for youth justice on the streets. Given what we have seen in the past few weeks on our television screens, it is also important that my hon. Friend the Minister and her colleagues in the Department look again at how to recruit more ethnic minority police officers. There have been many initiatives to try to deal with that issue. We should celebrate the fact that we live in a multicultural society that is an inspiration to us all, but we must consider why we cannot recruit the ethnic minority officers that we need. Greater numbers of such recruits would be enormously helpful.

To judge by the comments of my constituents, there is a great deal of work to do. Many members of the public have lost confidence in community sanctions. I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Minister talk about the need for community punishments as an alternative to locking up young people, but they should not be regarded as a soft option. We must give people the confidence in community sanctions that they have so far lacked. It may not be fair to describe them as a soft option, but if they are seen as such it will be very difficult for them to work.

I was also pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Minister talk about the causes of crime. It is important to consider the circumstances of many young people. I make no apology for believing that if we totally divorce the criminal justice system from its social context, it is doomed to failure. We need also to consider poverty, housing, poor facilities, educational achievement, and so on. The Home Office should talk to other Departments about the provision of sporting, recreational and leisure facilities for young people, and about what is being done to tackle other neighbourhood problems. We need also to talk to more young people, and to give them a voice.

This morning, I had the privilege of visiting Ernehale junior school in my constituency. Nottinghamshire police and the local education authority have set up the DARE—drug abuse resistance education—programme, certificates for which were being awarded to young people at the school. Police officers, teachers and parents are working together to try to give year 6 pupils the personal skills necessary to resist drugs. When I was there this morning, they were given certificates and tee-shirts such as this one—

Mr. Roger Gale (in the Chair): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the *Hansard* writers find it extremely difficult to record visual exhibits, which are therefore prohibited in the Chamber.

Vernon Coaker: I am sorry, Mr. Gale.

What was important about the DARE graduation that I attended this morning with year 6 pupils was the optimism that it offered. The police, social services and

[Vernon Coaker]

parents have, by working together, given young people the skills, self-esteem and ability to resist drugs, which is the way forward. We must punish those who persistently offend, but we must also recognise that we need to look at ways in which we can turn people away from crime by giving them the hope, skills and abilities that they need to resist the temptations that will come their way.

This is an enormously difficult time for young people to grow up in and we have not yet got the youth justice system right. However, this debate on how to address the serious problems that our young people face gives cause for optimism. I wish my hon. Friend the Minister well in clamping down on persistent offenders and finding a form for the restorative justice that will, in the end, give us more hope. When we have a similar debate in three or four years' time we shall not be quoting the sort of distressing figures that we have heard today.

4.11 pm

Simon Hughes (Southwark, North and Bermondsey): Like others, I welcome the debate. I welcome the fact that the Government have given us this opportunity in the week of the publication of the Youth Justice Board report, which means that there is a logical sequence of events.

Today gives me my first opportunity to welcome the new Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Beverley Hughes). I look forward to working with her and her colleagues at the Home Office. She has experience, commitment and interest.

Judging by the tenor of the debate, it has been well worth having. Some of us, including me, were in the Chamber on Tuesday debating not unrelated issues in the debate on urban community relations. The hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) was also present. Many issues that cropped up in that debate are relevant to today's, and vice versa.

Politics, life and news are a rollercoaster event. We went from the debate on Tuesday, which was well reported and regarded, to a day when the public debate focused on the Conservative party's leadership and its future. Today we woke up to have a debate on crime statistics, which has gone on to be about crime and sentencing. I hope that this debate features against the other two big stories of today, because unless we sort out the problems of youth offending we will create considerable problems for ourselves.

Like the hon. Members for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) and for Aylesbury, we are all under pressure at this time of the year to reconcile our time here in the last week of term with other people's last weeks of term. Before I came here this afternoon, I attended the leavers' service of the primary school of which I am chair of governors. It was held in the parish church of St James's in Bermondsey. When I stood up to say a couple of words, behind me was a beautiful picture accompanied by the appropriate theological phrase, "Lo, I am with you always."

As I drove back from Bermondsey, I reflected on the fact that most young people get into some sort of scrape or trouble. However—the hon. Member for Gedling was right—in most cases it does not remain with them: they do not become locked into a pattern of behaviour or get a criminal record.

Earlier in the week, we have the launch of the Youth Justice Board report at which the Minister was present; I apologise for the fact that I could not be there. Like others, I pay tribute to the board for its work. It is fair to say that there is little difference of opinion between the three parties on some simple propositions. Until a few years ago, the youth justice system was in a mess. I do not blame that entirely on the Conservative Administration, but the statistics speak for themselves. The Audit Commission's report was strident and pungent about the crying need for reform. One oft-mentioned statistic was that 3 per cent. of offenders were responsible for 25 per cent. of offences. Another salient point picked up by the commission was that in 1991 more than 1,000 young people aged 15 to 16 were on custodial remand, whereas by 1995—four years later—the number had increased to 17,000.

The social exclusion unit figures quoted by the hon. Member for Gedling remind us that if we are not careful to implement the correct strategies, the numbers simply grow. The message from the courts has been that no alternative exists and that the public and the young person must both be protected. However, we learn from reports such as those of the chief inspector of prisons that putting a youngster in custody is often far removed from providing protection. Tough, clear statements have been made that many youngsters in custody are bullied, harassed and assaulted. As we are all aware, they are unlikely to be improved by the experience.

Feltham young offenders institution—where, happily, there has been a division into two regimes—is the subject of a report due out, I think, next week. It is a pity that it was not published before today's debate. I join the hon. Member for Aylesbury in asking the Minister to tell us what further strategies the Government have introduced to ensure that abuse and self-abuse—at the most extreme, attempted suicide—are reduced in our custodial institutions for young people. The chief inspector is clear: there has been far too much bullying, assault and harassment. The figures on attempted suicides are a disgrace to all of us.

I agree with the Minister that reducing drug taking by young people is hugely important. The hon. Member for Gedling pointed out the need to reduce alcohol abuse as well. Hon. Members will have seen last month's news bulletin printed inside the cover of the Youth Justice Board report. The MORI survey that was commissioned at the same time as the report revealed attitudes to crime and set out three factors, called motivators, environmental factors, and values, that influenced children's likelihood to offend. Motivators were explained through quotes from youngsters, such as the following:

"You do it for a laugh."

Another said:

"That copper up behind you. You get the blood pumping. You know you're going to get chased. That is a rush."

The experience is excitement for young people. A third motivator was:

"When I was nine, I was f***ing mad and I used to do anything for money."

Money is often a factor for youngsters. Mobile phones are often nicked and sold on for money.

There is also a section in the survey on environmental factors. On Tuesday, I mentioned the fact that there are places near all of us where no one would want to live. That is no inducement to good behaviour or the belief that quality of life must be enhanced. The survey also mentions values, offering a sad and telling statement that I will quote verbatim, because it picks up some important themes and provides an example of what we are trying to deal with. A 15-year-old female offender said:

"I probably wouldn't have done half of them things if I weren't pissed. When I was on Valium I thieved so much alcohol from the shops. You just don't give two shits. And if boys pull up next to you that are stoned in the car, if you're sober you're like, 'No, because then I'll get nicked.' But if you're pissed you'd be like, 'oh, yes, man... let's go'."

That is not unreal. We all know that that is how people sometimes come to us, and we see such people on the streets. It is tragic, pathetic and awful. Before I became an MP, as well as a lawyer in the criminal courts I was a youth leader. I dealt with that sort of kid every day because they came to the youth courts every day.

The report is clear. The telling statistic from the Youth Justice Board is that last year 160,000 decisions were made in the youth justice system, of which 50 per cent. were final warnings and reprimands, 26 per cent. community-based penalties, 20 per cent. community sentences and 4 per cent. custodial sentences. We need to remind people that the courts have—thank goodness—decided that we do not need to send inside the majority of those who come into the youth justice system. Only four in 100 are sent inside, because the other options are better.

As the hon. Member for Aylesbury said, some young people have no appropriate role model. That point is constantly made. Normally, it is a case of young men lacking an adequate role model, although it is a sad trend that more and more young women are behaving badly. Young women are more likely to have a role model, but in some cases it is clearly not a satisfactory one. That is demonstrated by the statistics given at the beginning of the report, which I have used to set the scene without duplicating what other hon. Members have said.

Answers given by the Under-Secretary's predecessor—the right hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Clarke)—to parliamentary questions tabled earlier this year. Show that, of those aged between 10 and 17, a fairly consistent number are sentenced at magistrates courts—about 5,500 during each of the past five years. Happily, only a few of that age group are sentenced at the Crown court, but that figure shows a worrying increase, having gone up from almost 3,000 in 1995 to almost 5,000 in 1999, which reflects the severity of what the young people in question do. At the youth court, the total number sentenced has risen from 59,470 in 1995 to 79,883 in 1999.

It is therefore not surprising to read in the YJB report the responses of regular school attenders to the question, "Have you committed any criminal offence in the last 12 months?" In 2000—only a year ago—when the board carried out the survey, 22 per cent. answered yes. In one year that figure has increased to 25 per cent.—a quarter of all young people. Whereas a year ago the only two figures that were above 25 per cent. were 44 per cent. in respect of fare dodging and 31 per cent. in respect of shop theft. This year, fare dodging has increased to 49 per cent. of those questioned, vandalising property to 39 per cent. and shop theft to 35 per cent. The really worrying and depressing figure is for physical assault, which has increased to 35 per cent. of those questioned.

There are features common to all those offences. I take the view that there is a step difference between offences against property and offences against other people and I think that everybody with responsibility in this area agrees. That is why I told the Minister about the findings of the work done in Southwark, which may have to be further refined but which shows the pattern of physical abuse being replicated in different ways as youngsters get older. Surprisingly for me when I went through the figures I learned that, tragically, it often starts with abuse in the home by a parent, relative, carer, stepchild or mother's boyfriend; the young person in turn becomes the bullied, the bully, then the offender.

One point completes and reinforces the picture. The hon. Member for Gedling quoted the social exclusion unit figures from 2000. Because I had to respond on my party's behalf to the latest crime figures, I read carefully the crime figures report that was embargoed until this morning. Looking at violent crime as a whole in the last year, victimisation was highest in the 14 to 19 age group, which accounted for one in five of all victims. In addition, three quarters of male victims and nearly 9 per cent. of female victims knew the offenders, so they were victims as well as offenders and they knew each other in many cases. In the case of robbery, the 14 to 17-year-old males group accounted for a quarter of all victims in the last year for which statistics are available, and 40 per cent. of the suspects were males aged 14 to 19.

We have a group of young people—the future of the country. Many of them start off on the straight and narrow. Often, they often become offenders or victims, but on stripping away the bravado, we find that they do not want to be either. They want to go on and get the same satisfaction from life as the rest of us.

The Minister made two other important points which I wholly endorse. We must make sure that in the pattern of constructive activity we do not think only about the three school terms—or six, if that change occurs—but of the time between the terms, when summer schemes and the like are hugely important. The second is that it is clearly right for young people that the period between offence, punishment and disposal should be as short as possible. Otherwise, the system does not work. Youngsters have to understand the relationship between the two, or it becomes disjointed—a game.

Will the Minister and her colleagues to try to increase the co-ordination between her Department and the Departments for Education and Skills, for Work and Pensions and for Culture, Media and Sport in certain areas? We desperately need more trained and qualified youth workers. I hope that by the end of this Parliament we shall have the youth service on a statutory footing, which would help a lot. We need more counsellors for young people—people qualified to help with drugs, alcohol and other problems.

We desperately need more mentors. I have long believed that if every primary school child in their leaving year had somebody come in to talk about their

[Simon Hughes]

aspirations—someone from business, sport or elsewhere in the community; it could be a police officer, somebody in the services, a teacher or whatever—and that happened again in secondary school before children started to play truant, to be excluded and so on, they would have something to motivate them and they would be more likely to remain engaged.

Some children are not academic; they are not going to be academic. It is no good thinking that GCSEs are what they want out of school. They might want to drive cars or ride trail bikes instead. We should find out what will lock them into pursuing a sense of achievement and value. I hope that Ministers will talk to each other about how we can maximise that; a programme that supports each youngster in that way would be helpful.

I share the concern of the hon. Member for Aylesbury that they should not get a message that if they behave they will receive mercenary rewards. We live in far too mercenary a society—there is too much bribery by way of anything from increased pocket money to a double cheeseburger. We must find non-mercenary rewards, and schools try by way of stars, merit marks and all the traditional coloured sticky things that we used to have on our school books. Things like that matter a lot.

Having expressed solidarity and a desire to collaborate and agree with colleagues, I have another point that I should like to flesh out. Again, it has already been made by the hon. Member for Gedling. There is an interesting book about communities and how to rebuild them co-authored by Lord Young of Dartington, the Labour sociologist. It makes the point that, for 30 or 40 years, housing allocation destroyed communities: moving a single 17-year-old into a flat where he or she does not know anyone, or moving a young couple with a child or two nine-year-old children away from their parents, aunts and uncles or grandparents means that there is no family support. Inadequate parenting—we might all be guilty of that—is compounded by inadequate support, and kids are out and about, running amok much more. We must make sure that social landlords, such as the local authority, and others in the housing sector, manage housing policies, housing allocation, tenancy issues and responsible neighbour issues much more effectively.

I have a set of questions that are not intended aggressively, but designed to check where we stand. They arise as much from other people's concerns as from my own. First, the new intensive surveillance and supervision programme was launched this week. I welcomed the pilot in Southwark. However, I want to ask whether it is intended to be an alternative to custody. If so, custody-level offences have to be reached before it should be considered. However, there is always a danger of downward slippage in the mind of the person handing out the sentence.

Secondly, how are we doing with ensuring that youth offending teams are properly evaluated before they are developed? People in the sector have put it to me, and the Minister will know this from her family, that there is a mountain of work and that people want to move quickly. There is a danger that we do not learn the lessons of the past. The Minister was honest enough to say, "Look, this is a new system and we don't have all the answers yet." That is true—we clearly do not, and I am keen that we do not push people more quickly than it is humanly possible for them to go as regards evaluation. In that context, who evaluates the youth offending teams? Is it the Youth Justice Board or someone else? What is the Minister's plan in that regard?

Thirdly, I shall not make a party point about implementation but merely express my trust that the Government's goal for speeding up the youth justice system will be achieved by next year. If it is not, I will have a bit of a go, but I am happy to wait. However, there is a tension between accelerating the process and ensuring that the victim gets involved in any reparation system. It is not always easy to get victims to sign up to being part of the criminal justice process; they do not necessarily feel happy about having a relationship with the person who committed the offence.

One encouraging point to emerge from the reports by the Youth Justice Board and Her Majesty's inspector of prisons is that young people understand the impact of the crime much more if it is personalised and they relate it to someone, rather than to society as a whole. I am a huge believer in the effect of that approach. If offenders suddenly realised that smashing up someone's car meant that it could not be used to take a little child to hospital, they suddenly see their offence in a personal context—it could have been their little brother or sister or baby. Will the Minister make it clear that we are not accelerating the process and cutting the time between the criminal act and disposal so much that we lose the opportunity of working with victims?

Fourthly, are we satisfied that the people in the youth courts are now adequately trained? The issue was raised by the professionals—by the Magistrates Association, the Judicial Studies Board and Her Majesty's inspector. Fifthly, are we satisfied that the courts take a consistent approach? I am not one who believes that we should have robots in the courts—we should not. We have individuals who judge the individual, the crime and the community circumstances. Clearly, however, we must make sure that there is no unjustified disparity.

Sixthly, when will the new referral orders be implemented? I think that I am right in saying that they are planned for next year at the latest. Do we have plans to make sure that enough community volunteers are recruited to sit as panel members and to ensure that youth offending teams are adequately resourced?

My last two points relate to matters touched on by the hon. Member for Gedling. The other day, I substituted for the Minister at a National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders conference—it is amusing to think that a Liberal Democrat spokesman substituted for a Minister; I am not sure that No. 10 Downing street would regard such an option as automatically desirable, although I sure that we could often manage to express compatible views. Perhaps it would be better to say that I took the Minister's place at the NACRO conference, which was about what we do with 18 to 20-year-olds.

It is clear from the debate in the Lords and from Lord Warner's contribution that, whereas huge progress has been made with youngsters aged up to 17, many of the advantages thus gained will be lost unless we get the system for those aged 18 and upwards in working order. I do not want the Minister to tell us that things will be changed in two seconds, as that would be a mistake.

However, I should be grateful to know what process and timetable are envisaged for working out whether the Youth Justice Board or a similar body should deal with commissioning. I prefer the idea of commissioning for a band covering those aged 18 to 24; the 18 to 20 grouping is less appropriate.

I have a plea. I perceive a dilemma to which we are all prey. Governments frequently want to sound tough, even though the more effective actions are often the less tough ones. The hon. Member for Gedling made that point well, as did the hon. Member for Aylesbury. There is a tendency to use phrases that dress up or hype the need to punish. The trouble with that approach is that it hides the truth and does not educate the public about what really works, and the culture that it creates can lead those who pass sentences to respond accordingly.

One of our new colleagues, my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Dr. Pugh), is a philosopher—his background is as a teacher of philosophy. He told me that Plato said that democracy was a nightmare operation because it meant pandering to the public wish, which was bad for the public because a more considered response was preferable. I am no expert on such matters but that is what I am told. Plato was apparently a spin doctor of his day—an adviser rather than an elected politician.

The general election is over, there will not be another for some years and the Government appear to have just enough of a majority to enable them to hang on for four years. In that case, the more honest that we can be about what is effective rather than what sounds tough, the better. I do not criticise the Minister, but my plea is that we set a pattern of honest debate about what works rather than what sounds good.

Beverley Hughes: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point, on which I have been reflecting. Does he agree that the debate needs to include a challenge to what I could call the popular notion—it is not only public usage, but the language that we use in the House—of what is tough? I have never accepted that there is an inherent contradiction in the idea of a toughness that demands rigour and discipline but that constructively provides some of what young offenders need to avoid future offending.

Simon Hughes: I absolutely agree. Besides doing youth work, I spent a few happy days experiencing borstal from the inside—not compulsorily, I point out lest hon. Members get the wrong idea. It was a telling experience. Half the time it was frustratingly and desperately boring. Being locked up is a quite unpleasant experience: knowing I could not get through the door brought on an overwhelming desire to go the pub, which would not normally have overcome me in the middle of the night. Besides that, there were activities that were theoretically tough but actually easy, like completing an assault course or some other tough physical assignment that was over in 20 minutes. That is easier than routinely turning up to take part in responsible activity for weeks or months. It is often much tougher to confront one's actions and their implications by dealing with the victim, or as part of a group that forces one to come to terms with one's inadequacies.

Whatever other arrangements are made between parties in this Parliament, I am happy to collaborate and co-operate with Ministers as much as possible on this issue. I have suggested to the Home Secretary, on behalf of my party, that we do so in respect of criminal justice reforms. We serve no one by making cheap political points and holding a Dutch auction of wacky ideas. We need a more measured approach.

The answers will not come tomorrow, as the Minister honestly said. There is always pressure on the Government to deliver so that something can immediately be put in the shop window. If we get the system right, it may take the lifetime of this Parliament to establish it firmly, and another Parliament to see that it works. Reducing crime, preventing re-offending and allowing more young people to start on the path toward responsible, constructive adulthoods is a prize well worth having, as much for them as for the rest of us.

4.40 pm

Mr. Hilton Dawson (Lancaster and Wyre): It is a pleasure to take part in such a stimulating debate. I am mildly bemused by the idea of the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) committing himself to a borstal for three days to experience life there. He may recommend it, but I would not take up a similar offer, even though he has risen in my esteem by being prepared to go to such lengths.

The Minister's intervention of a few minutes ago was extremely important and constructive. If we can create a genuine dialogue about the issues between all parties in the House and outside, we could make real progress on youth justice. Earlier this afternoon, I diverted myself with the thought that it is almost 20 years to the week since I began a placement at a pioneering youth justice project in Rochdale, in the days when IT meant intermediate treatment rather than information technology. That project explicitly set out to put into practice the ideas developed by David Thorpe, David Smith and Norman Tutt at Lancaster university's centre for youth crime and community. It acknowledged the role of systems in youth justice and worked towards the development of ideas about effective practice, concentrating on offending behaviour, seeking to confront young people about it and effecting lasting change. It took a multidisciplinary approach, but compared with the present structures—the Youth Justice Board and the youth offending teams—those early stages were rudimentary in the extreme.

I welcome the debate because it coincides with the publication of a good report from the Youth Justice Board, and because my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced intensive supervision and surveillance programmes earlier this week. I am not sure of the figures nationally but am pleased that, in Lancashire, it will mean £2.7 million of extra investment over three years. That will enable work to be carried out with 75 young people at once, to reduce offending by 5 per cent. and to tackle those young people's underlying problems. It will pay particular attention to educational needs and will develop a programme that I hope will reassure the community about the extremely serious behaviour of those young people who can be regarded as persistent offenders—young people who have been charged or warned for imprisonable offences on four or more occasions and who have received at least one

[Mr. Hilton Dawson]

community or custodial penalty. They will not be first offenders but serious, persistent offenders. The community should at least be reassured that the programmes can operate rigorously and be effective and that they have substantial resources behind them.

As I said, those programmes will be targeted at persistent offenders. Those working on the programmes will have a case load ratio of one worker to five young people, which is a remarkable level of intensity. The programmes will stress reparation, education, and training and will deal with serious offending behaviour to help young people to build a bigger stake in the community. I hope that grounds for breach in those programmes will be operated rigorously; if so, they will provide an excellent tool. In addition to the local youth offending team, they will make a big difference in dealing with the offending behaviour of those young people.

As well as reducing crime and assisting young people to make far more of their lives, I hope that a programme of intensive supervision and surveillance will begin to reduce the incidence of custody in my local area and throughout the country. I have not worked in youth justice since the late 1980s, but I have worked within a system that managed to obtain a custody-free zone. That was a worthy objective and I am still proud of having been part of achieving it.

The considerable use that we make of custody is unacceptable. We should put an end to remand in custody for 15 and 16-year-olds. I am completely opposed to the use of prison custody for all young people under 18. I firmly believe that young people who are a danger to others and to the community and have to be kept away from the community should be maintained in secure units that are subject to the Children Act 1989, which imposes the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people who, although they may have committed the most serious and heinous offences, are still children. I shall return to that subject later.

On a more positive note, after several years of necessary upheaval, the Government are putting youth justice on the right lines. As I said in an intervention, the strong leadership of the Youth Justice Board is important, but it must maintain quality control and surveillance and consider the effectiveness of youth offending teams. It is beginning to work. Its admirable goals are to help rebuild communities and promote decent opportunities for all by preventing offending by children and young people. I strongly support its aim to promote a culture in which it is a matter of shame for young people and their parents to appear in a youth court. I strongly support an approach that emphasises the rights of victims and the responsibilities of young people and their parents to reduce the seriousness and frequency of offending by children and young people, which, in turn, will lessen the use of youth courts and custody measures. What had, in the 1990s, become a confusing and inadequate mess has been transformed under the Government's direction.

I look forward in particular to the introduction of referral orders in April 2002 as a result of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999. I firmly believe that an approach to first-time offenders that involves parents, agencies and communities as well as victims in a programme of restorative justice to tackle criminal behaviour that requires offenders to repay their victims will be a key building block in the youth justice system of the future. It is important to reflect on the huge range of community approaches in the youth justice system. Referral orders will complement the system of final warnings, reparation orders, parenting orders, action plans, combination orders, curfews, ASBOs and compensation orders, as well as the more traditional approaches of fines, conditional discharges, binding over and supervision orders. People know what systems work and are clear about which measures address offending behaviour and relocate young people positively in community structures. If emphasis is placed on identifying which systems work and they are linked to other basic networks and community opportunities, it will make a huge difference.

I declare an interest as the husband of a sure start manager. We need to put youth justice in an overall context of community redevelopment and regeneration. I agree with the Government's programmes on neighbourhood regeneration, the renewal of initiatives to combat child poverty, the promotion of work opportunities for parents, providing young children and their families with great opportunities under programmes such as sure start at an early stage and facilities such as the children's fund. Locating youth justice within such systems and facilities can be profoundly important. It is the only way in which youth justice will work and how we shall achieve an acceptable situation. I strongly believe in the participation of young people in the structures that dominate their lives and in the decisions that are important to them. It is of enormous significance that we empower and involve young people at all levels—that is a message for the Youth Justice Board and other agencies working with young people in the community.

Two important issues are the rate of custody and the age of criminal responsibility. I am firmly opposed to young people being in adult prisons, and we have had an indication of the Government's reluctance about such placements. I hope that the Government will agree that, as a fundamental principle, young people should not be in adult prisons. That resolution should not be undermined by factors such as whether facilities are closer to home. It is a fundamental principle that young people should not mix with adult offenders.

Young people are accommodated in other forms of Home Office custody. In 1999, approximately 4,700 young people received custodial sentences and at the end of March 2000, 1,708 under-18s were serving sentences in custody. We seem to lock up more teenagers than almost any other country in western Europe, and I wonder why. We almost doubled the number of imprisoned 15, 16 and 17-year-olds between 1993 and 1998. I am concerned that the alterations to the criteria for remand under the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 will lead to more young people being in custody, which cannot be right.

We are aware—it has been mentioned again this afternoon—of the number of young people who have committed suicide in custodial institutions and of the huge number of incidents of self-harm. There has been

a stream of horrific reports from the prisons inspectorate, which said that it had

"not come across such totally deliberate and unnecessary impoverishment of children anywhere",

and that this would be

"unacceptable in a civilised country".

The inspectorate has highlighted

"disgraceful treatment and appalling conditions."

Incidents of bullying, criminal behaviour and drug abuse are well documented, as is the gross over-representation of young black people within custodial institutions. Such a system cannot be right.

I have an excellent young offenders institution within my constituency. I am going to Lancaster Farms tomorrow to celebrate and commend its work. Although I admire the institution's work with young adults, I am appalled that there is now a wing—albeit rigorously separate from the rest of the establishment—that is available for 12-year-olds. With the possibility of the extension of detention and training orders, some of those involved may be as young as 10.

Not only am I morally opposed to the use of custody for young people, I do not believe that it is effective in reducing crime. Custody is not a tough measure: it avoids the really tough decisions, which involve facing the necessity of confronting young people with their offending behaviour, of putting in place structures and systems that can support them, of addressing their behaviour in the community, and of addressing the role of the parents and the institutions that have failed them in the community. Compared with facing those decisions, locking young offenders away for a while is not a tough measure. Our debate has given me hope that we can have further discussions on this issue.

Custody for young people reinforces their criminal identity. It also cuts them off from their families, schools and wider communities when much needs to be done to re-establish those ties and to build mutual commitment—which is very important. The high rate at which we commit young people to custody demeans us all, and it must be addressed. The Government have done a lot for children—although they must do a heck of a lot more—and they should be making great strides to address the issue.

The best way for the Government to start to get to grips with the problems of the youth justice system is for them to take a good, hard and considered look at the age of criminal responsibility. At present, criminal responsibility starts at 10 years of age, when children are still in primary school. Children are not legally entitled to own a hamster until they are 12 years old, but at the age of 10 they are expected to take the responsibility for criminal behaviour that is applicable and relevant to an adult. The age of criminal responsibility is 18 in Belgium and Luxembourg, 16 in Portugal and Spain, 15 in Denmark, 14 in Germany, 13 in France and 12 in Greece.

Youth justice is a serious issue for young people and their families. It is also important to communities: lives can blighted, destroyed and disrupted by the serious criminal behaviour of young people. However, their problems must be addressed properly, and in the right context: it must be acknowledged that they are, in many ways, the victims of communities that need huge resources, investment and support to enable them to become fit places to live in. The serious underlying problems in such children's lives must be addressed. Many of them have problems with their families, schools or mental health. All of their various problems must be addressed firmly and comprehensively. We should not go down the custodial route, or resort to the soundbites that all politicians, including me, can be driven to utter when we feel under pressure.

The Government are moving along the right lines; good basic structures are being put in place, and I look forward to continuing this debate over the coming years. This is an opportune time, as has been said: we are at the beginning of a new Parliament, so we have several years to think the issues through. Some basic structures are beginning to be put right, and we should now begin to tackle some of the hard and difficult issues.

5.4 pm

Beverley Hughes: It is a long while since I heard such a constructive and informed debate in Parliament. It augurs well for cross-party support, although it has raised matters that not only Opposition Members but my hon. Friends will take issue with. However, I welcome the general support for the Government's approach, and the co-operation to engender the debate that, as it is acknowledged, must take place.

I have tried to pick out themes in hon. Members' speeches, rather than simply responding to individuals, and I shall try to address those themes as comprehensively as possible. A number of hon. Members mentioned the Government's pledge in 1997 to reduce the average time—at 142 days, a considerable period—taken for a persistent young offender to move through the criminal justice system from charge to sentence. I am glad that it has been recognised, notwithstanding questions about the impact on reducing the period, that the period between being apprehended and the matter being disposed of at sentence is too long to allow young people to make the necessary link.

I tell the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) that the pledge was to reduce the average time taken by half by or before May 2002—that holds. By the first quarter of this year, 18 of the 42 areas were already at or below 71 days. We cannot claim that we have met the pledge overall because it was about the average time. However, we are working hard so that by—or possibly before—May 2002 we will be able to say that the average has been reduced to that level.

The hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) queried whether that might conflict with the goal of reparation. I remind him that the pledge is about persistent young offenders because that is where the strong link must be made most forcibly. When the pledge is met, we will examine how we continue to ensure the continuation of the principle of keeping the time gap as reasonable as possible. It may be that another pledge is not the correct approach. We will have made a big inroad when the pledge is met and may then have to think of other ways to ensure that the time does not drift back. Reparation largely comes beyond sentence—certainly in terms of many orders that we have heard about today—when discussions following sentence take place about how a young

[Beverley Hughes]

offender can best make reparation to an individual consenting victim or the wider community. I am not concerned that we prevent reparation by trying to keep a reasonable period of time to enforce the necessary link.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the matter of suicides and self-harm, as did the hon. Member for Aylesbury and my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker). In February, the Home Secretary announced a new three-year strategy to reduce suicides and self-harm across the custodial estate. That was a response to the rising trend of incidents resulting in suicide or serious self-harm. The Director General of the Prison Service has made the matter a personal priority since his appointment in 1999. I do not want to be premature, but we are beginning to see the results of that focus and the action that resulted from having that strategic approach. There was a 16 per cent. reduction in suicides in the financial year 2000-01 compared to the previous year. So far this year, that trend has continued. Of course, even the present figure represents a tragedy, but there has been a reduction. There were 30 self-inflicted deaths across the prison estate by 3 July this year, compared with 42 in a similar period last year.

I cannot give the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey the differentiated figures for young offenders in institutions, but I am confident that they are part of that trend which, after a long upward tendency, is heading downwards. As hon. Members intimated, it is a tragedy for people to lose their lives in custody in such a way. The incidence of suicide and self-harm is also, for many people, a barometer of the general health, or the ill health, of the custodial system.

Simon Hughes: The Minister might not be able to give the answer now, but will she at some stage tell us whether the following two things are in place? First, do all prisoners—especially juveniles and young adults—whether they enter custody on remand or on conviction, have access to a "buddy" system with someone already in custody? That is good practice.

Secondly, do all prisoners go into cells for more than one person at the beginning, so that for the initial few days, which are always the critical period, someone appropriate can monitor them effectively and be on hand? That appears to be one of the best ways of managing prisoners through that time of crisis.

Beverley Hughes: The "buddy" or mentoring system is developing strongly, especially in the youth offender institutions. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman whether every single person can have that facility on entry, but I will write to him on those matters after the debate.

The hon. Gentleman also raised some specific questions to which other Members did not refer, which I will deal with now. ISSPs are indeed specifically framed as an alternative to custody. He mentioned courts, and asked whether there was consistency. I think that we all recognise that variance exists in the system, and it is difficult to know whether that variance is justified from the figures, because we do not hear all the detail of individual cases and circumstances that might be taken into account. However, the main objectives of the Halliday review, which has now reported, and the way in which the Government use those proposals and any others that come out of the consultation process, are designed to ensure that we achieve consistency across courts, within the limits of a system taking individual factors into account. People should be able to expect consistency in sentencing when they appear in different courts in different parts of the country.

Referral orders are coming on stream everywhere in April 2002; 11 pilots are running at present. I raised the issue of volunteers with my officials, because we have recently cleared the guidance on referral orders. At a conference held on Tuesday, that guidance was made available to youth offending team managers and others. It was asked whether there would be difficulty in getting volunteers to serve on community panels. The experience from the pilots suggests that a diverse range of people is willing to undertake that public duty. It is important that those panels represent the diversity within their local communities. So far, the pilots have succeeded. We may face challenges in some areas, but the evidence suggests that with the right strategy they can be overcome.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about youth offender team training and resources, to which I shall refer later. They are important, because much of our aspiration for the effectiveness of the new system and its facilities depends on the quality of the work of individual professionals on the ground with individual young offenders. We recognise the importance of resourcing and training, which the Youth Justice Board takes seriously.

I shall deal later with several points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster and Wyre (Mr. Dawson). I listened carefully to his views on the use of custody and the age of criminal responsibility. He speaks, as always on the subject, from a considered and informed position. As he will know, the Government's view on the age of criminal responsibility is now settled, and differs from his. However, I hope that he will recognise that as a result of the Government's emphasis on prevention, including my comments today and observations about prevention, although we may make young people liable for their behaviour at an early age, we have put in great effort and resources and have provided several new opportunities for young people who enter the system at an early stage to be diverted from such behaviour as effectively as possible. Although I accept that there is no meeting of minds on the principle, I hope that there is a meeting of minds on what we each want to achieve in keeping very young people out of the criminal system and from consolidating a criminal career.

The hon. Members for Southwark, North and Bermondsey and for Aylesbury mentioned 18 to 20-year-olds. We have rightly focused on juveniles, in the custodial estate in particular. The impact of the Youth Justice Board in improving conditions in the juvenile custodial estate has been significant. In recognition of that effectiveness, our manifesto for the last election included a commitment to use our experience of the Youth Justice Board in improving the circumstances of juveniles not only in custody but across the board, apply those lessons in considering the 18 to 20-year-old group and make that the next priority for improvement. Ministers in the Department have already commissioned work to develop that approach, and I

shall ensure that that work progresses rapidly over the next few months. Hon. Members will be interested to know that I shall not have much of a recess, as that is one of the urgent pieces of work that needs to be done. Many Ministers are involved, but I am initiating it.

The hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey mentioned one of the many issues that need to be considered—18 to 20 and the right, or most feasible, age group, about which views differ. The 18 to 20-year-old group has been identified because, as about half the 100,000 persistent offenders are in that age group, an impact on it could have a significant impact on crime overall.

Another issue is whether 21 to 24-year-olds would be more suitably linked with the way in which we treat adults in the criminal justice system, rather than the way in which we treat young people aged 16 and 17. There are a number of different professional views about that, which we want to take on board in developing our ideas about the 18 to 20-year-old group—or whatever age group it turns out to be. Custody will not be the only focus, although I recognise some of the urgent questions in that regard. We will look across the board in the same way that we have for juveniles to consider how we can make the system more effective for them.

Broadly, two important issues were raised by Members of all parties in this debate. The first was concerned generally with questions of evaluation, effectiveness and performance. The hon. Member for Aylesbury said that he would be looking, from the Opposition's point of view, with a beady eye on performance. He will be behind me, because I will be looking with a beady eye as well. I, and all my colleagues, want these measures to work. I agree with him that, in terms of the measures by which we will be judged, the impact that we have on youth offending and re-offending will be one of the most important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling raised some important points about the need to make sure that the measures that we have already introduced are bedded down, and made as effective as possible before other measures are brought on stream. That is an important point. I listened carefully to what he said about ASBOs. Other hon. Members raised the issue of the child curfew. The age in relation to the child curfew has been raised because feedback from local areas showed that such a low age was not workable. Young children do not associate only with people of a certain age—groups are mixed. If the measure is to be effective, we have to have more flexibility. On ASBOs, I cannot give my hon. Friend any resolution to those problems, except to say that they have been recognised. A review of the ASBO scheme has been instigated, to consider how to make it even more effective. A total of 215 antisocial behaviour orders is a fairly good record. One of the questions that we want the review to address is why people in local areas have not used the provision more frequently.

Questions were also asked about breaches, and I would say to the hon. Member for Aylesbury—although he has left this Chamber—that we recognise that, in order for us to be able to evaluate what is happening in relation to some of the new measures, data collection needs to improve. Data on breaches will be collected and it will be possible to differentiate between the figures for breach and revocation of community orders. Everybody agrees that youth offending teams are a good thing, and I declared my interest at the start of this debate. However, we must evaluate their effectiveness. We must have a system in which we can say how well they are doing. We are discussing with the Youth Justice Board what that mechanism of inspection or evaluation should be. There will be an evaluation of the teams, and on-going evaluation of the specific programmes that they are using—the offending behaviour programmes, education programmes and so on. All those programmes are in the process of being evaluated and the results will appear shortly.

A central tenet of the way in which we have approached the matter—it is a term that has been used today—is that we have a system based on what works. That is not merely a slogan. It is a principle that we must have evidence that what we are resourcing and doing in terms of interventions in young people's lives and the lives of their families is having a positive impact. That is an important backstop position for us.

My hon. Friends the Members for Gedling and for Lancaster and Wyre and the hon. Members for Southwark, North and Bermondsey and for Aylesbury all raised important issues, which are part of a wider debate that we must try to engender about the future of youth justice. Hon. Members also pointed to this country's high custody rate for under-21s. It is difficult to provide demanding, constructive regimes within custody when we have to cater for large numbers of young people there. There is therefore a need to provide effective community-based alternatives. That is important, and it has not happened in the past.

I would like to recount a comment from my husband, who is the youth offending team manager of a team in an area that has a high incidence of youth custody, which I used at the meeting of the annual review of the Youth Justice Board this week. He asked me, "When we were setting up our team, do you know how many young people were transferred to us from the statutory agencies, as being on supervision in my area?" When I said "No," he said, "It was 12." That was how effective the system was at that time at identifying, bringing in and supervising young offenders.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling rightly said that the public does not yet have confidence that we are providing effective alternatives to custody. We need to do that urgently, and that is why evaluation is important, as part of the process of demonstration. We need effective disposals, and we need to engender public confidence in them. There are lessons from the past for all of us.

The youth offending teams, and the apparatus around them in the youth justice system, are changing the culture. We have touched on an important point by recognising that we can be both constructive and tough. We have to get that message across.

Mr. Dawson: Does the Minister accept that this Government inherited a system that was chaotic indeed? I am sure that there are many examples of extremely bad practice, but there are also examples of good practice. We do not have to hold up our hands in despair. There are things that we know how to do well. If we have a proper structure, such as we are now developing, we can make the system work.

Beverley Hughes: I agree with that, and it fits quite neatly with what I was going on to say.

[Beverley Hughes]

The matter is partly about structure and resources, and the Government have a commitment to provide those, and the impetus and the political will for change. However, ultimately, the effectiveness of the new system also strongly depends on the quality of what happens every day in the interaction between young offenders and dedicated professionals, the quality of the decisions made by the courts, the rigour with which people pursue goals and the effectiveness of inter-agency co-operation. However strongly we all feel about the matter, the Government cannot do those things. We depend on people in local areas to deliver that rigour and quality. Otherwise, we will not be as effective as we could be.

Simon Hughes: I should like the Minister to respond to my point about inter-agency co-operation between the three Departments of Government—she mentioned four—on the issues of the youth service, mentoring, ways in which young people can be supported through the education service, a potential statutory youth service and sport and other activities outside the formal school environment. Will she take that up and examine the idea of working with the other two or three Departments to see whether we can get a more comprehensive system for providing support for young people in the primary and secondary school age ranges?

Beverley Hughes: At Government level, that co-operation is going on through various sub-committees. If the hon. Gentleman means will the Government establish one big Department to institute those arrangements, my reply is that I do not think that we will. We cannot avoid the need, whether it is at central Government or at local government level, for Departments and organisations to work together. We cannot fuse everybody into one big organisation, as that would not work. We must continue to work at people in different organisations, ensuring that they break down barriers and pool their resources and expertise effectively where that is required. It is equally important—this is a bit jargony, but hon. Members will know what I mean—to bend the core activities and resources of mainstream organisations so that those organisations take on board the work that is going on.

In terms of YOTs, we need education, health, police and probation not only to send somebody along to a team or meeting but to take on board and incorporate into their priorities the work of YOTs. I accept that the same thing needs to happen at Government level. We are working hard to make that happen and in some ways that is how we reached the youth justice proposals. YOTs have had contributions from the Departments and we must continue to ensure that those partnerships work. Nevertheless, the principle that there needs to be that partnership remains.

Simon Hughes: I agree with every word that the Minister said. However, I am still pushing her to say that she will consider whether we can offer through the school system a better scheme for comprehensively linking mentors with young people. We should seek to build up the youth service and look at whether it could be statutory and filled with people who can do both professional youth work and professional counselling because we are desperately short of that. Such role models outside home and school are, in my experience, hugely important in avoiding the development of criminality.

Beverley Hughes: I agree in principle that the role of mentors in the community is something that many YOTs are pioneering. As the hon. Gentleman said, they must mainstream that in terms of services outside the criminal justice service, which could be an important part of prevention.

We must keep focused on the impact of crime. We must remember that families and communities are threatened and have their lives made miserable by the activities of some young people. We must say that our shared position on tackling youth crime is not negotiable: we must tackle it and we recognise the reasons why. Having said that, we must go further and recognise that in order to tackle youth crime we must tackle the underlying causes as well as the offending behaviour. We have had an excellent debate and I thank hon. Members for their contributions. If we can continue to work together in that spirit, we shall ensure that these new measures and the developments arising from them can be as effective as possible, as that will help many young people and their communities.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Six o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 16 July 2001

DEFENCE

Project Aquatrine

Brian White: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of Project Aquatrine. [4452]

Mr. Ingram: Project Aquatrine will transfer responsibility for the maintenance and operation of all the Ministry of Defence's water and wastewater assets and infrastructure in Great Britain to private sector service providers.

Four consortiums are bidding for the first package of work of this £2.9 billion private financial deal. An Invitation to Negotiate will be issued to bidders for the first package of work on 16 July 2001.

The consortiums invited to negotiate for this work, covering central southern England, western England and Wales, are:

Brey Utilities, comprising:

Brown and Root, Earth Tech and Yorkshire Water.

C2C, comprising:

Severn Trent, Costain and Arup.

Diamond Alliance Ltd.

Thames Water plc.

The preferred bidder will be announced in early 2003, with the contract expected to be awarded in late 2003.

Type 45 Destroyers

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) for what reasons the report by RAND into the bidders for the contract to build type 45 destroyers has been delayed; [2343]

(2) what criteria were given to RAND for their report into the bidders for the contract to build type 45 destroyers; [2346]

(3) when the report by RAND into the bidders contract to build type 45 destroyers will be completed; and when he will make a decision; [2344]

(4) if the Government will publish the findings of the report by RAND into the bidders for the contract to build type 45 destroyers. [2345]

Dr. Moonie: We commissioned RAND to do a study on a range of alternative procurement strategies for our future warship programmes over the next 15 to 20 years, with particular reference to options for the type 45 destroyers. The study is intended to help inform, not make, decisions by the Department within the context of obtaining value for money over the warship programme as a whole.

The study has not been delayed and RAND have provided their initial findings to the Department. We used these to help assess the best way forward for the type 45 procurement strategy as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 675–85. We will continue to use RAND to advise us on related issues over the next few weeks.

We expect RAND to publish a report based on their findings in the autumn, after consultation with interested parties over the confidentiality of its content, and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Kenya

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision, in the agreement with the Kenyan Government on military training is made for the British Army to clean up live bombs after operations. [3219]

Mr. Ingram: There is no agreement between the British Army and the Kenyan Government for the clearance of live ammunition after training. There is, however, a widely understood military protocol whereby the host nation is responsible for the clearance of military ranges and this is followed in Kenya. The British Army aims to destroy the ammunition it uses as soon as possible after it has been fired. In Kenya, destruction takes place while the units are conducting their training and at the end of the exercise period. Notwithstanding that, in the last two years the British Army has carried out clearance work in support of the Kenyan authorities.

The British Army is alone in that it also trains on privately owned land in Kenya in addition to using Kenyan Department of Defence facilities. The British Army clears any unexploded ordnance from privately owned land as required by their agreements with local landowners.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what point the military clearance operation in North Kenya was suspended after the unexploded ordnance specialist left the area. [2795]

Mr. Ingram: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the clearance operation which took place at Archer's Post earlier this year. The operation was not suspended. It was a planned activity that took place between 7 April and 16 May. The dates for the operation were agreed last year.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what the procedure is for the clearing of civilians before and after military training in the Archer's Post and Dol Dol training areas of north Kenya; [2784]

(2) what provision his Department has made to stop civilian entry into the testing grounds that the British Army use in Archer's Post and Dol Dol in northern Kenya. [2794]

Mr. Ingram: The responsibility for ensuring that civilians are cleared from the Archer's Post and Dol Dol training areas rests with the Kenyan Department of Defence. Wherever the British Army trains with live ammunition it must confirm that the danger area is clear before commencing training. At Archer's Post this is achieved by using range wardens, a helicopter overflight of the danger area and the deployment of danger flags and

sentries. The sentries and range wardens act to stop civilians entering Archer's Post while training is in progress.

The British Army does not conduct live firing at the Dol Dol area.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will take responsibility for the deaths and injuries caused by unexploded ordnance in the Archer's Post and Dol Dol areas. [2780]

Mr. Ingram: The Ministry of Defence's position is that we take responsibility for deaths and injuries where we are shown to be legally liable.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will ensure that all signs outside training areas used by the British Army in Kenya are intelligible to people who cannot read. [2791]

Mr. Ingram: There are large concrete signs outside live firing areas used by the British Army in Kenya, with words of warning written in English and Samburu. The nomadic tribesman have been grazing their animals in the area for a considerable number of years and are aware that some of the area is a Kenyan Department of Defence live firing military range as it has been for many years. We therefore believe that the signs are well understood by both the local population and nomadic tribesmen that transit the area. My hon. Friend may also wish to note that the range wardens employed throughout the year by the British Army instruct the local population about the dangers posed during live firing and from touching unexploded ordnance.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any of the unexploded ordnance found in the Archer's Post and Dol Dol training areas were from the British Army. [2792]

Mr. Ingram: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to recent activities where the British Army, in support of the Kenyan Department of Defence, conducted limited clearance operations at Archer's Post. During 2000 a total of 32 ammunition types were recovered, only two of which were found to be unique to the British Army. The Royal Engineers are continuing to analyse the ammunition found earlier this year.

We do not conduct live firing at the Dol Dol training area and have therefore not conducted an explosive ordnance clearance operation at the range. Any live unexploded ordnance found at Dol Dol is therefore a matter for the Kenyan authorities.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many square kilometres of the Archer's Post range were cleared in the operation from March to May. [3208]

Mr. Ingram: The clearance operation covered 64 square kilometres.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many live bombs were found in the recent clean-up operation of Archer's Post from March to May; how many were British made; and how many had batch numbers showing who had fired them; and of these how many had been fired by the British Army. [3207]

Mr. Ingram: During the recent clearance operation at Archer's Post a total of 271 live ammunition types were found. Work is continuing to establish their provenance.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the British Army first was informed that people were being *(a)* injured and *(b)* killed on the Archer's Post and Dol Dol range by live bombs. [3220]

Mr. Ingram: In recent times, the British Army has been aware of three incidents where civilians were killed or injured at Archer's Post. The first of these incidents is believed to have taken place in May 1999.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the British Army intends to clean up the live bombs about which they were informed by Osiligi representatives in late 2000. [3209]

Mr. Ingram: I understand that the ordnance to which my hon. Friend refers was found at the Dol Dol training area. The British Army does not conduct live firing at Dol Dol, and any live ammunition found there is therefore a matter for the Kenyan authorities.

Precision-guided Missiles

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom is part of the Netherlands-led consortium to purchase precision-guided missiles from the United States of America; and if he will make a statement. [2723]

Mr. Hoon: The UK is not part of any Netherlands-led consortium for the procurement of precision-guided missiles from the United States of America.

Armed Forces Pension Scheme

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will publish the review of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme; and if he will make a statement. [3490]

Mr. Ingram: The public consultation period on the emerging findings of the review of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 16 March 2001, *Official Report*, column 756W, ends on 31 July. A summary of the views expressed during this period and a response to them will be published when the comments have been fully considered.

Armoured Reconnaissance Unit

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the 4th Armoured Reconnaissance Unit will be stationed at Stanley Barracks, Bovington; and which regiment will be fulfilling that role at that time. [3488]

Mr. Ingram: In his answer on 12 April 2000, *Official Report*, column 147W, the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces, my hon. Friend the Member for Warley (Mr. Spellar) stated that the 4th Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment will be the Queen's Dragoon Guards who would move into barracks at Bovington in August 2003. Since then a number of factors have emerged that might affect this plan and there has therefore been a need to re-address the options. I shall write to the hon. Member when the position is clearer.

Medical Services

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the policy is for fast-tracking of service personnel for medical treatment *(a)* in Ministry of Defence hospital units and *(b)* elsewhere. [2862]

Dr. Moonie: Service patients are mainly treated in Ministry of Defence Hospitals Units (MDHUs), in other NHS hospitals as NHS patients, or in Defence Secondary Care Agency (DSCA) directly managed units (DMUs) in the UK and overseas. The British Forces Germany Health Service provides secondary care for service personnel in Germany where there are generally no waiting lists.

The DSCA has set waiting time targets for the treatment of patients from the armed forces in its DMUs and MDHUs. The contracts between MDHUs and their host NHS trusts include financial payments to encourage trusts to achieve these. The contracts also allow service personnel needed for operational deployment to receive a priority out-patient opinion. In addition, contracts were placed last year with independent sector health care providers to treat service personnel in shortage categories to relieve overstretch. Referrals under these contracts ceased in March 2001. Planning has recently been approved for another rapid treatment initiative.

Military personnel referred to NHS hospitals outwith MDHU arrangements are treated in accordance with NHS waiting times on the basis of clinical need.

MOD Property (Belfast)

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what land and property is in the possession of his Department in North Belfast; and on what terms. [3077]

Mr. Ingram: The Ministry of Defence has two properties in the parliamentary constituency of North Belfast. The Regular Army is based in Girdwood Barracks, part of which we hold freehold and the remainder is leasehold. The Territorial Army is based at Dunmore Camp, which is held under freehold.

A400M and Meteor

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library the memorandums of understanding for the A400M and Meteor that he signed in Paris in June. [2969]

Dr. Moonie: The memoranda of understanding for the A400M and Meteor programmes will become effective when all participants have signed them. We do not anticipate all signatures being in place until September 2001. Copies of the documents will be placed in the Library of the House when they become effective.

Helicopters

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the total *(a)* budget and *(b)* cost was of purchasing and commissioning the Merlin helicopter for the Royal Navy. [4337]

Mr. Ingram: The total budget for purchasing the Merlin helicopter was £4,931 million. The total forecast cost of purchasing the Merlin helicopter is £4,903 million. This includes the UK element of the development costs. The development of the Merlin Mk1 was part of the EH 101 UK/Italy collaborative project. The forecast also includes an estimate for the initial provisioning of capital spares, the cost of the avionics weapon system, the Merlin Training System and the supply of ground support equipment.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the full squadron of Royal Navy Merlin helicopters will be fully operational; and if he will make a statement. [4338]

Mr. Ingram: On current plans the first full squadron of Royal Navy Merlin helicopters will be fully operational in May 2002 with the further squadrons achieving this status within a rolling programme up to 2005.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if QinetiQ plc is included in the manufacturing licence agreement for the Apache AH MK I helicopter. [3487]

Dr. Moonie *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* No. The Manufacturing licence for the UK Apache Attack Helicopter is between Westland Helicopters Ltd. and the Boeing Company. Westland Helicopters Ltd. is currently seeking an amendment to the licence to enable QinetiQ to access such US proprietary data as it needs to undertake its work on the UK Apache programme. US State Department approval will be required for the amendment.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the impact of the failure of the full mission simulator software on the date for operational readiness of the WAH-64 helicopter. [3572]

Dr. Moonie: Problems with software integration have delayed the availability of the Full Mission Simulator for the UK WAH-64 Apache Attack Helicopter. This has, in turn, delayed the start of our training programme. As a consequence, we currently expect the readiness date for the first operational Apache squadron will be August 2004, a slip of seven months.

RAF Menwith Hill

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* US and *(b)* UK (i) military and (ii) civilian personnel are deployed at RAF Menwith Hill. [4176]

Mr. Ingram: As at 13 June 2001, at RAF Menwith Hill there were 459 US military, 1,012 US civilian, five UK military and 404 UK civilian personnel (excluding GCHQ staff). I am withholding the numbers of GCHQ staff under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Space Based Infra-Red System radomes to come on line at RAF Menwith Hill. [4175]

Mr. Ingram: At present there is no firm date for when the European Relay Ground Station for the Space Based Infra-Red System located at RAF Menwith Hill will come on line.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the legal status is of the United States personnel stationed at RAF Menwith Hill. [4180]

Mr. Ingram: The US personnel stationed at RAF Menwith Hill are there at the invitation of Her Majesty's Government, and are members (or dependants of members) of a visiting force or the civilian component of a visiting force to which Part 1 of the Visiting Forces Act 1952 applies.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason US Menwith Hill was renamed RAF Menwith Hill. [4173]

Mr. Ingram: The base was renamed RAF Menwith Hill in February 1996 bringing it into line with other sites made available to United States visiting forces in the UK.

Ministerial Visits (Menwith Hill and Fylingdales)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date a Minister from his Department last visited *(a)* RAF Menwith Hill and *(b)* RAF Fylingdales. [4174]

Mr. Ingram: RAF Menwith Hill was visited by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 5 July 2001. RAF Fylingdales has not been the subject of a ministerial visit since 1 May 1997.

Roving Sands Exercises

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom personnel were involved in the exercises known as Roving Sands; and for what purpose. [4172]

Mr. Ingram: Exercise Roving Sands is an annual multinational Air Defence exercise hosted by the US Army at Fort Bliss, Texas, USA, involving UK, Dutch, German and Canadian Air Defence forces. The purpose is to exercise in a joint and combined integrated defence environment as part of a joint forces headquarters. This year, we planned to deploy 264 personnel from 7 Air Defence Brigade to participate in the exercise between 6 June and 1 July. Owing to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the UK, however, the US Department of Defense asked the UK not to import vehicle or heavy equipment into Texas for the exercise. The UK participation in the exercise Roving Sands 01, therefore, consisted of 22 personnel from 7 Air Defence Brigade deployed to Fort Bliss where they were integrated in the Headquarters of the 31 Air Defence Brigade, US Army.

Sovereign Bases

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Sovereign base areas which would be defended under the terms of the Strategic Defence Review; and what plans there are to withdraw from these bases. [3915]

Mr. Ingram: There are two Sovereign base areas, at Episkopi and Dhekelia in Cyprus. There are no plans to withdraw from these bases.

Tank Accident (Salisbury Plain)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cause of the fatal accident involving a Challenger II tank on Salisbury Plain was on 11 July; and if he will make a statement. [4059]

Mr. Ingram: It is too early to know what caused the fatal accident on Salisbury Plain, but a full investigation has begun. Clearly all our thoughts are with the families and friends of the two soldiers who died in the accident.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Solicitor-General what the terms of reference are for the Green Minister in her Department; and if she will make a statement. [3979]

The Solicitor-General: I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Loizidou Case

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Solicitor-General what action the Attorney General proposes to take to assist in ensuring that Turkey complies with its obligations to the Loizidou case as a consequence of the resolution of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers of 26 June. [R] [2979]

The Solicitor-General: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

Congestion Tax

Richard Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the impact of the Mayor of London's proposed congestion tax on retailing within the proposed congestion tax area. [1777]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 3 July 2001]:* The Mayor's congestion charging proposals are his responsibility, not the Government's. However, in 2000, before the Mayor was elected, a Government-sponsored report was published entitled "Road Charging Options for London: a Technical Assessment". This was a report by an independent group consisting of transport experts from the academic, professional and public sectors. Chapter 5 on "Impacts and Effects" discusses how the illustrative charging scenarios included in the report would affect different groups including retail businesses. The impacts on businesses are discussed at paragraphs 5.3.79 to 5.3.82. Copies of the report are available in the Library.

Railways

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will provide the figures for the fourth quarter of 2000–01 of service disruptions due to failures in trains, signals, points and track. [2728]

Mr. Jamieson: Railtrack figures show that the average daily delays from all causes to services run by the franchised passenger train operators during the 12 week period beginning 7 January 2001 totalled 76,647 minutes. Around 18,500 trains ran each day under the winter timetables.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the need for additional capacity on the Cotswold railway line between Worcestershire and Oxford; and if he will make a statement. [4131]

Mr. Jamieson: The Strategic Rail Authority has met the Cotswold and Malvern Line partnership who are preparing a bid for funding from the Rail Passenger Partnership scheme to improve this stretch of the line. When the bid is submitted it will be assessed against the authority's planning criteria.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what evaluations his Department has conducted into the advantages of extending southwards the railway line from Chessington South. [3643]

Mr. Jamieson: No evaluations have been made by my Department or the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). I understand that evaluations have been made by Stagecoach, the franchisee of South West Trains, and that the proposal is supported by the local authority. If funding were required from Government it may be available through the Rail Passenger Partnership scheme (RPP), administered by the SRA. The SRA will assess any bids on value for money grounds against their published planning criteria. Bidding guidance has been sent to all local authorities.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will establish a method of independent oversight to ensure the study promised by GoVia into the viability of reopening the Lewes-Uckfield line is undertaken properly. [4169]

Mr. Jamieson: The study will be carried out by a consultant in accordance with terms of reference agreed by the Strategic Rail Authority and GoVia. The authority will consider the results of the study against planning criteria approved by Ministers. It would neither be practicable nor appropriate to introduce further parties into the evaluation process.

London Underground

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received about the full value for money analysis in respect of London Underground proposals; what has been the response to them and by whom; and if he will make a statement. [2727]

Mr. Jamieson: In addition to occasional questions in the House, my Department receives a small amount of correspondence from time to time about the value for money analysis of the Government's proposals for London Underground.

A report of the Environment, Transport and the Regional Affairs Committee published in July 2000 recommended that the National Audit Office should evaluate the public sector comparator used in the value for money analysis before contracts were signed. The National Audit Office produced a report into the financial analysis of our proposals for the London Underground in December 2000.

The Select Committee also recommended that the results of the comparator tests should be published before the letting of any contracts. Our response to all such representations has been that the results of the full value for money analysis will be made publicly available once contracts have been signed. To publish the results any earlier would undermine London Underground's commercial position and damage its ability to achieve best value for the taxpayer.

Housing

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions by what amount his Department intends to reduce the level of public subsidy to housing over the next 10 years expressed as *(a)* a total figure and *(b)* a figure per week for each tenant. [3001]

Ms Keeble: The Government's proposals for the new Housing Revenue Account subsidy system will not lead to any change in the overall level of subsidy in 2002–03 from that announced in the 2000 Spending Review. Thereafter the future level of subsidy will be determined as part of the general decisions in the Spending Reviews on future public expenditure.

Local Authority Redundancy Costs

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will publish the criteria under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 governing the use by local authorities of housing investment programme allocations for social services staff redundancy packages; and if he will make a statement. [3534]

Ms Keeble: Housing investment programme allocations, together with those for a number of other capital programmes, are issued in the form of Basic Credit Approvals. Authorities are free to use these for any capital purpose.

Expenditure for capital purposes is defined in the 1989 Act, but the Act also provides, in section 40(6), for the Secretary of State to make a direction that expenditure normally defined as revenue be treated by the authority concerned as expenditure for capital purposes. Directions are not normally issued unless the expenditure:

(a) is substantial in relation to the authority's revenue budget for the financial year concerned and was unforeseeable when that budget was adopted; or

(b) cannot be met out of financial reserves but will result in revenue account savings in future years.

Applications for capitalisation of redundancy costs, and similar lump-sum costs such as severance or premature retirement payments, are normally considered against test (b) as stated. In those cases, directions are not usually given unless the expenditure to be capitalised exceeds both:

5 per cent. of the authority's available reserves (excluding Local Management of Schools (LMS) reserves) and

0.25 per cent. of its total budgeted expenditure for the financial year in question.

It is therefore possible, owing to the flexibility allowed to authorities in the use of BCAs, and following issue of a section 40(6) direction, for housing capital allocations to be used to fund redundancy costs. But this would only be in an exceptional case and the authority in question would still be expected to meet longer term targets for housing improvement.

Postal Voting

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what research has been undertaken on the new criteria for postal voting; what steps have been taken to promote it; what the level of use of postal votes issued was; and if he will make a statement. [3192]

Dr. Whitehead: The Electoral Commission intends to publish by the end of July its review of the general election, including the operation of postal voting. Statistical information, including information about the numbers of postal votes issued will be in the Commission's further report expected at the end of the year. When the general election was announced an extensive Home Office publicity campaign was launched on TV, radio, in the press and through leaflets.

Traffic Area Network

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on what date the Traffic Area Network computer system will be implemented in the whole of the United Kingdom. [3464]

Mr. Spellar: The Traffic Area Network (TAN) has embarked on a major change programme, called TAN 21, designed to modernise the way the organisation carries out its business. The programme includes complete renewal of all computer systems throughout the network. The ICT infrastructure—the hardware, the links between the offices and the new e-mail systems—was installed last year and is already operating nationally. The first phase of the new business system, which handles the processing of operator licences, is currently being piloted in the Scottish traffic area. Subject to satisfactory performance of the pilot, this phase of the system will be rolled out to the rest of the country shortly. We are aiming to complete implementation of all the new systems, which include new e-commerce services for the industry, computerisation of the compliance and local bus route registration systems and a new finance system, across the whole of Great Britain by the end of the year.

Road Works

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what powers local authorities have to co-ordinate the excavation of roads within their areas by statutory undertakers and private companies; and what steps he is taking to review these powers. [3690]

Ms Keeble: Section 59 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 places an obligation on local highway authorities to co-ordinate the execution of utility street works and other works in their streets. This is intended to ensure safety, to minimise inconvenience to road users and to protect the structure of the street and any apparatus located in it. While we have no plans to review this requirement, we are looking at ways in which the co-ordination of works by authorities can be made easier and more effective.

Tram and Guided Bus Systems

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) in which cities *(a)* tram and *(b)* guided bus systems have been opened over the past four years; [3542]

(2) what plans he has to introduce new rapid transit lines broken down by *(a)* the cities in which he intends to introduce them, *(b)* the number of lines he will introduce in each city and *(c)* the date for commencement of each project; [3429]

(3) in which cities he intends to introduce *(a)* new trams and *(b)* guided bus systems over the next 10 years indicating in each case (i) when work is expected to commence and (ii) when the system is expected to open. [3541]

Ms Keeble: It is for local authorities to put forward proposals for light rail or guided bus schemes as part of their Local Transport Plan, or the Mayor's Transport Strategy in the case of London. Where Government funding is sought, we require a thorough appraisal of the scheme. Since 1997, five new light rail lines have opened: two extensions to the Manchester Metrolink, the Midland Metro line to Wolverhampton, the Croydon Tramlink and the Docklands Light Railway extension to Lewisham. No new guided bus schemes have been opened within this period. The charts set out those light rail and guided bus schemes that have been approved or given provisional approval with construction and approximate opening dates.

Light rail

Scheme	*City*	*Lines*	*Construction/opening date*
Tyne and Wear Metro Extension to Sunderland	Newcastle to Sunderland	1 line	Construction began February 2000—opens 2002
Nottingham Express Transit	Nottingham	1 line	Construction began June 2000—opens 2003
Manchester Metrolink Extensions	Manchester	3 lines	Construction to start early 2002—planned to open in 2006
South Hampshire Rapid Transit	Fareham to Portsmouth	1 line	Construction to start late 2003–04—planned to open in 2006.
Leeds Supertram	Leeds	3 lines	Construction to start 2002—planned to open in 2006.
Docklands Light Railway to City Airport	London	1 line	Construction to start early 2002 subject to outcome of Transport and Works Act (TWA) application—aim to open during 2004–05.
Bristol and South Gloucestershire Light Rapid Transit	Bristol	1 line	Provisional construction start 2004 subject to successful economic appraisal and any subsequent TWA application—provisional completion date 2006.
Midland Metro Extensions	Birmingham	2 lines	Construction to start 2003—completion in 2006.

Guided bus

Scheme	*City*	*Construction*	*Opens*
A63/A64 York Road and Selby Road	Leeds	Under way	September 2001
A641 Manchester Road	Bradford	Under way	Autumn 2001
Crawley Fastway	Crawley to Gatwick	Preliminary works commenced. Major works start February 2002	Completion of all three phases by 2005
Chester/Deeside Transport System	Chester	Seeking TWA Powers.	Dependent on TWA application
Leigh	Manchester	Seeking TWA powers	Dependent on TWA application

We are also aware of proposals for new light rail lines in Merseyside, Hull, Bath, East Lancashire and Blackpool and for further extensions to the Manchester Metrolink, the South Yorkshire Supertram, the Midland Metro, Nottingham Express Transit and the Tyne and Wear Metro. There are proposals for guided bus schemes between Luton and Dunstable, in Northampton and in Cambridge.

For London, the Mayor's Transport Strategy includes proposals for four tram or bus transit schemes—East London Transit, Greenwich Waterfront Transit, Uxbridge Road Transit and Cross River Transit. The Mayor and Transport for London will consult on each of these proposals to decide which, if any, should be taken forward, with a view to completing planning, determining funding and financing and starting the construction of any preferred scheme or schemes by 2004.

Buses

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how much money will be invested in the Urban Bus Challenge Fund in each of the next 10 years. [3427]

Ms Keeble: Provision for the Urban Bus Challenge in the current three-year spending review period is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
2001–02	8
2002–03	18
2003–04	20

As part of the next Spending Review, which is due to be completed in the summer of 2002, provision for this scheme for 2003–04 will be confirmed, and provision agreed for 2004–05 and 2005–06. Provision for the remaining years of the 10-year Transport Plan (2006–07 to 2010–11) will be considered in the forthcoming review of the plan and in future Government Spending Reviews.

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what estimate he has made of the extent to which bus passenger journeys outside London will change in the next 10 years. [3428]

Ms Keeble: Our assumption in the 10-year Transport Plan is that the measures, taken as a whole, would make achievable our target of a 10 per cent. increase in bus use nationally over 10 years. No separate estimates were made of the position outside London.

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made towards extending the rural bus subsidy grant to cover more journeys serving market towns. [3458]

Ms Keeble: The White Paper "Our Countryside: The Future" last November announced our intention to extend the eligibility criteria for Rural Bus Subsidy Grant to allow for the support of services operating in and around towns of up to 25,000 (compared with 10,000 previously). We have already implemented that change to the rules from 1 April this year. We have also increased the funding available this year to £41.5 million, with further increases planned for the next two years. It is for the local authority to decide which particular services to support using these additional resources and we have given them some flexibility to fund existing as well as new services.

Road Accidents

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made towards reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents over the past 12 months. [3547]

Mr. Jamieson: Good progress is being made in implementing the Government's Road Safety Strategy that was launched in March 2000. Progress to date and proposed next steps on the many elements of the strategy are reported in a quarterly schedule which is placed on the DTLR website (www.roads.dtlr.gov.uk/roadsafety/strategy/imp/index.htm). The end-June 2001 schedule will be available there soon.

The main road casualty results for 2000 were published on 14 June 2001. Fuller details will be published in September. I am pleased to say that the number of deaths and serious injuries in 2000 was 2 per cent. less than that for the previous year, and for children up to age 15, the number was 9 per cent. lower. I very much hope that this is part of a continuing downward trend and that we achieve or better the target casualty reductions set for 2010 in the strategy: a 40 per cent. reduction in the number of deaths and serious injuries, a 50 per cent. reduction in the number of child deaths and serious injuries, and a 10 per cent. reduction in the rate (by vehicle mileage) of slight injuries—all compared with the averages for 1994 to 1998.

Community Transport Schemes

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when community transport schemes will be entitled to claim a fuel rebate. [3457]

Ms Keeble: Following consultation with relevant organisations earlier this year, we will be bringing forward regulations on the introduction this financial year of fuel duty rebate for a wide range of community transport services.

Cycle and Pedestrian Routes

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many routes for safer cycling and walking have been introduced in the past 12 months; and how many are planned to be introduced in each of the next nine years. [3455]

Mr. Spellar: Information on cycling and walking provision is not available in the form requested. The Government have encouraged local traffic authorities in England to include strategies for increasing cycling and walking in their local transport plans (LTPs).

Local cycling strategies contain plans for up to 4,300 km of new cycle routes in England by 2005, as well as a range of facilities for cyclists such as advanced stop lines, toucan crossings and junction treatments. Local strategies to promote walking include pedestrian routes, pedestrianisation, safety measures, better facilities for the disabled and greater accessibility to transport interchanges and facilities. A number of authorities are likely to use LTP funding to make walking more accessible, by improving pavement and footway maintenance, and removing obstructions.

We shall also be continuing to help Sustrans in the development of the National Cycle Network, which it is hoped will be 10,000 miles long by 2005.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will open the extension of the Docklands Light Railway to London City airport. [3543]

Mr. Jamieson: The powers required to extend the DLR to London City airport have been sought from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by way of an order under the Transport and Works Act 1992. A public inquiry has been held and the inspector's report is under consideration. I cannot therefore comment on the merits of the scheme or say anything which might prejudice my right hon. Friend's decision. The application will, however, be dealt with as quickly as possible. If powers were to be given, responsibility for taking forward the scheme would rest with the Mayor of London in his role as Chairman of Transport for London.

Road Traffic Estimates

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the change in traffic levels has been since *(a)* May 1997 and *(b)* June 2000 on (i) motorways and trunk roads, (ii) other major roads and (iii) minor roads. [3551]

Mr. Jamieson: The Department estimates traffic quarterly, not monthly. These figures do not distinguish between trunk and principal 'A' class roads.

The percentage changes in road traffic for all motor vehicles in Great Britain for the relevant quarters until the first quarter of 2001 (the latest available) are as shown in the table.

Seasonally-adjusted *Percentage*

Road class	*Q2 1997 to Q1 2001*	*Q2 2000 to Q1 2001*
Motorway	10	1
Other major roads	5	0
Minor roads	1	−1

Alternative Fuels

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what proportion of registered motor vehicles are equipped to run on *(a)* liquified petroleum gas, *(b)* compressed natural gas and *(c)* biodiesel. [3546]

Mr. Jamieson: Figures from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency show that, as of 31 March 2001, there were 25,540 vehicles, out of a total vehicle parc of 29,174,788, registered in Great Britain as being capable of being powered by road fuel gases. DVLA does not hold separate figures for vehicles powered by CNG and LPG. These figures do not include vehicles from Northern Ireland for which quarterly data are not collected.

As any compression ignition engine should be able to use biodiesel without major modification, no separate figures are kept for biodiesel.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the current session of Parliament; when meetings are planned to take place during the current session of Parliament; and if he will make a statement. [3991]

Dr. Whitehead *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 690W.

Fishing Fatalities

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many fatalities there were in the fishing industry following an incident when at sea in each of the last five years. [4336]

Mr. Jamieson: In each of the last five years the number of fatalities occurring at sea were:

Year	*Number*
1996	20
1997	28
1998	25
1999	7
2000	28

Fatalities occurring in harbour, or when anchored outside harbour are not included.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what

anti-congestion traffic measures, other than increased taxation, are being considered by his Department; and if he will make a statement. [4116]

Ms Keeble: We have forecast that, without the 10-year Plan for Transport, congestion will rise by 15 per cent. across the road network as a whole, and by 28 per cent. on the inter-urban trunk road network by the end of 2010.

With the plan, overall congestion is forecast to fall relative to 2000, as would congestion on the inter-urban trunk roads. Action on relieving congestion will be focused on the most congested parts of the network and therefore much bigger improvements in journey times will be seen in these areas.

The implementation of the 10-year Plan as a whole rather than traffic measures alone, will deliver the planned reduction in congestion, The targets in the plan to increase passenger rail use by 50 per cent. and rail freight by 80 per cent. will be important contributions, as will better local road maintenance, road improvements, the introduction of better bus and light rail services and better facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

Transport (Environmental Damage)

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment his Department has made of the negative environmental impacts caused from *(a)* road traffic and *(b)* aviation; what policies his Department plans to reduce the negative environmental impacts caused from (i) road traffic and (ii) aviation; and if he will make a statement. [4000]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* Assessing environmental impacts is a well established and long standing practice in this Department and across Government. Our comprehensive policies for reducing environmental impact were set out in our White Paper, "A New Deal for Transport", in 1998. Our 10-year Plan for Transport, published in July 2000, has a number of policies specifically to reduce noise. Progress on specific commitments and announcements of our continuing plans are regularly announced.

Bexhill Bypass

Mr. Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the proposed Bexhill Bypass. [4068]

Mr. Jamieson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Transport on 12 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 635–37W.

A612 Public Transport Corridor

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the progress made by Nottinghamshire county council regarding their plans for the A612 public transport corridor. [4553]

Ms Keeble: I understand that Nottinghamshire county council intends to submit a bid for an A612 public transport scheme to the Department at the end of July. Following receipt a full assessment will be carried out before a decision is announced in December.

Housing Development (Coventry)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many new housing developments in Coventry have been on *(a)* greenfield and *(b)* brownfield sites in the last four years; and how many are planned in each category in the next three years. [3913]

Ms Keeble: Detailed figures are not available centrally. Under best value, Coventry city council are required to report on the percentage of new homes built on previously-developed land. The Audit Commission are currently collecting data from all authorities and the Government expect to be able to publish estimated outturn for 2000–01 shortly.

Planning Policy Guidance

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the introduction of public policy planning guidance on housing; and what advice has been issued to councils on responding to this guidance. [4311]

Ms Keeble: Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG3) was published in March 2000. Since then, a series of good practice guides has been issued to help local authorities implement its new approach to planning for housing. We expect local authorities to update their development plans to reflect PPG3 and to test planning applications for housing development against the policies it contains.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if the definition of previously-developed land in Annexe C of the PPG3 guidance is to be applied uniformly throughout the country. [4418]

Ms Keeble: There are various definitions of previously-developed land in use. For the purposes of applying the policies in PPG3 the definition of previously-developed land given in annexe C should be used.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the advice given to councils on withdrawing greenfield sites earmarked for housing development where no planning permission exists and where that withdrawal is in line with PPG3. [4417]

Ms Keeble: PPG3 introduces a new approach to planning for housing which, for most authorities, will mean their development plan will require early review and alteration in respect of housing. The most effective way of removing greenfield allocations from a plan that does not reflect the policies in PPG3 is through a formal alteration to the plan.

Motor Insurance

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the total amount collected by the Motor Insurers' Bureau is from motor policies in the latest year for which figures are available. [4074]

Mr. Jamieson: Industry estimates suggest that the amount levied from motor insurers last year to pay for the Motor Insurers' Bureau was approximately £200,000,000.

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the average amount is that a motorist pays to the Motor Insurers' Bureau to compensate the victims of uninsured drivers. [4073]

Mr. Jamieson: Industry estimates suggest that the honest motorist pays from £15 to £30 extra on his premium to fund compensation of victims of uninsured drivers.

Workboat Code

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when the Maritime and Coastguard Agency workboat code was last revised; and what application the Maritime and Coastguard Agency workboat code has to the aquaculture and fishing industries. [3751]

Mr. Jamieson: The Workboat Code came into force in August 1998 and has not been revised. The code is currently under review as part of a harmonisation project designed to produce a single code of practice for all small commercial vessels. This review is due for completion in March 2002.

The Workboat Code sets safety standards for vessels undertaking aquaculture (e.g. fish and shellfish farming). It does not apply to vessels engaged in commercial fish catching.

Private Finance Initiative

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what central monitoring his Department undertakes of value for money obtained in private finance initiative projects; and if he will make a statement. [4461]

Dr. Whitehead: The value for money of private finance initiative contracts must be demonstrated against a public sector comparator, representing the costs associated with providing the same service through a conventional procurement, before approval will be given for signature of a contract. The Department ensures that the value for money benefits of a PFI contract are delivered across the life of the contract through appropriate clauses in the payment mechanism. Performance of contracts is monitored against the individual requirements of the payment mechanisms which provide incentives for the delivery of quality services.

Dredging (Tidal Water)

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what powers *(a)* he and *(b)* his agencies have to control maintenance dredging of estuarine channels. [4300]

Mr. Jamieson: The general power to control dredging in tidal waters is contained in section 34 of the Coast Protection Act 1949 which requires the Secretary of State's consent to any operation to remove any object or any materials from any part of the seashore lying below the level of mean low water springs. Harbour authorities usually have powers in their local legislation to carry out within their harbour dredging in order to maintain or facilitate navigation and to license others to do so. These operations are generally exempted from the requirement for CPA consent. Disposal of the dredged material will require the approval of the Secretary of State if it is placed below the level of high water.

Wootton Creek and Ryde, Isle of Wight

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what powers as harbour authority are held *(a)* by the Queen's Harbour Master and *(b)* by others in respect of Wootton Creek and Ryde, Isle of Wight. [4297]

Mr. Jamieson: The Department is currently investigating the precise responsibilities, some of which overlap, of the harbour authorities in the area in the light of an application by Wightlink for consent to dredge at the Fishbourne ferry terminal. Although the application, has now been withdrawn I will write to the hon. Member when our investigations are completed.

Waterways (Freight)

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what percentage of total UK freight was transported by inland waterway in *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 2000. [3749]

Mr. Jamieson: The percentage of total domestic UK freight (tonne-kilometres moved) by inland waterway in each year 1997 to 1999 was 0.8 per cent. The percentage for 2000 is not yet available.

TREASURY

Official Residences

Norman Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if refurbishment of official residences is classified as benefits in kind for tax purposes. [4171]

Dawn Primarolo: Yes. Where refurbishment to the accommodation consists of repairs, decoration or furniture, tax is charged on the benefit.

The same rules apply to all office holders or employees.

Insurance Premium Tax

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his Department's income has been from insurance premium tax on motor policies over the last three years. [4071]

Mr. Boateng: The information is not available. Customs and Excise do not require insurers to identify the specific types of insurance policies on which insurance premium tax is paid.

Surveillance and Security Services

Mr. Laws: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 5 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 311W, on surveillance and security services, if he will break down the figures provided to distinguish between expenditure on *(a)* GCHQ, *(b)* the Security Service and *(c)* the Secret Intelligence Service; if he

will make it his policy to publish the public service agreements relating to each agency; and if he will make a statement. [3662]

Mr. Andrew Smith: National security considerations preclude publication of this information, although all of it is available to the Intelligence and Security Committee.

Barnett Formula

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a list of the programmes for financial years 1999–2000 and 2000–01 where spending increases in England and Wales have resulted in an allocation under the Barnett formula of additional money to the Scottish block, indicating for each programme listed and in total, the amount allocated under the formula to Scotland in cash and percentage terms, and the equivalent increase in cash and percentage terms for each matching programme in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement. [3916]

Mr. Andrew Smith: Information on the departmental expenditure limits for 1999–2000 and 2000–01 for Scotland was published in Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses in April 2001. Increases in the block grant to the Scottish Executive were published in the Scotland Office estimates for 1999–2000 and 2000–01 (and prior to devolution in Scottish Office Estimates). Details about the Barnett formula were published in the Statement of Funding Policy, which was updated in July 2000.

European Community Budget

Barbara Follett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will publish the Statement on the 2001 Community Budget. [4779]

Ruth Kelly: I have today laid before Parliament the Statement on the 2001 Community Budget, entitled "European Community Finances". This White Paper is the twenty-first in the series. As in the past, it covers annual budgetary matters and includes details of recent developments in European Community financial management and in countering fraud against the Community Budget. It also describes the Community Budget for 2001 as adopted by the European Parliament, and the United Kingdom's gross and net contributions to the Community Budget between 1996 and 2001.

I have placed copies of the White Paper in the Libraries of the House.

Bribery

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to incorporate into UK law the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions into UK law; and if he will make a statement. [3814]

Dawn Primarolo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen) on 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 407W.

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions in the last year his Department has considered bribes paid by UK companies overseas to be *(a)* a reasonable business cost and *(b)* a business entertainment, hospitality or gift; what the value of such bribes allowed as a business expense was; what estimate he has made of the total cost of such bribes in this period; and if he will make a statement. [3819]

Dawn Primarolo: The information requested is not available.

Public Service Delivery

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the proportion of public services demonstrating an improvement in productivity in each year since March 1999. [3811]

Mr. Andrew Smith: The Government are on course to meet targeted efficiency improvements covering well over half of public spending (excluding transfers).

IT Procurement

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations his Department has received from *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* Government Departments on the legal status of GCAT and S-CAT; and if he will place copies of such representations in the Library; [3817]

(2) what legal advice his Department has received on the legal status of GCAT and S-CAT; and if he will place copies of such legal advice in the Library. [3816]

Mr. Andrew Smith: Legal advisers are consulted as necessary on the operation of the schemes. Such legal advice is both confidential to the parties and commercially sensitive. OGC has not received any formal representation from Government Departments or local authorities on the legal status of GCat and S-CAT.

Capital Gains Tax

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the expected cost is for the next five fiscal years of the changes to the capital gains tax system since 1997; what studies the Treasury has *(a)* undertaken, *(b)* reviewed and *(c)* commissioned on the efficacy of the changes to the capital gains tax system since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [4402]

Dawn Primarolo: The available information on the expected cost/yield of capital gains measures introduced since 1997 is published in each "Financial Statement and Budget Report". Further information on the difference in yield between the planned regime and that which would have applied if no changes had been made since 1997 could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

The Government consulted widely on the effectiveness of the reformed capital gains tax system in the light of developing market conditions before making the improvements to taper relief that were implemented in the Finance Acts 2000 and 2001.

In the June 2001 "Enterprise for All" announcement, the Government said that they would consider whether, during the lifetime of this Parliament, changes to the regime for non-business assets are necessary in order to improve incentives for investment and help businesses attract finance. And they will also consult on whether

there are worthwhile and good value for money options to simplify capital gains tax within the existing policy framework.

Census

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when area—specific information from the census will become available. [3442]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Pullinger to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 16 July 2001:

The National Statistician and Registrar General for England and Wales has been asked to reply to your recent question asking when area-specific information from the Census will become available (3442). I am replying in his absence.

Mid-2001 population estimates for local authority areas for England and Wales, based on the 2001 Census, are planned to be published around the end of August 2002.

More detailed figures from the 2001 Census are planned to be released towards the end of 2002 and during 2003. These will provide information on the full range of topics covered in the census for geographical areas ranging from the output area and ward level up to national level.

Advizas

Paul Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to investigate the role of the Personal Investments Authority in the acquisition of the financial adviser Advizas by Towry Law. [3166]

Ruth Kelly *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* Under the Financial Services Act 1986, the Personal Investment Authority regulates retail investment firms and the lead regulator, the Financial Services Authority, is responsible for ensuring that the Personal Investment Authority carries out its responsibilities under the Act. Therefore it is a matter for the Financial Services Authority.

Endowment Policies

Paul Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a list of endowment mortgage providers, indicating *(a)* how many shortfalls are associated with each company and *(b)* the value of orphan assets held by each company; [3720]

(2) if he will encourage the Financial Services Authority to publish an analysis of the performance of each company endowment policy using real charges to help consumers identify the degree of risk in each company. [3718]

Ruth Kelly: The FSA does not collect performance information direct from firms, but the Association of British Insurers collects data from its members on the proportion and numbers of letters in each of the red, amber and green, categories and passes this on to the FSA. However, the FSA is subject to constraints under Section 179 of the Financial Services Act 1986 on publication of firm data, even if it owns it.

In any case, the performance of individual company endowment policies is not an indication of mis-selling. Consumers should focus on what they are being told by their endowment provider and the information sent by, and available from, the FSA, and take a view and appropriate action if they believe the policy has been mis-sold. If compensation is due to consumers, the size of orphan assets is irrelevant.

Paul Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ask the Financial Services Authority to ensure that the cost of compensation paid to those who were mis-sold endowment mortgage policies is borne by the companies' shareholders. [3719]

Ruth Kelly: The Government's view is that, in principle, the costs of compensating victims of any endowment mis-selling should be shared and borne in the same proportion as profits arising from mis-selling would have been.

Efficiency Measures

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures the Treasury has developed of improvements in efficiency in delivering the Treasury's outputs; and if he will make a statement on progress in achieving these measures. [3812]

Ruth Kelly: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him on 24 January 2000, *Official Report*, column 117W.

Industrial and Provident Societies

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those industrial and provident societies which have deregistered for each of the last five years along with the reasons given for their deregistration. [3726]

Ruth Kelly: The table provides details of industrial and provident societies which have deregistered each year since 1997 including the reason for their deregistration.

Deregistered industrial and provident societies

Reason for deregistration	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*[1]
Unclassified	6	8	43	24	7
Cancellation	1	0	0	1	1
Transfer of engagements to another society	30	49	26	24	7
Final notification of liquidation	22	68	67	32	2
Cancellation of the registration initiated by the Registry	58	133	802	110	25
Liquidator appointed	4	3	10	7	2
Instrument of Dissolution	0	1	8	16	3
Multiple cancellation of the registration initiated by the Registry	0	0	0	386	0
Winding Up	1	4	15	11	0
Request to cancel from the society	70	87	74	78	25

Deregistered industrial and provident societies

Reason for deregistration	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*[1]
Conversion to a limited company	14	9	10	8	8
Final winding up	0	1	5	9	0
Transfer to a company	5	1	2	2	2
Total	211	364	1,062	708	82
Grand Total	2,427				

[1] Deregistrations up to June 2001

European Single Currency

Mr. Laws: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer further to his answer of 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 126W, if he will list those present at each meeting of the cross-party advisory group on preparations for the euro since January 2000; if he will provide a summary of discussions held at such meetings; if he will publish a list of the current membership of the advisory group; and if he will make a statement. [3703]

Ruth Kelly: I refer the hon. Member to the answer to which he referred.

Equitable Life

Richard Ottaway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Croydon, South of 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 126W, on the Financial Services Authority inquiry, when he estimates the report will be completed. [4407]

Ruth Kelly: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Mr. Brown) on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 663W.

National Asset Register

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish an updated National Asset Register; and if he will make a statement. [4627]

Mr. Andrew Smith: Shortly.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clergy Stipends and Pensions

39. **Sir Sydney Chapman:** To ask the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners, what contribution the Church Commissioners made to clergy stipends and pensions in the last financial year. [2461]

Mr. Bell: In the year ended 31 December 2000 the Commissioners contributed £22.4 million to the stipends of parish clergy, distributed mostly to the neediest dioceses, plus bishops and cathedral clergy stipends of £6.7 million.

The Commissioners paid £90.6 million for clergy pensions and a further £11.7 million to help offset the cost of contributions payable under the new pensions scheme funded by dioceses.

Redundant Churches

40. **Mr. Paterson:** To ask the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the powers of the Church Commissioners to set conditions on those who purchase redundant churches. [2462]

Mr. Bell: Section 62 of the Pastoral Measures provides that the Commissioners may include in the conveyance of a redundant church such covenants as they think necessary to secure the suitable use of the building.

These covenants are enforceable as if the Commissioners were owners of adjacent land and cannot be set aside by the Lands Tribunal.

Property Portfolio

41. **Miss McIntosh:** To ask the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners, when the Commissioners last reviewed their property portfolio; and if he will make a statement. [2463]

Mr. Bell: The Church Commissioners' property portfolios are each subject to annual professional external and independent valuations. Those property holdings cover three main investment portfolios: commercial, agricultural and minerals, and residential.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Belize

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if the two public investment companies have *(a)* requested and *(b)* been sent copies of the report arising from the study commissioned from KPMG by her Department into regulation of offshore financial services in Belize. [3835]

Hilary Benn: Neither company has requested nor been sent copies of the report.

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development on what dates KPMG visited Belize while conducting the study commissioned by her Department into the regulation of offshore financial services in Belize. [3821]

Hilary Benn: 18 July to 1 August 2000.

Mozambique

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what plans she has to support the teaching of English in Mozambique. [3573]

Hilary Benn: DFID currently supports the advancement of English language teaching in three key areas:

1. The development of English language teacher training through distance learning. This programme, which is currently run by the British Council but which will transfer to a Mozambican institution next month, is aimed at secondary school teachers and has cost £3 million over a five-year period.

2. The establishment of a new Directorate within the Ministry of Education, the main goal of which will be to facilitate the expansion of distance learning in key areas (such as, inter alia, continuing education and training in the Civil Service, including the English language).

3. The formation of a pilot secondary school distance learning programme for students unable to access conventional secondary schools, which began this year in Nampula Province, with three core subjects, one of which is English.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

School Exclusions

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills to what extent, and according to what time scale, school budgets are reduced following the exclusion of pupils from schools. [3644]

Mr. Timms: We have significantly increased the standards fund grant available to schools and local education authorities to tackle poor behaviour and provide education to excluded pupils, from £17 million in 1996–97 to £131 million in 2000–01 and again to £174 million this year—a 10-fold increase. Before April 2000, most of this money was held centrally by local authorities to support authority-wide initiatives to tackle poor behaviour and provide education to excluded pupils. For the first time in April 2000 the majority of this funding was devolved directly to schools so that they could decide how best to tackle poor behaviour. Schools have, therefore, benefited by an additional £100 million in 2000–01 and £126 million this year. Where a child has to be permanently excluded some of the money previously held by local authorities, which is now in schools, reverts back to the local authority. The exact amount of between £3,000 and £6,000 is agreed locally. This money can be used by the authority to provide education outside school or to support a reintegration package at a new school. By September 2002, all permanently excluded pupils must be offered full-time education and not the 2–3 hours per week all too typical in the past.

Schools delegated budget shares are also reduced following permanent exclusion under the principles introduced by the last Government. I have placed in the Library a copy of "Supplement to Circular 11/99" which explains this in more detail.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many school decisions to exclude pupils were reversed by local education authorities in the last year for which figures are available. [3642]

Mr. Timms: Appeals against permanent exclusions from maintained schools are heard by independent appeal panels established by local education authorities. Figures published on 4 May show that in the school year 1999–2000, 948 appeals were lodged by parents. Of these, 863 were determined, 546 were rejected and 317 were allowed.

Provisional information on exclusions was published in the statistical first release "Permanent Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals, England 1999/00" on 4 May 2001, copies of which are available from the Library, or alternatively can be accessed from the Department for Education and Skills statistical website www.dfes.gsi.gov.uk/statistics. Final exclusion figures will be published in a statistical first release on 19 July 2001.

Standards and Effectiveness Unit

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many people are employed by the standards and effectiveness unit; and what its budget was for each year since 1997. [3122]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* The SEU is responsible for taking forward key parts of the Government's agenda for raising standards in schools. Created in 1997, the unit's remit has expanded with the development of new policies. The unit has led on strategies for literacy and numeracy, for intervention in failing schools and LEAs, and for key stage 3. It is also responsible for new policies such as city academies, excellence in cities, education action zones and beacon schools. It has taken on responsibility for specialist schools and city technology colleges, and more recently, for dealings with local education authorities on a day-to-day basis across a wide range of the Department's business.

The unit is staffed with a mix of civil servants, and education advisers appointed from outside with recent experience of education.

At the end of May 2001, the total number of staff in the unit was 275. The running cost budget for the unit for each year since 1997 was as follows:

	£ million
1997–98	2.4
1998–99	4.8
1999–2000	6.4
2000–01	8.1
2001–02	10.6

Fast Track Teacher Scheme

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many places have been accepted on the fast track teacher scheme; and how many of these teachers on the fast track scheme will be employed in *(a)* specialist schools, *(b)* city academies, *(c)* city technology colleges, *(d)* beacon schools, *(e)* grammar schools and *(f)* other maintained schools. [3360]

Mr. Timms: The total number of fast track places offered now stands at 135. Candidates are currently in the process of responding to these offers. Successful candidates will begin a year of high quality initial teacher training this autumn, and take up posts in schools in September 2002. All categories of school will be encouraged to identify how they could best use a fast track teacher.

Teaching Staff (Harrow)

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* teaching staff and *(b)* teaching assistants were employed in Harrow schools in each of the last five years. [3132]

Mr. Timms: The full-time equivalents of regular teachers (excluding short-term supply) and teaching assistants employed in the maintained schools sector in Harrow local authority are as follows:

January	*Regular teachers*	*Teaching assistants*	*Total*
1996	1,590	240	1,830
1997	1,580	270	1,850
1998	1,500	270	1,770
1999	1,490	290	1,780
2000	1,380	300	1,690
2001[1]	1,490	n/a	n/a

[1] Provisional

Note:

Totals may not be the sum of the component parts because of rounding.

n/a = 2001 data for teaching assistants are not yet available at individual local authority level.

Specialist Schools

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many specialist schools there are in England; how many are in areas within the worst 20 per cent. of wards in England according to the DETR's index of deprivation; and what specialisms have been chosen by the schools which are situated in such areas of deprivation. [3491]

Mr. Timms: From September 2001, there will be 685 specialist schools of which 181 schools (26 per cent.) are in the most disadvantaged 20 per cent. of wards in England, based on the Government's index of deprivation. This comprises 100 technology, 33 sports, 25 arts and 23 language colleges.

Teachers (Early Leavers)

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what research her Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated into the reasons for teachers leaving the teaching profession. [3645]

Mr. Timms: The Department has not commissioned any such research to date. A research project on this topic has, however, been included in the Department's research programme for the current year.

Tuition Fees

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if it is her policy that the maximum increase in student tuition fees in *(a)* 2002–03, *(b)* 2003–04 and *(c)* 2004–05 will be equivalent to the rate of inflation. [3859]

Margaret Hodge: The level of student fee contributions at publicly funded institutions for those years will be decided in due course.

"Schools—Building on Success"

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, pursuant to her answers of 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 389W, on "Schools—Building on Success", if she will list the organisations with which officials have held meetings to discuss the Green Paper "Schools—Building on Success". [4365]

Mr. Timms: Officials have held meetings to discuss the Green Paper "Schools—Building on Success" with the following organisations:

National Governors' Council
National Association of Governors and Managers
Information for School and College Governors
Catholic Education Service
Methodist Church (also Free Church Council)
Board of Deputies of British Jews
Association of Muslim Schools
Al Furqan School and Association of Muslim Schools
Network of Sikh Organisations
Seventh Day Adventist Church
Greek Orthodox Church
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
Local Government Association
Association of Chief Education Officers/Society of Education Officers
National Union of Teachers
Secondary Heads Association
Professional Association of Teachers
National Association of Headteachers
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers.

Teacher Training (Eastern Region)

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of the Teacher Training Agency's budget was spent in *(a)* the eastern region and *(b)* Bedfordshire in the last financial year. [4715]

Mr. Timms: This information is not available. The Teacher Training Agency does not account for its budget on a regional basis.

Education Reform White Paper

Geraint Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when she will publish the White Paper on Education Reform. [4778]

Estelle Morris: The Government will issue a White Paper on education reform in early September 2001.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Communications Data Protection Directive

Mr. Allan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the Government's policy (1) on the change in wording in recital 10 of the revised telecommunications data protection directive (com2000/189); and if she will set out the reasons underlying the case for this recital; [3234]

(2) in respect of the introduction of mandatory data retention on communications service providers. [3239]

Mr. Alexander: At the Telecommunications Council on 27 June, member states and the Commission agreed to clarify that the proposed Communications data protection directive should not alter the existing balance between individual rights to privacy and the possibility for member states to take measures necessary for law enforcement. Recital 10 of the proposed directive now makes it clear that member states will be able, but will not be required, to introduce data retention requirements provided that these are proportionate and in accordance with the general principles of Community law. The position will therefore be essentially the same as it is under the existing telecommunications data protection directive.

The UK Government welcome this outcome, although there are no plans to introduce legislation mandating the retention of communications data here. Such a move could be considered only in the context of detailed consultation with all relevant law enforcement, industry and civil liberties interests.

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if it is the policy of her Department that United Kingdom manufacturers should have legal liability for the disposal of waste electrical and electronic equipment which was *(a)* manufactured outside the United Kingdom and *(b)* manufactured by companies which have ceased trading; [3900]

(2) what regulatory impact assessment *(a)* has been carried out and *(b)* will be carried out into the proposed EU directive on waste electrical and electronic equipment; [3909]

(3) what assessment she has made of the impact of the proposed waste electrical and electronic equipment directive upon *(a)* the retail price of electrical and electronic goods and *(b)* the competitiveness of United Kingdom manufacturers of such goods; [3910]

(4) what assessment her Department has made of the impact upon UK manufacturers of electrical and electronic equipment of the requirement in the draft waste electrical and electronic equipment directive that they should be responsible for products sold before adoption of the directive and for products the manufacturer of which has ceased trading; [3901]

(5) what her Department's policy is on the proposed EU waste electrical and electronic equipment directive; and if she will make a statement. [3908]

Mr. Wilson: The Government support the common position text of the draft waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) directive agreed at the Environment Council of Ministers meeting of 7 June 2001.

The directive will help to provide a common framework for all member states in an area where some individual member states had already started to adopt national legislation. The effect on retail price and competitiveness of UK manufacturers will partly depend on the domestic implementation option adopted. The Government will seek to achieve the environmental objectives while minimising the cost burden placed on business through the implementing of legislation, alongside the maintenance of a level playing field.

The common position text would require "producers" to provide for the financing of the environmentally sound treatment, recycling and disposal of WEEE. This definition of "producer" goes wider than manufacturers. For the majority of goods manufactured outside the United Kingdom it will be the professional importer who will bear the responsibilities of "producer".

The financing method for the management of WEEE arising from "producers" who have ceased trading will be dependent upon the United Kingdom implementing regulations. The common position text would require producers to provide for this financing either when electrical/electronic goods are placed on the market or when arising as waste. The detail of these cannot be agreed until the directive is adopted and published in the *Official Journal of the European Community*.

For all goods placed on the market before adoption of the directive (historic WEEE), irrespective of whether the manufacturer is still trading or not, the common position text would require all existing producers to provide the financing on a proportionate basis.

Initial regulatory impact assessments (RIA) have been placed in the Library of the House of Commons. There will be a further update when the formal common position text is submitted to the House following the Commission's juriste/linguiste procedure.

EU Legislation

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the burden of European Union producer responsibility legislation upon the United Kingdom manufacturing industry; and if she will make a statement. [3911]

Mr. Wilson: The concept of producer responsibility for waste is central to the EC directive on end-of-life vehicles (2000/53/EC) and the proposed EC directive on waste electrical and electronic equipment (COM (2000) 347 final). The implications for manufacturing industry of both these directives formed part of the regulatory impact assessments (RIAs) which the Department carried out to inform the UK's negotiating position. RIA assessments will continue to inform our consideration of the options for implementation. Copies of all RIAs have been placed in the Library of the House.

Industrial Diseases (Compensation)

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the compensation payments for respiratory diseases and vibration white finger made to recipients in *(a)* the Cynon Valley and *(b)* the rest of Wales. [3229]

Mr. Wilson: With regard to respiratory disease, IRISC have made 146 final and 919 interim payments amounting to £4.45 million in the constituency of Cynon Valley, as defined by the postcodes with prefixes CF 37, 44 and 45. In the whole of Wales, 1,237 final and 8,146 interim payments have been made, totalling £38.7 million.

In relation to vibration white finger, VWF, IRISC have made 292 final and 366 interim payments amounting to £4 million in the constituency of Cynon Valley. In the whole of Wales, 4,482 final and 3,353 interim payments have been made, totalling £36.8 million.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the legal costs to date are in respect of the claims for *(a)* chronic bronchitis and emphysema and *(b)* vibration white finger; and what the expected future costs are. [2775]

Mr. Wilson: Since the Department assumed liability for British Coal's coal health liabilities in 1998, the Department has paid £40.6 million to the plaintiff's legal representatives with respect to respiratory disease. In relation to vibration white finger, VWF, these costs to date have been £32.5 million. Both figures exclude trial costs.

So far, the Department has registered over 153,200 claims and 123,705 for respiratory disease and VWF respectively. Approximately 1,300 new claims continue to be registered each week and it is difficult to estimate the eventual total number of claims and the relevant costs. At the present rate, the Department estimates that future costs of the plaintiffs' legal representatives will be £330.3 million and £92.6 million for respiratory disease and VWF respectively.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the cost of claims settled in respect of *(a)* chronic bronchitis and emphysema and *(b)* vibration white finger; and what the anticipated cost is of all outstanding claims. [2774]

Mr. Wilson: Since the Department assumed liability for British Coal's coal health liabilities in 1998, the Department has paid £247.4 million in respect of respiratory disease for damages, costs to plaintiffs and their legal representatives, medical costs and compensation recovery to the Department for Work and Pensions. These costs for vibration white finger, VWF, amount to £359.8 million.

The Department has received over 153,000 claims and 123,700 claims for respiratory disease and VWF respectively. Approximately 1,300 new claims continue to be registered each week and it is difficult to estimate the total number of claims and the relevant costs. At the present rate, the Department estimates that the cost of settling outstanding claims as defined above will be around £2.1 billion and £1.9 billion for respiratory disease and VWF respectively. These are in addition to the above amount already spent.

Paddy Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evaluation she has made into the claims handling procedures provided by Hays in respect of vibration white finger; what percentage of employment histories are provided within 56 days; and how many have been outstanding for more than *(a)* six months, *(b)* nine months and *(c)* 12 months. [3657]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* British Coal employment records are stored on antiquated microfiche and paper systems. Photocopying them proved very difficult. The Department therefore set up a major project with Hays which involves the scanning of claimants' records. There were some teething problems with this, particularly concerns about image quality of the CDs. These have now been resolved and Hays are producing approximately 5,000 record packs, on CD, each week of which 2,500 are for VWF claims.

There was a backlog of employment record requests before the scanning project got up to speed but this has now been worked through and Hays are currently supplying to IRISC, the Department's claims handling agent, full record packs for individual claimants in approximately two to three weeks. Upon receipt of the records pack IRISC have 40 days to confirm a claimant's occupation, providing the claimant's solicitors has provided a correctly completed claims questionnaire.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to her answer of 5 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 267W, on miners' compensation, what the average duration is between a medical assessment for former miners with *(a)* vibration white finger and *(b)* respiratory diseases, and the point at which IRISC are in possession of necessary documents to establish viability and level of compensation claims. [3725]

Mr. Wilson: On vibration white finger, SEMA, the company contracted to deliver the medical assessments, return 95 per cent. of medical reports to IRISC within five days of the claimant having his appointment. Once the report is received, IRISC can assess the validity of the claim and the level of compensation.

On respiratory disease, there are two processes to be completed between a medical assessment and IRISC being able to value the claim. First, IRISC need to evaluate the medical report and secondly, the miner's employment history needs to be agreed.

Healthcall, the company contracted to deliver the medical assessments, are now returning reports, on average, within a month. There was a backlog here but this has recently been sorted out.

The employment history can be agreed before medical assessment, but where this is not possible, agreement has to be reached after the medical report has been received before a claim can be validated.

The employment history details the collieries and jobs that a miner worked in. It is established using any available work records and the statements from the claimant. The time taken to agree these histories with solicitors varies widely from case to case and an average timescale is not available.

Oldbury Nuclear Power Station

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the anticipated lifetime is of Oldbury nuclear power station; and what the anticipated peak weight loss is of graphite in major locations in the reactor core at Oldbury by the time it reaches its planned lifetime. [3009]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* I understand that the anticipated operational lifetime of Oldbury nuclear power station is 40 years, i.e. until 2008. However, this is subject to BNFL maintaining the high safety standards at Oldbury required by the HSE's nuclear installations inspectorate and to any operational review by BNFL.

I am awaiting advice on the technically complex issue of graphite weight loss, I will write to my hon. Friend on this in due course.

Post Office

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the average annual closure rate of sub-post offices *(a)* in 1997 to 2001 and *(b)* between 1979 and 1997. [292]

Ms Hewitt *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* Taking into account conversions of Crown offices to agency offices, which are then classified as sub-post offices, the net annual average rate of sub-post office closures from March 1979 to March 1997 was 196, and from March 1997 to March 2001 it was 351.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library the guidance, regulations and circulars relating to the levels of service which the Post Office must maintain in rural areas. [2742]

Mr. Alexander: Copies of the licence granted to Consignia plc on 23 March 2001 by the Postal Services Commission (Postcomm) by virtue of section 11 of the Postal Services Act 2000 were placed in the Library of the House in April. Section 4 of the Postal Services Act 2000 lays down the statutory minimum service which must be provided for the universal postal service in the United Kingdom.

I am placing in the Library of the House copies of Postcomm's direction designating exceptional conditions and circumstances (relating to the universal postal service) under condition 1 of Consignia plc's licence.

Employment Agencies

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by what means recruitment companies will be advised of proposed changes to regulations relating to the industry to be introduced in the next five years. [2861]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* The Department makes information on changes to regulations available on its website, www.dti.gov.uk, and is also in regular contact with the main recruitment industry bodies.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment she has made of the impact on smaller recruitment companies of the proposed new regulations contained in the draft Employment Agencies Bill; [2859]

(2) what steps she is taking to ensure that smaller private recruitment companies are not financially disadvantaged by the proposals in the temporary agency work directives. [2856]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* A regulatory impact assessment on the proposed new employment agency regulations has been produced and published on my Department's website. This considers the impact on small firms, and concludes that the proposed changes affect small and large firms equally.

A draft European directive on temporary agency work is expected to be issued by the European Commission in the autumn. The Government will work to ensure that any such proposal supports the promotion of employment and does not reduce labour market flexibility or restrict the activities of recruitment companies whatever their size.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the definition of quarantine period is in the draft Employment Agencies Bill regulations; and if she will set out the reasons for proposing this measure. [2857]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* "Quarantine period" is a term used (though not in the regulations themselves) to describe the period following the ending of a hiring during which conditions (such as payment of a transfer fee) may be imposed when a temporary worker takes up permanent employment with the hirer or some other person. Under the current draft regulations, this period is 14 weeks from the start of the hire or eight weeks from the end, whichever is the later, where permanent employment is taken up with the hirer. Where the worker takes up work with another person (including another agency) the period is four weeks from the end of the hire. The Government believe that onerous restrictions on transfers, such as high transfer fees, restrict labour market flexibility and competition, and act as a disincentive to workers taking up permanent employment. The use of a "quarantine period" was suggested by the recruitment industry, as an alternative to restrictions on transfer fees as such.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to reintroduce licensing and the monitoring of the work of private recruitment agencies; and if she will make a statement. [2860]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* The Government have no plans to reintroduce licensing of recruitment agencies. They are monitored by my Department's employment agency standards inspectorate, which receives approximately 12,000 calls a year, and carries out full investigations in 1,200 cases. This ensures that resources are targeted on the relatively small number of agencies who break the rules or exploit clients or workers.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the prospects for small private recruitment companies over the next five years. [2858]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* The recruitment industry—a large part of which consists of small companies—is an important and successful part of the labour market, as shown by recent growth in turnover of 28 per cent. a year, and we expect it to continue to thrive.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list, by source, the targets for renewable energy by *(a)* 2003, *(b)* 2005 and *(c)* 2010; and if she will make a statement. [2517]

Mr. Wilson: The Government have proposed targets of obtaining 5 per cent. of our electricity from renewable sources by 2003 and 10 per cent. by 2010, subject to the cost to consumers being acceptable. No target has been set for 2005.

We are very reliant on the old support mechanism, the non-fossil fuel obligation, for the deployment of renewables up to 2003. The new renewables obligation will be the main driver towards achieving our 2010 target.

The renewables obligation is a market-led approach and we will not be specifying percentage targets to be achieved by particular renewable energy technologies. By 2010, however, we envisage strong contributions from offshore wind and energy crops as well as from more established technologies.

Trawlermen (Compensation)

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications there have been for compensation from former Icelandic waters trawlermen which have been *(a)* successful, *(b)* unsuccessful, *(c)* put on hold and *(d)* which are pending a decision for each region and nation of the UK. [3902]

Nigel Griffiths: At 6 July 2001, 1,710 claims made under the compensation scheme had received payments. Some 3,344 claims had been assessed as unsuccessful, 905 were on hold pending consideration of representations that there should be changes in the rules for those who continued fishing on former Icelandic water trawlers after 1979 and work was in progress on a further 2,016 claims. The following table gives a breakdown of successful claims by area. There are no corresponding figures for unsuccessful and other claims.

Area	*Number of successful claims*
Hull	848
Grimsby	206
Fleetwood	174
Blackpool	27
Cleethorpes	53
Newcastle	151
West Yorkshire	86
Aberdeen	19
All others	146

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations she has received from fishermen from the north and north-east of Scotland about compensation awards made to former Icelandic waters trawlermen from Scotland. [3903]

Nigel Griffiths: I have received numerous pieces of correspondence from former fishermen from the north and north-east of Scotland in connection with claims under the Government's compensation scheme for former Icelandic water trawlermen.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the appeals procedure is for former Icelandic waters trawlermen who have their requests for compensation rejected; and what the success rate is for such appeals for each nation and region of the UK. [3907]

Nigel Griffiths: Any former trawlerman whose claim is either rejected, or who considers that the amount of compensation received is incorrect, can apply, in the first instance, to the assistant director of the employment relations directorate responsible for the operation of the scheme for a review of the decision. If he is still not satisfied with the outcome, he can appeal to the independent adjudicator appointed for the scheme.

Ten appeals have been submitted to the independent adjudicator so far. One has been upheld, four disallowed and five are still under consideration. All are from the north-east. None of the appeals dealt with so far by the independent adjudicator has been from Scotland or Wales.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what estimate she has made of the number of former Icelandic waters trawlermen who are eligible for compensation but who have not yet applied from each region and nation of the UK; [3904]

(2) what assessment she has made of the geographical distribution of applications from former Icelandic waters trawlermen; and what steps she will take to encourage applications from all parts of the UK. [3905]

Nigel Griffiths: The compensation scheme for former Icelandic water trawlermen has been well publicised in the main port areas throughout the United Kingdom through the port MPs and the British fishermen's associations. Payments under the scheme are available by area, but there is no similar analysis of all applications.

As a result of the widespread publicity, I believe that most former trawlermen who are eligible for compensation under the scheme have already submitted claims. Applications can be submitted until 1 October 2002.

Irish Sea (Pollution)

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the pollution incidents involving discharges above 0.01 tonnes in the Irish Sea since 9 January to the present, indicating the date, size of incident, name of company reporting the spill and the name of the company responsible in each case. [2923]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* The information relating to oil spill incidents in the Irish sea basin, reported to the Department of Trade and Industry, from 9 January 2001 to the present date is as follows:

Date: 4 February 2001

Amount (tonnes): 0.1

Reported by: BHP

Company responsible: BHP.

DTI only receives reports for oil spills reported from or attributed to offshore installations.

Information Technology Industry

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what measures her Department has taken to ensure that United States law does not affect trade in software in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement; [3712]

(2) what action she has taken in respect of the impact of US legislation on trade in information technology on the UK; and if she will make a statement; [3742]

(3) what complaints relating to breaches of *(a)* UK law and *(b)* international law in the field of information technology her Department has received in the past year; and if she will make a statement; [3710]

(4) what notice has been given to her Department in the last six months of breaches of UK law relating to the information technology industry; and if she will make a statement on her policy on this subject. [3426]

Mr. Alexander: My Department is responsible for a wide range of areas on information technology. I would ask the hon. Member to write to me indicating his specific areas of concern.

Gas Prices

Mr. Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made with the inquiry into non-domestic gas prices. [1950]

Mr. Wilson: There has been no formal inquiry into gas prices. However, a key part of the Government's strategy to address the problem of high gas prices is to take action against any anti-competitive behaviour. At the Government's request, the EU Commission is conducting an inquiry into the operation of the UK-Belgium interconnector.

Meanwhile, DTI, Ofgem and OFT continue to monitor the market closely. Ofgem and OFT have strong powers under the Competition Act 1998 to act against anti-competitive behaviour if necessary.

Innovation

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what initiatives she intends to take to support innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises. [3945]

Nigel Griffiths: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 13 June a review of all DTI business support schemes, and I cannot pre-empt the results of that review.

In the meantime—through its agency, the Small Business Service—the DTI is continuing to support innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with schemes such as Smart and TCS. Smart helps SMEs fund research and development into innovative products and processes, or buy external consultancy to improve their use and exploitation of technology, while TCS helps businesses access the knowledge and expertise available in universities, higher education institutions and research organisations.

The DTI also worked with the Treasury on the introduction last year of the research and development tax credit for SMEs, to help meet the costs of developing innovations.

Export Licences (Israel)

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 88W, on export licences (Israel), what was the nature of the end use restrictions of the two SIELs granted between 1 January and 31 May. [2835]

Nigel Griffiths: Licences for items rated "End-use" do not usually have provisos or restrictions placed on them other than the standard conditions. I can confirm that there were no additional restrictions placed on these two licences. The rating "End Use" covers items that do not normally require an export licence but are subject to control because the exporter has been told or knows or suspects that the items would or might be used in activities connected with weapons of mass destruction or missiles for their delivery. This is a dual-use rating under Council regulation (EC) No. 1334/2000.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will revise estimates of emissions of carbon dioxide from the electricity sector to take account of changes *(a)* in operational management of centralised power stations and *(b)* since the start of the New Electricity Trading Arrangements; and if she will make a statement. [3740]

Mr. Wilson: Actual CO_2 emissions from the electricity generation sector since the start of the new electricity trading arrangements (NETA) are not yet available. Government projections of emissions were last published in November 2000 as energy paper 68[1]. These are long-term projections, which we see no reason to revise at this stage. We do not, as yet, have sufficient information (including the generation fuel mix) to assess any resulting changes in the electricity sector. In any event, we are still in the early days of NETA and generator behaviour in response to the new arrangements is unlikely to have settled down. There have been particular issues regarding the impact of NETA on renewables and CHP, on which Ofgem will shortly be publishing a report.

[1] Energy Projections for the UK, 2000–20. Energy Paper 68. Published November 2000.

Wind Farms

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Defence about the development of wind farms within the operational low flying tactical training areas; and if she will make a statement. [3416]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* Ministers in the two Departments discussed the issue of wind farms in May and this has been followed by meetings with officials. Both Departments are working closely together to co-ordinate policy so that we can successfully balance our efforts to address the needs of renewable energy, while ensuring that defence concerns are properly taken into account.

NIREX

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the findings of the internal investigation by NIREX into allegations of mismanagement. [4060]

Mr. Wilson: I welcome the commendable efforts which NIREX has made to address the criticisms levelled against it, and its intention to adopt more positive policies in the future. This investigation is an important part of those efforts and I have placed a copy of the report in the Libraries of both Houses.

Unlicensed Broadcasting

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many complaints her Department has received about unlicensed broadcasting stations in each of the last five years. [3475]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The Radiocommunications Agency has no centrally held figures for 1996, 1997 and the first quarter of 1998. On 1 April 1998, the agency's pirate radio reporting point started recording specific complaints about pirate radio interference in keeping with the provisions of the Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996. The figures for 1 April to 31 December 1998 and 1999–2000 are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1998	83
1999	150
2000	187

The number of complaints received in 2001 stands at 148 as at 13 July.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the number of unlicensed broadcasting stations operating in the United Kingdom. [3474]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The Radiocommunications Agency, which is responsible for taking action against pirate radio stations, undertook operations against 231 identified stations in 2000.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many seizures of equipment from the Voice of Africa pirate radio station have been made. [3476]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* Radiocommunications Agency staff undertook 13 operations against the Voice of Africa in 2000 and six so far this year, with equipment seized on each occasion.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the deterrent effect of penalties available for unlicensed broadcasting. [3478]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The maximum penalties on indictment for unlicensed broadcasting under section 1 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 are up to two years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. The actual penalties are for the courts to determine.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many convictions of unlicensed broadcasting stations under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 have been obtained in each of the last five years. [3481]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The number of convictions secured by the Radiocommunications Agency against persons for unlicensed broadcasting in the last five years is:

Year	*Number*
1996	28
1997	41
1998	53
1999	47
2000	41

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prosecutions have been undertaken against unlicensed broadcasting stations in each of the last five years. [3482]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The number of prosecutions undertaken by the Radiocommunications Agency against persons for unlicensed broadcasting in the last five years is:

Year	*Number*
1996	28
1997	41
1998	53
1999	47
2000	41

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many complaints her Department has received about unlicensed broadcasting by Voice of Africa. [3479]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The Radiocommunications Agency has received four complaints addressed to headquarters and one to its London regional office about interference caused by Voice of Africa. All the complaints have been by an authorised broadcaster.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many seizures of equipment from unlicensed broadcasters have taken place in each of the last five years. [3477]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The number of equipment seizures by Radiocommunications Agency staff from pirate broadcasters in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1996	842
1997	820
1998	928
1999	1,414
2000	1,494

The figure for seizures of equipment in 2001 stands at 801 as at 29 June.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been *(a)* the maximum and *(b)* the average fine imposed by the courts for unlicensed broadcasting in breach of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 over the last five years. [3480]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The information is as follows:

Year	*£ maximum*	*Average*
1996	400	350
1997	500	272
1998	750	452
1999	500	193
2000	1,400	317

In addition to fines, the courts have also awarded periods of community service and terms of imprisonment to those convicted of unlicensed broadcasting.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Knowledge Network

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what steps were taken to ensure that the information collected under the Knowledge Network Project was not used for party political campaigning in the 2001 general election; and if he will make a statement. [4309]

Mr. Leslie: Access to Knowledge Network by Ministers and special advisers was suspended during the general election period. Full written guidance was circulated to all Departments to ensure that the system could not be misused for party political purposes. All Departments implemented this guidance and a copy was placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will *(a)* list by subject the statistics that have been collected for the first time at constituency level under the Knowledge Network Project, stating in each case the date on which the first in the series was completed and *(b)* place a copy of the most recent of each set of statistics listed in the Library; and if he will make a statement. [4370]

Mr. Leslie: No statistics have been collected for the first time at constituency level specifically for the Knowledge Network Project. All statistics used have been taken from existing publicly available Government sources, with collation at the existing operational level.

WALES

Inward Investment

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the size of the Welsh manufacturing work force employed by foreign investors who have chosen Wales *(a)* as a centre for operations in the single market and *(b)* for other reasons. [4302]

Mr. Paul Murphy: In 1997, the most recent year for which figures are available, employment in private sector enterprises of foreign nationality in Wales, classified as "manufacturing" was 53,100. No breakdown is available of the reasons for locating these jobs in Wales. However, several companies have publicly cited the quality of the Welsh work force, their reliability and eagerness to develop new skills, as important considerations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Western Sahara

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the recommendations that United Nations Special Envoy James Baker has recently made regarding the future of western Sahara. [2714]

Mr. Bradshaw: We supported UN Security Council Resolution 1359 which was passed unanimously on 29 June 2001 and which extended the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 30 November 2001. This resolution reiterated full support for the ongoing efforts of MINURSO to implement the Settlement Plan and agreements by the parties to hold a free, fair and impartial referendum for the self-determination of the people of the western Sahara. It also reaffirmed our commitment to achieve a just and lasting solution to the question of western Sahara. We fully support the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to invite all the parties to meet directly or through proximity talks, under the auspices of his Personal Envoy James Baker, to discuss the draft Framework Agreement and to negotiate any specific changes they would like to see in this proposal, as well as to discuss any other proposal for a political solution, to arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement.

China

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the factors underlying China's increased defence spending. [2922]

Mr. MacShane: On 6 March, China announced a 17.7 per cent. increase in defence spending, bringing the total to US$17.07 billion. Two reasons were given: the need to improve pay and conditions, and the need to strengthen high technology capabilities. Chinese official figures give little indication of total military spending, though we estimate that spending remains low as a percentage of GDP. China is committed to military modernisation, but economic development remains the overriding national priority.

European Court of Human Rights

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the case load of the European Court of Human Rights, including registered applications; what was the average time between a case being referred to the European Court of Human Rights and judgment in the last three years; what monetary contribution the UK Government make towards the expenditure of the European Court of Human Rights; and whether the budgeting expenditure for the European Court of Human Rights is sufficient to enable the Court to determine cases within the two year time limit set down by the Court. [3228]

Mr. MacShane: Figures provided by the Court's Registry indicate that the case load is 17,329 as of March 2001 and the average time between referral of a case and judgment is approximately three years. The Court aspires to reduce this to two years, but the set limit remains three years. This limit has been exceeded in about one third of the applications pending. The Court's budget is an integral part of the Council of Europe budget, of which the UK share is 12.7 per cent. In 2001, some £2 million of the UK total contribution went to the Court. HMG are actively supporting the work of the Evaluation Group which has been established to consider all potential means to guarantee the Court's continued effectiveness in the face of rapid growth in the number of applications to it. The

Group's recommendations, due in September, are likely to include proposals requiring an increase in the Court's budget.

Loizidou Case

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take to ensure compliance by Turkey with its obligations in the Loizidou case following the resolution of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers of 26 June. [R] [2981]

Peter Hain: We supported the interim resolution of 26 June calling on Turkey to respect the European Court of Human Rights' decision in the Loizidou case. We deplore the fact that Turkey has not yet complied with the judgment and will continue regularly and strongly to remind them of the need to do so both bilaterally and in the Council of Europe.

Visa Case

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the application for an interview from Miss Mae I. Copitco, a Filipino national born on 9 May 1971 for an interview in respect of her application to join her husband Mr. Marcus Cottham in the UK will be considered; and if he will make a statement. [3146]

Mr. Bradshaw: It is not our practice to disclose details of individual visa cases in a public forum. The Joint Entry Clearance Unit will write to the hon. Member in the next few days.

UN Voting

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many votes have taken place at the *(a)* UN General Assembly and *(b)* UN Security Council since 1 January; and of those, on how many occasions the United Kingdom cast its vote, including by abstaining, for the same outcome as the United States. [4179]

Peter Hain: Since 1 January 2001 the UN General Assembly has adopted 38 resolutions without a vote. The only recorded vote on a resolution in this period was on 14 June 2001 on resolution A/RES/55/180B on the financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The outcome was 115 votes in favour (including the UK), three against (including the United States) and nine abstentions.

In the same period, the UN Security Council has adopted 27 resolutions. 25 of these were adopted unanimously, one without a vote and one by acclamation.

The one occasion when the Security Council's vote was split was on 27 March 2001 when the United States vetoed a draft resolution on the situation in the middle east. The United Kingdom abstained on this draft resolution.

"Your Britain, Your Europe, Your Wales"

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what independent survey is referred to in his Department's document, "Your Britain, Your Europe, Your Wales". [4298]

Peter Hain: The document refers to an independent survey entitled "Out of Europe, Out of Work" produced in February 2000 by Professor Ian Begg, Professor of International Economics at the European Institute, South Bank University.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Youth Justice Board

Dr. Iddon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Youth Justice Board will publish its annual review. [4629]

Beverley Hughes: The Youth Justice Board annual review is published today. Copies have been placed in the Library. The Youth Justice Board was established to spearhead the reforms to the youth justice system in 1998 by Crime and Disorder Act. The review shows a year of delivering change. A new system for preventing youth crime is in place, progress in delivering the Government's pledge on delays, with a nine week reduction in the time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders and robust new sentences for young offenders.

Prison Service

Mr. Plaskitt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress the Prison Service has made towards improving its environmental performance; and if he will make a statement. [4474]

Beverley Hughes: The Prison Service is making good progress in this area. A formal greening operations policy was introduced in March 2000, the implementation of which is being overseen by a headquarters working group chaired by a member of the Prison Service management board.

During the last year, there have been many developments in areas such as biodiversity, energy efficiency, procurement, transport and waste management. These are described in the service's first annual environmental report which is published today, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

The Director General of the Prison Service has made clear his own personal commitment to improving the environmental performance of the service and a challenging programme of further work—detailed in the report—has been set for the current year.

Commission for Racial Equality

Dr. Desmond Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the Commission for Racial Equality's annual report for 2000. [4557]

Mr. Blunkett: The Commission for Racial Equality's annual report 2000 is published today.

I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library and for copies to be sent to the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales.

Stops and Searches

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the effect

on the level of police paperwork of the requirement to record all stops and searches; and if he will make a statement. [1249]

Mr. Denham: Since the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, code of practice (A) on stop and search, all stops and searches carried out under any legislative provision have been recorded. In 1999–2000, 818,203 such stops and searches were recorded.

Stops and searches under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 are not included in the above figure and are recorded separately. There were 7,153 such searches in 1999–2000.

Since code of practice (A) was last revised in 1999, the Lawrence steering group set up to take forward the Home Secretary's action plan in response to the Stephen Lawrence inquiry report, has agreed that all persons searched should be given a copy of the record at the time of the search together with information on police powers and public rights. This does not represent an extra recording requirement and simply means that the record is routinely made available at the time of the search rather than within 12 months as was previously the practice. The group agreed that this should also apply where stops are carried out without there being any subsequent search because grounds for suspicion are eliminated as a result of questioning the person detained. It is not possible to predict exactly how many extra records this might entail, but it is not likely to be significant in terms of the overall number of records. Chief constables were requested to implement those new arrangements from 1 April 2001.

We are also considering whether to accept recommendation 61 of the Lawrence inquiry that all stops should be recorded, whether or not a search takes place. A public consultation exercise on that by local police authorities, co-ordinated by the Association of Police Authorities, finished at the end of May. I expect the Lawrence steering group to consider the results of that consultaton exercise in July.

MI5

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions of MI5 employees have been instigated in each year since 1980 for crimes where the maximum sentence is six months imprisonment or greater. [3138]

Mr. Hunkett *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* As far as is known, one, in 1983.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of employees within MI5 are *(a)* of ethnic minority origin and *(b)* female; and what pecentage apply within the senior grades, (i) for the lates year for which figures are available and (ii) for 1990. [3139]

Mr. Blunkett *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* Currently, 3.2 per cent. of employees of the Security Service are of ethnic origin, that is, not white European; all equivalent of senior civil service grades are white.

Females represent 46.6 per cent. of employees of the Security Service; and represent 13.8 per cent. at the equivalent of senior civil service grades.

James Ashley

Mrs. Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make arrangements for the Hoddinott report into the fatal shooting of James Ashley to be published. [2317]

Mr. Denham: The report by Sir John Hoddinott was into the conduct of the chief officers in charge of the operation which led to the fatal shooting of James Ashley. The report is the property of Sussex police authority and it must be their decision to publish. I met my hon. Friend and members of the Ashley family on 4 July. At the meeting I said that we would use our best endeavours to encourage the police authority to publish as much as possible, bearing in mind that the report contains confidential information that will need to be subject to considered legal advice, and the need to ensure there is no adverse impact on other proceedings.

Asylum Seekers

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Government determined that family groups of asylum seekers would be treated on arrival in the UK as one person and as individuals when departing in statistics on asylum seekers; and how this decision was published. [2026]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 4 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the right hon. Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Miss Widdecombe) on 4 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 206W.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his policy is on assisting people seeking asylum appeals who do not have the finance for the payment of legal representatives to assist them in the presentation of their case; and if he will make a statement. [2843]

Angela Eagle: The Home Office currently provides grant-in-aid under section 81 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 to three voluntary organisations: the immigration advisory service, the refugee legal centre, and the law centre (Northern Ireland). They provide free legal advice and representation to those with rights of appeal under the Act including asylum seekers. Additional funding for this purpose is also available in England and Wales in the form of franchised contracts awarded under the community legal scheme, which is administered by the Legal Services Commission (which replaced the Legal Aid Board).

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current weekly unit cost of housing an asylum seeker in Oakington detention centre; and what proportion of that cost is accounted for by *(a)* IND staff and related costs, *(b)* supervisory and care staff and related costs and *(c)* security staff and related costs. [3306]

Angela Eagle: The current weekly unit cost of housing an asylum seeker at Oakington, based on an average occupancy of 229 in June, is estimated at £1,203. This can be broken down into the immigration and nationality directorate (IND) staff and related costs of £184 and supervisory, care and security staff and related costs of £745. (The balance is attributable to other running costs, primarily the costs of interpreters and accommodation). The unit cost is subject to variation because of changes in occupancy.

The contract for the management and operation of the establishment does not disaggregate costs for each element of the service so it is not possible to provide the information in the form requested.

Young Offenders

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* juveniles and *(b)* young offenders are covered by probation orders; what the average (i) length of such orders and (ii) frequency of contact with a designated probation officer is, for each of the last 12 months; how many breaches there have been of such orders; and if he will make a statement. [2100]

Beverley Hughes: The number of juveniles[1] starting community rehabilitation orders (formerly probation orders) in 1999, supervised by the Probation Service, was 2,443; the number of young offenders[2] starting community rehabilitation orders in 1999, supervised by the Probation Service, was 9,772.

The average length of community rehabilitation orders starting in 1999 was 14.99 months for juveniles and 16.25 months for young offenders.

In 1999, breach proceedings were taken in court against 306 juveniles and 2,359 young offenders on community rehabilitation orders for failure to comply with their orders.

National standards require at least 12 appointments within the first 12 weeks of supervision, normally once a week and one of which will be a home visit. A minimum of six appointments is required over the following 12 weeks, and thereafter contact should be no less than monthly.

[1] Offenders aged 16 to 17.

[2] Offenders aged 18 to 20.

Passports

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the UK Passport Agency's criteria are for deciding to undertake a security check on a passport application. [4409]

Angela Eagle: All passport applications are examined to establish the identity and eligibility on nationality grounds of the applicant. The guidance notes with application forms explain this and set out what evidence is required. Further checks are made if identity and nationality cannot be satisfactorily established from the evidence sent with the application. In addition, a random sample of examined applications is re-checked before the passport is issued, as part of the United Kingdom Passport Service's quality assurance procedures.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Sailing

11. **Mr. Swayne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to promote the sport of sailing. [2431]

Mr. Caborn: The Sports Councils—UK Sport and Sport England—continue to work with the governing body to develop the sport at every level. To date, the national governing body of sailing has received Exchequer support of £1.9 million, and lottery support of £6.9 millions for its world class Programmes. In addition awards of £32.9 million have been made to sailing organisations in support of 142 capital projects.

Local Museums

14. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to promote local museums. [2434]

Dr. Howells: The Government encourage the development of local museums through the work of Resource and through the development of our cultural policies. Resource are now leading a taskforce to consider the issues facing regional museums and to make recommendations about their sustainability.

We have also allocated £10 million per annum to Resource starting next year to enable them to support regional collections.

Local Authority Lottery Liaison Officers

15. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement concerning relations between her Department and lottery liaison officers employed by local authorities. [2436]

Mr. Caborn: The Government are keen to see all areas of low take-up receiving their fair share of lottery funding. This will not happen overnight, but is an important priority for distributors. I understand that since being designated a priority area, north-east Derbyshire has received increased funding from the community fund.

Lottery Funding (Thurrock)

16. **Kevin Brennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to meet Camelot to discuss their ability to deliver their projected level of funding for good causes. [2437]

Tessa Jowell: I met Camelot on 12 July. We discussed a range of issues, including income for good causes under the new licence period.

Media Ownership

17. **Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she plans to introduce legislation to deal with cross-ownership in the media. [2438]

Dr. Howells: The White Paper, "A New Future for Communications" asked for comments on how we might reform the cross media regime. We are currently considering the responses. The Government will publish details of their proposals in a draft Bill as announced in the Queen's Speech.

Licensing Laws

18. **Mr. Grogan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to reform the liquor licensing laws. [2439]

Dr. Howells: We remain committed to bringing forward legislation, as announced on 2 May, when parliamentary time allows.

Cricket Matches (Crowd Violence)

20. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment she has made of the problems of crowd violence at cricket matches. [2441]

26. **Tony Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to hold further meetings with the cricketing authorities to discuss the disturbances during the recent triangular one-day international tournament. [2448]

Mr. Caborn: The Minister of State, Home Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr Denham) and I met the cricket authorities on 27 June. Following that meeting, a review group has been appointed to consider recent disorder at cricket matches and to recommend measures for ensuring the safety of spectators and players. The group includes Government officials and representatives of the cricket authorities, the police, and the Football Licensing Authority. I expect it to report by mid-August.

Digital Broadcasting

21. **Mr. Simon Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the take-up of digital services for *(a)* Wales and *(b)* England. [2442]

Tessa Jowell: From the figures declared by the service providers, we estimate that over 31 per cent. of households in the United Kingdom have taken up digital television services. We do not have a breakdown of take-up figures by country.

Tourism Industry (Foot and Mouth)

22. **Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment she has made of the impact of foot and mouth disease on domestic tourism. [2444]

Dr. Howells: Our best estimate to date is that the loss of revenue in 2001–02 by the English tourist industry is likely to be around £120 million per week averaged over the eight month tourism season (the impact in subsequent years has not yet been estimated). We are currently revising the model on which this is based in the light of the latest available data.

Lottery Funding

23. **Mike Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to reform the criteria for distributing national lottery funding. [2445]

Mr. Caborn: The criteria that are used for determining awards from national lottery funds are a matter for the lottery distributors. The criteria vary from distributor to distributor and from funding programme to funding programme. They are based on financial and policy directions which the Government issued to lottery distributors, and also on distributors' own policies and strategic plans.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list those major millennium projects which have applied for additional national lottery funding, indicating the sum requested, the reasons given for this request and the amount of extra funding allocated in each case. [71]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* This is a matter for the Millennium Commission. I will write to the hon. Member in my capacity as chairman of the Commission, and place copies of my reply in the Libraries of both Houses.

Arts Festivals

24. **Mr. Heath:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what support is available from her Department for town and city arts festivals. [2446]

Tessa Jowell: There are several programmes run by the Arts Council of England and the Regional Arts Boards to which those organising town or city festivals can apply, including the regional arts lottery programme. The National Foundation for Youth Music's music maker scheme also supports arts festivals.

So far, a total of £10,870,781 of lottery funds has been awarded to town and city festivals by the Arts Council, the National Foundation for Youth Music and the Regional Arts Boards.

Millennium Dome

25. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much money the millennium dome has received from the national lottery. [2447]

Dr. Howells: The New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC) has received a national lottery grant of £628 million for the millennium experience at Greenwich and for its associated national programme of events and activities.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions she has had since 15 February with *(a)* Mr. Robert Bourne and *(b)* his associated parties regarding the future of the dome. [4257]

Tessa Jowell: I have had no discussions with Mr. Robert Bourne or his associated parties regarding the future of the dome.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) how much money was allocated to NMEC Ltd. during 2000 by the Millennium Commission; and from which of the Commission's budgets this sum was drawn; [3650]

(2) from what date the Millennium Commission set aside reserve funds as a contingency against the financial problems of the dome; how much was set aside; and from which budgets those funds were drawn; [3652]

(3) for what purpose the money set aside by the Millennium Commission for unforeseen contingencies and unforeseen costs of the dome was used; [3649]

(4) what budget was set aside by the Millennium Commission for 2000 for other good causes, excluding the dome; and what proportion of this sum was spent on such projects; [3651]

(5) what was the total value of grant applications turned down by the Millennium Commission during *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 2000; and how many applications were refused during this period; [3638]

(6) what was the sum total of all funds paid by the Millennium Commission to *(a)* NMEC Ltd. and *(b)* other organisations involved in the design, construction, management and decommissioning of the dome; and what were the total amounts authorised for these purposes by Parliament. [3639]

Tessa Jowell: This is a matter for the Millennium Commission. I will write to the hon. Member in my capacity as chairman of the Commission, and place copies of my reply in the Libraries of both Houses.

Ministerial Briefings (Sport)

27. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to improve the arrangements for the provision of briefing material to Ministers on subjects related to sport. [2449]

Mr. Caborn: Ministers receive briefing materials on sport from the Government's expert advisers in the sports councils and from a variety of other sources, including many governing bodies of sport. I have found the arrangements for briefing to be satisfactory.

Lottery Funding (Rugby League)

28. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on national lottery support for rugby league. [2450]

Tessa Jowell: To date, Sport England has made national lottery awards to rugby league of £1,972,347, to support the national governing body's world class programmes, and £7,918,139 in support of 28 capital projects.

British Lions (Broadcasting)

29. **Mr. Dhanda:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to extend the provision for British Lions rugby tours to be broadcast on terrestrial television. [2451]

Mr. Caborn: The list of events of major importance to society protected under part IV of the Broadcasting Act 1996 was last reviewed in 1998. Following wide consultation and the recommendations of an advisory group chaired by Lord Gordon of Strathblane, the Secretary of State extended the list to include the most prestigious events in rugby union—the rugby world cup final and the six nations tournament. The Government have no immediate plans to review the list again.

Lottery Funding (Coalfield Areas)

30. **Andy Burnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to target Lottery money on former coalfield areas. [2452]

Mr. Caborn: My Department and lottery distributors commissioned research into the impact of the lottery on the coalfields and we are working with coalfield groups to take forward the report's recommendations. I shall report on progress later in the year.

Regional Theatres

31. **Ms Munn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on her plans to increase funding for regional theatres. [2453]

Tessa Jowell: This remains a matter for the Arts Council of England and the Regional Arts Boards. The Arts Council has already announced significant additional funding for theatre from 2002–03 including a 91 per cent. increase for Sheffield theatres by 2003–04, the end of the current planning cycle.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what is the current deficit of regional theatres in receipt of public funds; and if she will make a statement. [74]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* The estimated deficit was £2.3 million as at the end of March 2001.

Summer Play Schemes

32. **Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what support her Department gives to summer play schemes. [2454]

Tessa Jowell: DCMS does not fund summer play-schemes; our support for children's play focuses on funding the development of playworker training, research into the provision of children's play and the funding of the national children's play information service. I certainly see enormous potential for enrichment activities for young people to take place during the school holidays and commend the work which many local authorities already do in this area.

Local Authority (Arts and Museums) Funding

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what estimate she has made of the level of local authority funding for *(a)* the arts and *(b)* museums in each of the last four years. [68]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the local authority expenditure table on page 218 of the Department's annual report 2001, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The report can also be accessed via the Department's website at www.culture.gov.uk

Expenditure is classified as "museums and galleries" and as "arts activities and facilities (including Theatres)" for

capital expenditure and "other culture and heritage" for current expenditure. These figures under the headings are:

£ million

	Current	Capital
Museums and galleries		
1997–98	138	31
1998–99	125	34
1999–2000	141	45
2000–01[1]	169	50
Arts activities and facilities (including Theatres)		
1997–98	—	67
1998–99	—	76
1999–2000	—	96
2000–01[1]	—	109
Other culture and heritage		
1997–98	128	—
1998–99	131	—
1999–2000	148	—
2000–01[1]	178	—

[1] Estimated

BBC Digital Services

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what measures she has taken to ensure transparency and public accountability in the process of determining approvals for proposed new BBC digital services. [2412]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 5 July 2001]:* The criteria against which I will be considering the BBC's new digital services are set out in the Department's guidelines for assessing BBC public service proposals; these include a requirement for interested parties to be consulted so that their representations can be taken into account. The guidelines were published on 10 January. Copies were placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what estimate she has made of the effect on the level of take up of digital television of proposed new BBC digital services. [2416]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 5 July 2001]:* I am in the process of considering all relevant aspects of the BBC's new digital service proposals and responses to the Government's consultation on these.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what evidence she has received from the BBC that the Corporation's proposed new digital services will enhance the take up of digital television. [2409]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 5 July 2001]:* The BBC state, in their application and the additional information supplied in May (available on the DCMS website), that their evidence (eg their consultation report) bears out the report submitted to the Licence Fee Review Panel in 1999. This report concluded that licence fee funded digital services have the potential of significantly increasing digital take up.

Mr. Mark Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she intends to announce her decision on the applications of the BBC to run *(a)* a new children's television channel and *(b)* Network Z. [4256]

Dr. Howells: The consultation period for the new BBC digital services proposals has been extended to 27 July. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State therefore hopes to be able to make an announcement about her decision in late August/early September.

Analogue Television

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to her answer of 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 73W, on analogue television, when she will publish a strategic plan which will lead to the United Kingdom meeting the criteria for the switch off of analogue terrestrial television broadcasts. [2703]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* The White Paper, "Opportunities for All in a World of Change", outlined the Government's commitment to working with key players in the public and private sector to develop a comprehensive action plan to maximise the benefits and public information about those benefits of digital television by December 2001.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she last travelled on the London Underground in the course of her official duties. [3670]

Tessa Jowell: I have not travelled on the London Underground in the course of my official duties since my appointment on 8 June.

Public Bodies (Reviews)

Mike Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to undertake reviews of the public lending right and the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. [4027]

Tessa Jowell: As part of the Department's programme of quinquennial reviews of its public bodies, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts is today announcing that this summer we will be starting reviews of the Public Lending Right and the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester.

The reviews will include an evaluation of the role and functions of these bodies and how those functions can best be carried out, and a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which they deliver services to their users. We estimate that the reviews will be completed next spring. A copy of the announcement has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Hinduja Brothers

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what payment has been received by NMEC from the Hinduja brothers to cover the value-added tax due in connection with their donation to the Faith Zone of the Millennium Dome. [4178]

Dr. Howells: It was NMEC's responsibility to account to Customs and Excise for value added tax in respect of the contribution by the Hinduja Foundation to the Faith Zone of the Millennium Dome, which NMEC has done.

NMEC has advised that it has not received, and does not expect to receive, any further payment from the foundation in relation to this.

Digital Radio

Mr. Mark Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what measures she intends to introduce to ensure plurality of voice in digital radio broadcasting. [4307]

Dr. Howells: The Government published their proposals for the future of radio broadcasting in the White Paper, "A New Future for Communications", last December. Those proposals included a firm commitment to maintain plurality in a period of media convergence—allowing listeners a choice between different providers with different editorial styles and opinions. My Department, along with the Department of Trade and Industry, has consulted widely on the proposals and ideas set out in the White Paper; we are now carefully considering all the responses. A draft Bill will be available early next year for further consultation on more detailed proposals.

S4C

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to her answer of 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 448W, on S4C, if she will make a statement clarifying the definitions of *(a)* estimated weekly reach and *(b)* weekly viewing figures. [4314]

Dr. Howells: S4C's weekly reach is defined as the number of people estimated to have viewed at least three minutes or more uninterrupted of S4C's programmes during any given week. The figure is normally expressed as a percentage of the total number of people in Wales aged four or above able to receive S4C in their homes. The average weekly reach over the year as a whole provides the basis for the weekly viewing figures which are published in S4C's annual report.

Lottery Grants (Library Buildings)

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to allow libraries to bid to the national lottery heritage fund for improvements to their buildings. [2427]

Dr. Howells: Decisions on funding priorities are a matter for the trustees of the heritage lottery fund, within the broad framework of their statutory powers and the policy directions set by the Government. The heritage lottery fund supports library collections and archives of historical importance but does not fund repairs or improvements to buildings that are normally the responsibility of local authorities. To date, the heritage lottery fund has awarded over £109 million to library and archive projects.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Butterflies

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of changes in the numbers of butterflies in British resident species which have *(a)* become extinct in recent years and *(b)* suffered major declines in numbers. [2366]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* On the 54 species of butterfly resident in the UK, more than half are undergoing declines in their populations and distributions. The recently published Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland gives fresh information on which to base new assessments of conservation priorities. The atlas gives us particular cause for concern over five species which have each suffered a more than 50 per cent. loss of range over the last twenty years. These are the High Brown Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Wood White and Large Heath Butterfly. No species have become extinct in the last decade.

Conservation action is underway through Biodiversity Action Plans for a number of butterfly and moth species that set objectives and targets to maintain and, where possible, enhance and restore populations. Six species of butterfly are also fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, with a further 19 species protected against trade.

Waste Management

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the recommendations contained within the Fifth report of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, Session 2000–01; and if she will make a statement. [4013]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* We expect to publish the Government's response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee report on Sustainable Waste Management shortly.

Sustainable Development

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what indicators the Government use to monitor progress in implementing its strategy for sustainable development; what progress has been made to date; how her Department plans to improve its strategy for sustainable development in the next 12 months; and if she will make a statement. [3988]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The Government's sustainable development strategy, "A better quality of life", (Cm 4345) makes clear that headline indicators will be used to measure progress towards sustainable development. There are fifteen headline indicators, covering economic, social and environmental factors. The Government's aim is for all the headline indicators to move in the right direction over time, or, where a satisfactory level has been reached, to prevent a reversal. Where a trend is unacceptable, the Government will adjust policies accordingly, and will look to others to join them in taking action.

The strategy commits the Government to report annually on the headline indicators and on action taken or proposed in priority areas. The first annual report—"Achieving a better quality of life"—was published in January 2001. The report makes clear that one year's data do not constitute a trend but that there was evidence of improvement in many of the indicators, across all three aspects of sustainable development.

The Government will continue to report on an annual basis, and is committed to a full review of the strategy after five years (in 2004).

G M Maize Trial (New Farm, Walston)

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the proposed planting of genetically modified seed on New Farm, Walston, Coventry. [2866]

Mr. Meacher: The proposed Farm Scale Evaluation site of Genetically Modified maize at Wolston was withdrawn by the farming and biotechnology industry body SCIMAC on 21 May 2001 in response to my request. I had asked them to reconsider the use of this site, as publicity surrounding its proximity to the Ryton Organic Gardens was potentially damaging to public confidence in the farm scale research programme as a whole.

In withdrawing the site, SCIMAC noted that the Soil Association had confirmed that, as the nearest boundary of Ryton Organic Gardens was 3km from the evaluation site, organic maize production at Ryton would not be in conflict with the separation distance set by the association as a trigger for the re-assessment of organic status.

Food Supplements

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on negotiations on the draft directive on Food Supplements. [1992]

Yvette Cooper: I have been asked to reply.

A compromise proposal developed by the Swedish Presidency and supported by the United Kingdom was discussed in the Council of Ministers in May. However, there was insufficient support to achieve the qualified majority of votes needed to adopt the proposal. Further negotiations have yet to take place.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to his answer of 4 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 196W, what estimate he has made of the specific provision made in the Disability Living Allowance for excess home heating costs; what proportion of people claiming *(a)* Incapacity Benefit and *(b)* other disability benefits presently receive the Disability Living Allowance; and if he will make a statement. [3663]

Maria Eagle: The care and mobility components in Disability Living Allowance act as broad indicators of all the extra costs of a disabled person, including heating costs.

The available information about the proportion of people receiving incapacity and other relevant benefits who also get Disability Living Allowance is in the table.

People in receipt of incapacity and disability benefits and the proportion who receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

	All recipients	*Percentage receiving DLA[3] (Percentage)*
Incapacity Benefit[1,4]		
Incapacity Benefit	1,509,700	36
Severe Disablement Allowance[6]	366,100	82
Total	1,875,900	45
Other benefits[2, 5]		
Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit (IIDB) only	213,300	22
Reduced Earnings Allowance (REA) only	86,100	28
Both IIDB and REA	67,400	41
Total	366,800	27

Notes:
1. Figures relate to 30 November 2000.
2. Figures relate to 1 April 2003.
3. Figures are based on 5 per cent. data.
4. Figures are based on 5 per cent. data and exclude a small number of clerically held cases.
5. Figures are based on 10 per cent. data.
6. Severe Disablement Allowance was designed to provide help for people who could not receive Incapacity Benefit because they had not paid enough National Insurance Contributions. From April 2001 it is no longer available to new claimants, and severely disabled young people may be able to receive improved support from Incapacity Benefit without meeting the normal contribution contributions.
7. Figures may not sum owing to rounding.

Source:
DWP Information Centre

Pensioners

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people *(a)* retired and *(b)* drew their state pension in each year since 1996; how many people are over (i) 60, (ii) 65, (iii) 70, (iv) 75 and (v) 80 years; how many people are (A) eligible for the Minimum Income Guarantee for pensioners and (B) actually claiming the Minimum Income Guarantee for pensioners; and if he will make a statement. [2804]

Mr. McCartney: The information is not available in the format requested. Such information as is available is as follows.

The latest estimates show that there are 10.5 million people of state pensionable age in Great Britain.

Numbers of retirement pensioners in receipt of Basic State Pension for the years March 1996 to March 2000

Thousand

	Total ages
March 1996	10,315.4
March 1997	10,468.3
March 1998	10,633.7
March 1999	10,751.5
March 2000	10,881.9

Notes:
1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100 and expressed in thousands.
2. Includes all retirement pensioners resident in Great Britain, Overseas and Channel Islands.

Source:
5 per cent. sample from the Pension Strategy Computer System at March for each year.

Number of people over given ages

	Men	Women	Total
People aged 60 and over	5.16	6.72	11.88
People aged 65 and over	3.79	5.3	9.08
People aged 70 and over	2.58	3.99	6.57
People aged 75 and over	1.55	2.75	4.3
People aged 80 and over	0.75	1.64	2.39

Note:
Numbers of people are in millions rounded to the nearest 10,000 people.
Source:
Information is from the GAD 1998 Population Projections.

The latest estimates of pensioners entitled to but not claiming Income Support (Minimum Income Guarantee since April 1999) are set out in the publication "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take Up in 1998–99", a copy of which is in the Library.

As at February 2001 there were 1,679,300 people in Great Britain claiming Minimum Income Guarantee.

Notes:

1. The figure provided for people in Great Britain claiming Minimum Income Guarantee is based on a 5 per cent. sample of cases.

2. The figure has been rounded to the nearest 100.

3. Claimants are those who, or their partners, are 60 years or over.

Source:

Income Support Statistics Quarterly Inquiries—February 2001.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what was the average time taken by the Child Support Agency independent case examiner to conclude each case given to him in *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01; [4161]

(2) how many cases the Child Support Agency independent case examiner dealt with in *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01; [4160]

(3) how many people were employed by the Child Support Agency independent case examiner in *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01. [4159]

Malcolm Wicks: The information requested is in the table.

Child Support Agency independent case examiner

	Staff employed	Cases dealt with	Average time (weeks) to conclude cases
1997–98	41	204	17.4
1998–99	38	474	25.3
1999–2000	46	665	33.7
2000–01	60	595	38.5

Disability Rights Commission

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when the Disability Rights Commission submitted to him the draft code of practice on part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; and when he intends to lay it before Parliament. [4308]

Maria Eagle: Officials in my Department and the Commission have been working together on parts of the draft of the Code that was provided in February. The final version of the Code will be laid before Parliament when this work has been completed.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many *(a)* permanent and *(b)* casual staff there were in his Department on (i) 1 May 1997 and (ii) the most recent date for which figures are available. [4158]

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Department for Work and Pensions was formed from the Department of Social Security, Employment Service and part of the Department for Education and Employment on 11 June 2001. The following staffing figures shown relate to the component parts of the new Department. The figures for 1 May 1997 include Contributions Agency, Family Credit Unit which have since moved from the Department and the Information Technology Services Agency.

At 1 May 1997 the Department of Social Security employed 97,625 permanent staff and 5,203 casuals. The figures for the Employment Service at that time were 32,248 permanent and 2,413 casual.

At 31 May 2001, the Department of Social Security employed 89,599 permanent staff and 2,290 casuals. The Employment Service employed 35,067 permanent staff and 1,863 casuals.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will provide a breakdown of the recipients of Incapacity Benefit by each available age cohort; and if he will make a statement. [3660]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is available in the Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance Quarterly Summary Statistics February 2001 which are in the Library.

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* constituency and *(b)* region of the United Kingdom of the number of new claimants of Incapacity Benefit anticipated in each year until 2005–06; [3917]

(2) what projection he has made of *(a)* the number of future claimants who will lose entitlement to Incapacity Benefit as a result of the proposed changes and *(b)* the average loss of entitlement per claimant, broken down by (i) constituency and (ii) region, of (A) Scotland, (B) England, (C) Wales and (D) Northern Ireland; [4154]

(3) what assessment he has made of the annual saving as a result of the Government's proposed changes to Incapacity Benefit in each year up to 2005–06, broken down by *(a)* constituency and *(b)* each region of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [3920]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is not available in the format requested. The proposed changes to Incapacity Benefit are intended to help people move into work where possible, rather than reducing people's entitlement or making savings. In the past many people were moved onto Incapacity Benefit with limited help to make sure

that they got the right level of support. There was no help to get people into work, nor any support or rehabilitation. Yet, as research has shown, one million disabled people not in work say they would like to work. We have a duty to help them do so and our proposals will help to achieve this.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people currently receive Incapacity Benefit; how many have had no test of the status of their incapacity and their ability to work within the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [3659]

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many new claimants of Incapacity Benefit will have their claims subject to the new rules proposed by the Government on entitlement to Incapacity Benefit in each year until 2005–06, broken down by *(a)* constituency and *(b)* region of (i) Scotland, (ii) England, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland; [3918]

(2) what proportion of Incapacity Benefit claimants for each year until 2005–06 will receive their benefit under *(a)* existing eligibility criteria and *(b)* the Government's proposed changes to the entitlement rules. [3919]

Malcolm Wicks: I refer the hon. Members to the written answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions gave the hon. Members for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) and for Northavon (Mr. Webb) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Lynne Jones) on 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 565–67W.

David Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of those in receipt of Incapacity Benefit are not subject to periodic medical tests because of their severe disability. [4364]

Malcolm Wicks: The available information is in the table.

	Number (Thousand)	*Percentage of all recipients*
All Incapacity Benefit (IB) recipients	1,515.2	100.0
Total exemptions from the personal capability assessment	366.7	24.2

Notes:
1. The data relate to recipients of IB at 28 February 2001.
2. The data do not include "National Insurance credits only" cases.

Stakeholder Pensions

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has for a further promotional campaign on stakeholder pensions; and what provision for such a campaign has been included in the previously announced forecasts of current year spending. [2258]

Mr. McCartney: The Government attach great importance to providing clear information to help people make informed decisions about saving for their retirement and to encourage them to take action.

We have undertaken work to inform both individuals and employers about stakeholder pensions. Our pensions education campaign gives individuals broad information about the range of pension options available, including stakeholder pensions. Our activities to inform employers about stakeholder pensions began last autumn when we mailed all employers with five or more employees and a programme of media activity has been taking place since then. In addition, we will be mailing employers with five or more employees again shortly to remind them about stakeholders.

For individuals, we will continue to undertake pensions education publicity activity.

Social Security (Australia)

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what response he plans to make to the ending of the Social Security Agreement with Australia. [2542]

Mr. McCartney: The Social Security Agreement between the UK and Australia ended on 28 February 2001. The Government announced in December that the UK pension position of people who had lived in Australia when the Agreement was in force would be protected. The Agreement allowed residence in Australia to count towards the UK retirement pension of people living in the UK. Periods of residence in Australia, up to 5 April 2001, can still be used in the pension calculation for people living permanently in the UK when they retire.

People who were already getting benefit with the help of the Agreement are not affected by its ending.

Benefit Interviews

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what monitoring has taken place of the schemes piloting compulsory interviews for *(a)* lone parents and *(b)* disabled people; and if he will make a statement. [3066]

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Compulsory work-focused interviews for lone parents and disabled people have been piloted as part of the ONE service. Qualitative research from the evaluation has recently been published.

Lone parents and disabled people have generally reported that these compulsory interviews are a positive experience. We are taking forward the lessons learnt from these programmes in the development of Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus will provide a new service to benefit claimants of working age, offering help to those looking for work now or in the future. We are opening the door to more independence for those who feel trapped on benefit.

New Deal (Disabled People)

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what advice was given to the Rehabilitation Resource Centre at City University, London, regarding the application process for the evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People. [3182]

Mr. Nicholas Brown *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* On 2 March 2001 an invitation seeking expressions of interest in tendering for the evaluation of New Deal for Disabled People was posted on the New Deal website. The website also contained information about the evaluation and about the New Deal for Disabled People.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he last travelled on the London Underground in the course of his official duties. [3677]

Mr. Darling: Tuesday 10 July 2001.

Pensioner Benefits

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the numbers of pensioners claiming *(a)* the Minimum Income Guarantee, *(b)* Housing Benefit, *(c)* Council Tax Benefit and *(d)* Attendance Allowance; and how many pensioners who are eligible do not claim these benefits. [3627]

Mr. McCartney: The latest available information is as follows:

(a) As at February 2001, 1,679,300 pensioners were claiming the Minimum Income Guarantee[1].

(b) As at May 1999, 1,769,000 pensioners were claiming Housing Benefit, and

(c) 2,542,000 pensioners were claiming Council Tax Benefit[2].

(d) As at the end of November 2000, 1,291,300 pensioners were claiming Attendance Allowance[3].

Available information on take-up of benefit can be found in the publication "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take Up in 1998–99", a copy of which is in the Library. Up-to-date information on take-up of Attendance Allowance is not available.

Sources:

[1] Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiries, 5 per cent. sample, February 2001.

[2] Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Management Information System, annual 1 per cent. sample, May 1999.

[3] Based on 5 per cent. sample data relating to 30 November 2000.

Minimum Income Guarantee

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will place a copy of the new piloted minimum income guarantee claim form in the Library. [4405]

Mr. McCartney: We are developing a new reduced form for claiming Minimum Income Guarantee with a range of stakeholders and we expect to have it ready for use by October 2001.

Pensions (Hospital Downrating)

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to his answer of 5 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 270W, concerning hospital downrating, if he will estimate the annual cost of abolishing the reduction of state pensions, other contributory benefits and income-related benefits for the first 12 weeks for *(a)* claimants and *(b)* pensioners. [3747]

Mr. McCartney: The information requested is not available.

Pension Credit

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to his answer of 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 7W, on the pension credit, if his response to the pension credit consultation document will include both a summary of the responses received and details of the organisations that provided submissions. [4406]

Mr. McCartney: We will be guided by the Cabinet Office Code of practice on written consultation published in November 2000, a copy of which is held in the Library.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he expects to receive the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority's fifth annual report; and if he will make a statement. [4777]

Mr. Darling: I have received the fifth report of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (OPRA). I have laid copies of the report before both Houses today.

Social Inclusion

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will place in the Library copies of the United Kingdom's national action plan on social inclusion. [4776]

Mr. Darling: I have today placed in the Library copies of the UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion for 2001–03, which sets out the Government's policies for implementing the objectives in the fight against social exclusion and the eradication of poverty, agreed at the European Council held in Nice in December 2000. The plan contains information on policies and programmes that are tackling exclusion throughout the UK.

HEALTH

Tattoo Removal

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many surgical procedures to remove unwanted tattoos on *(a)* women and *(b)* men were carried out by the NHS; and at what cost in each year since 1997. [1990]

Yvette Cooper: The table shows data for in-patient episodes for minor skin procedures, such as for the removal of tattoos and port wine stains, in national health service hospitals in England from 1997–98 to 1999–2000. This is the most recent information available. Information on the cost of these episodes is not collected centrally.

	1997–98	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*
Male	77	40	40
Female	96	58	49
Unknown	2	0	0
Total	175	98	89

Source:
Hospital Episode Statistics

Breast Cancer

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proportion of women diagnosed with breast cancer tested to date overexpress the HER-2 marker; [2324]

(2) what the cost per patient is of assessing the HER-2 status of women diagnosed with breast cancer; [2319]

(3) what guidelines he has issued to health authorities assessing the HER-2 status of women diagnosed with breast cancer; [2326]

(4) what proportion of women diagnosed with breast cancer were assessed for the expression of the HER-2 marker *(a)* by the NHS and *(b)* privately in England in (i) 2000 and (ii) 2001; [2321]

(5) what financial support he has provided to cancer centres and units to assess the HER-2 status of women diagnosed with breast cancer; [2325]

(6) what assessment he has made of the implications for treatment of women with breast cancer who overexpress the HER-2 marker; [2320]

(7) what recent discussions he has had with the *(a)* cancer charities, *(b)* patient group of organisations, *(c)* medical profession and *(d)* pharmaceutical companies regarding HER-2 testing of women diagnosed with breast cancer. [2323]

Yvette Cooper: We do not know how many women are currently tested for the HER-2 marker, either on the national health service or privately. Some research groups working in NHS trusts will measure HER-2 status for research purposes, or prior to entry of patients into clinical trials.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is currently assessing the clinical and cost-effectiveness of herceptin (a drug that specifically targets the HER-2 protein) and will publish guidance shortly. As part of that appraisal process we expect that NICE will be looking at the cost of HER-2 testing. Charities, patient groups, health professionals and the pharmaceutical industry will all have had the opportunity to submit evidence to NICE during this process.

Health authorities will be expected to meet the costs of positive recommendations from NICE from the £255 million available to them in 2001–02 for cancer services.

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the impact on women with breast cancer who overexpress the HER2 marker of non-prescription of herceptin. [4157]

Yvette Cooper: No assessment has been made of the impact of non-prescription herceptin in women who over express the HER2 marker. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence has been asked to evaluate the clinical and cost effectiveness of herceptin in the treatment of advanced breast cancer.

If NICE makes a positive recommendation for herceptin health authorities will be expected to fund the treatment from the additional £255 million available to them for cancer services in 2001–02.

Bowel Cancer

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what investment his Department is making in services to combat bowel cancer. [2522]

Yvette Cooper: An additional £280 million is available in 2001–02 to improve the delivery of cancer care.

Since 1998, £10 million per year has been invested to implement "Improving Outcomes" guidance on colorectal cancer. Bowel cancer patients have also benefited from the £6 million investment in nine cancer services collaborative (CSC) pilots which have been proven to reduce delays in diagnosis and treatment. The CSC is now being rolled out across all 34 cancer networks.

The NHS cancer plan set out a commitment to a £2.5 million endoscopy training programme. Endoscopy is a key diagnostic procedure for gastro-intestinal cancers. General practitioners, nurses, surgeons and gastroenterologists will benefit from this initiative which will help in meeting an increasing demand for endoscopy.

There is also a programme of investment in cancer equipment under way. £93 million from the new opportunities fund and £100 million from the modernisation fund will buy new and replacement equipment for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

A bowel cancer screening pilot is currently under way at sites in Scotland and England. The pilot will complete in 2002, and if it demonstrates that colorectal cancer screening is appropriate, feasible and acceptable to the public we will introduce it for all people aged 50–69.

Chrysotile Asbestos

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on the use of chrysotile asbestos in environmental projects for which his Department is responsible. [2521]

Yvette Cooper: Departmental policy is that chrysotile asbestos must not be used in any new works or projects in accordance with the provisions of the relevant health and safety legislation.

NHS Recruitment and Retention (North Staffordshire)

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the further investment announced in March to improve the recruitment and retention of general practitioners and nurses was allocated to the north Staffordshire health authority. [2669]

Yvette Cooper: We announced £135 million in March 2001 for recruitment, retention and returners to the national health service work force, particularly general practitioners and nurses. Allocations have not yet been made to individual health authorities.

This additional money will be significant in enabling us to achieve the ambitious proposals set out in the NHS plan, with 7,500 more consultants, 2,000 more GPs, 20,000 more nurses, midwives and health visitors, and 6,500 more therapists and other health professionals by 2004.

Alzheimer's Disease

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans he has to *(a)* monitor the implementation of NICE guidance on the use of Aricept, Exelon and Reminyl to treat mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and *(b)* publish the results; [3213]

(2) when he will direct health authorities to make funds available for the treatment of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease with Aricept, Exelon and Reminyl. [3196]

Jacqui Smith: All national health service bodies and clinicians are expected to give due weight to guidance from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence and to the evidence on which it is based. The Department is monitoring implementation of NICE's guidance through its established procedures supplemented through other data sources available to the Department. We will be looking to the Commission for Health Improvement to provide more information in due course.

We are currently preparing to implement our manifesto commitment that "local health authorities and trusts will be directed to fund drugs and treatments recommended by the NICE". We expect to announce further details shortly.

Care Homes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people under 16 live in care homes in England and Wales. [2847]

Jacqui Smith: The information requested for England is provided in the table for the year ending 31 March 2000, the latest year for which figures are available. Requests for information about Wales should be addressed to the National Assembly for Wales.

Children looked after at 31 March 2000 who were placed in children's homes or residential care homes—England

Placement	*Number*
Children's homes	6,300
Community homes	4,800
Voluntary homes	370
Private registered children's homes	1,200
Residential care homes and nursing homes (Residential Homes Act 1984	110

Notes:
1. Figures for children looked after in this table exclude children accommodated under an agreed series of short-term placements.
2. Figures are estimates derived in part from SSDA903 one-third sample of looked-after children, and include estimates for missing data and incomplete returns.
3. Figures have been rounded and therefore the detailed figures may not sum to the total presented.

Source:
DH annual returns SSDA 903 and CLA 100.

Drug Prescriptions

Dr. Naysmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what quantity of each individual antidepressant was prescribed by doctors in England in 2000; [2954]

(2) what quantity of each individual benzodiazepine was prescribed by doctors in England in 2000. [2955]

Jacqui Smith: Statistics about prescription items dispensed in the community in England during 2000, at individual preparation level, are published in the publication "Prescription Cost Analysis: England 2000". The publication provides details about items dispensed, their cost, and the quantity, and covers all prescriptions dispensed in the community in England during 2000. The items are listed alphabetically within chemical entity by British National Formulary therapeutic class. A copy has been placed in the Library. The data are also available on the internet: www.doh.gov.uk/stats/pca2000.htm.

Food Labelling

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to ensure that labels on food products accurately reflect the country of origin; and if he will make a statement. [2946]

Yvette Cooper *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* The Food Standards Agency is pressing for changes to labelling rules at European and international levels to require information about country-of-origin labelling to be provided to consumers on a wider range of foods, particularly meat products, and for clear rules on the use of terms like "produce of". The FSA will shortly begin a review of the guidance notes on origin labelling, issued last year, to ensure that current legal requirements are interpreted in the way most likely to meet consumers' concerns.

Mental Health Services

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to have collated information from health authorities and trusts in order to determine the proportion of total NHS spend used to provide mental health services in *(a)* 1999–2000 and *(b)* 2000–01. [3828]

Jacqui Smith: Information from health authorities and national health service trusts showing the proportion of total NHS spend used to provide mental health services in 1999–2000 will be available in early August. Information for 2000–01 will be available early August 2002.

Cannabis

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has received on the carcinogenic, toxic and psychotic effects of smoking cannabis; and if he will place it in the Library. [4156]

Yvette Cooper: A report by the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, published on 11 November 1998, included a review of available evidence on the effects of cannabis. The report is available in the Library.

The Department has funded three literature reviews of various aspects of cannabis. The following reports are also available in the Library.

"Clinical and Pharmacological Aspects"—Professor Heather Ashton (Newcastle University)

"Psychological and Psychiatric Aspects"—Dr. Andrew Johns (Institute of Psychiatry)

"Therapeutic Aspects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids"—Dr. Philip Robson (Oxford University).

A further study, "Long Term Heavy Cannabis Use: Patterns and Problems" is due to be completed in September 2001.

Public Appointments

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the proportion was of *(a)* women and *(b)* black and Asian non-executive members of health authorities and

NHS trusts in May 1997; and what were the proportions appointed in (i) 1997–98, (ii) 1998–99, (iii) 1999–2000 and (iv) 2000–01. [3489]

Ms Blears: The proportions of non-executive directors, including chairs, on the boards of national health service trusts and health authorities for each year since May 1997 who were women, or black or from an ethnic minority background, are shown in the table in percentage terms.

Percentage

	May				
	1997	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*
Proportion of non-executives and chairs who were women	39.8	42.6	48.4	49.3	49.2
Proportion of non-executives and chairs who were black or from an ethnic minority	5.8	7.8	10.5	11.8	12.4

Nursing Care (Elderly)

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the Government's plans for the funding of the costs of nursing care for the elderly; when the first payments for funding will be made; and if payments will be made directly to elderly people. [3646]

Jacqui Smith: Detailed guidance will be issued for consultation shortly.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what definition his Department will apply to nursing care in a residential home. [3647]

Jacqui Smith: The national health service, through local community nurses, already provides for the nursing needs of residential care home residents. There is no need for this to be defined.

A definition of what constitutes care by a registered nurse is set out at section 49 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001. When commenced, this will remove the ability of councils to provide nursing care by a registered nurse in nursing homes, paving the way for NHS nursing care.

Pilgrim Hospital, Boston (Neurology Waiting Times)

Mr. Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action he is taking to reduce waiting times for an appointment to see a consultant neurologist at the Pilgrim hospital, Boston; [4018]

(2) if he will assess the length of waiting times for an appointment to see a consultant neurologist at the Pilgrim hospital, Boston; and if he will make a statement. [4017]

Yvette Cooper: The vast majority of neurology outpatients—about 95 per cent.—are seen within 26 weeks and the average waiting time in England is 11.04 weeks. More than 58 per cent. of hospitals are able to give appointments within 13 weeks. However, we recognise that on occasions, some patients, like those at Pilgrim hospital, Boston, can wait a long time for neurology treatment.

The service at Pilgrim hospital is provided by consultants from Queen's medical centre, Nottingham. There have been difficulties in recruiting to this outreach service, but provision has been made to recruit to two additional posts, one of which will be based at Boston. Additional clinics and support are also being provided from Sheffield. This will help us to meet the waiting times targets in the NHS plan.

Stroke Patients

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance he has issued to NHS trusts on ensuring that stroke patients are assessed by social services before discharge; [3493]

(2) how many beds were available in specialist stroke units in each of the past five years. [3492]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is not collected centrally. However, many hospitals already have, or plan to introduce, specialist stroke services.

The Department published the National Service Framework for Older People (NSF) on 27 March 2001. It sets out a comprehensive strategy to ensure fair, high quality integrated health and social care and reduce variations in services for older people.

The NSF addresses a number of specific conditions which are significant for, although not limited to, older people. It includes a standard on stroke and service models which should apply to all who need them regardless of age.

The stroke standard provides for stroke prevention, immediate care, early and continuing rehabilitation, and long-term support as components of a service model for integrated specialist stroke services which will build on current arrangements and be in place in all general hospitals which care for people with stroke by April 2004.

Community Equipment Services

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans he has to monitor the effectiveness of community equipment services; [4064]

(2) how many local authorities have established agreed budgets with their relevant NHS trust in relation to community equipment services; [4065]

(3) what targets he has set for the number of additional people who will have access to community equipment services. [4063]

Jacqui Smith: The NHS plan set targets for integrating community equipment services by 2004 and, by the same date, increasing the number of people benefiting from these services by 50 per cent. To reach these targets, all councils with social services responsibility are expected to draft plans for integration, agree them with the national health service locally, and have budgets agreed with NHS colleagues by April 2002. Information on early achievement of these targets is not held centrally.

The effectiveness of community equipment services will be monitored in a number of ways. These include regular statistical returns from councils with social services responsibilities and health authorities, monitoring through the social services inspectorate and scrutiny of local action plans. The Department is keeping the need for further performance measures under review, being advised by those in the field, service users and others with an interest.

Kayleigh Glenn

Mr. John Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the case of Kayleigh Glenn of Summerfield road, Solihull, and her need for emergency surgery. [4165]

Yvette Cooper: First, may I say how sorry I was to hear about the distressing circumstances surrounding this case.

I can confirm, however, that a new clinical team has been assembled at the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford and that Kayleigh was admitted on the evening of Thursday 12 July and an operation was carried out on Friday 13 July. I understand that Kayleigh's condition is stable.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Electronic Conveyancing

Laura Moffatt: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he will publish the responses to the consultation paper "Electronic Conveyancing: A Draft Order under Section 8 of the Electronic Communications Act 2000" (cp.5/2001) published on 16 March. [4605]

Mr. Wills: The consultation paper period closed on 25 June. Copies of the responses have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. My Department is currently preparing an analysis of the responses and that will be published shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

Departmental Responsibilities

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the departmental responsibility for *(a)* regional policy, *(b)* regional development agencies, *(c)* planning policy, *(d)* urban regeneration, *(e)* rural regeneration and *(f)* regional assemblies under the new departmental structure; and if he will make a statement on the factors underlying these new departmental responsibilities. [3965]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) on 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 408W.

Black Police Association

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he has received a copy of the letter dated 7 June to the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office from Chair of the Black Police Association. [4353]

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, I have not received a copy of this letter.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister when he last met representatives of the Black Police Association. [4352]

The Prime Minister: I have meetings with a wide range of organisations and individuals. As with previous Administrations, it is not my practice to provide details of such meetings.

Gifts

Norman Baker: To ask the Prime Minister how many pictures of the House of Commons he has signed since 1 May 1997 which were intended to be given as gifts to businessmen; and what his policy is in respect of such gifts. [4306]

The Prime Minister: I am asked to sign a range of material by MPs. I understand that the majority of this material is intended for auctions and presents for staff.

Ministerial Group on Biotechnology and Genetic Modification

Mr. Breed: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the membership of the ministerial group on biotechnology and genetic modification (MISC6). [3752]

The Prime Minister: MISC6 has now been dissolved. It has been replaced by a new ministerial sub-committee on biotechnology (SCI(BIO)). I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) on 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 452W.

Dredging (Tidal Water)

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Prime Minister which Department has responsibility for controlling estuarine maintenance dredging in England. [4299]

The Prime Minister: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions has responsibility.

Incapacity Benefit

David Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will meet national organisations representing the disabled to discuss changes to Incapacity Benefit; and if he will make a statement. [4366]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 4 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 261.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 17 July 2001

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

National Museums and Galleries

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much public funding has been allocated to each of the national museums and galleries to facilitate the introduction of free admission where this does not already apply *(a)* in the current year, *(b)* in 2002–03 and *(c)* in 2003–04. [2691]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* The amount of public funding allocated to each national museum and gallery to facilitate free admission is listed in the following table:

£ million

	2001–02	*2002–03*	*2003–04*
National Museum of Science and Industry[1]	3.2	6.5	6.6
Natural History Museum	3.4	6.7	6.8
Victoria and Albert Museum	1.1	2.6	2.7
National Maritime Museum	1.7	2.7	2.8
Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester	0.4	0.7	0.8
Museum of London	0.4	1.1	1.2
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	1.4	1.9	2.4
Royal Armouries	0.4	0.8	0.9
Imperial War Museum	1.5	4.5	4.6
Tate St. Ives	0.2	0.5	0.5
Totals	13.7	28.0	29.3

[1] Including the National Coal Mining Museum for England

Tourism

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to make further funds available for the marketing of Britain as a tourist destination. [120]

Mr. Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what additional funding for marketing she expects to provide to the British Tourist Authority in response to the foot and mouth disease crisis. [189]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* As in other sectors of the economy, businesses themselves take the lead in marketing their services to overseas markets. We as a Government back those efforts only where they need special co-ordination. In this case the Government have pledged additional funding of £14.2 million, supplemented by £2.1 million re-deployed by the British Tourist Authority from existing plans. This provides in full what was sought by the British Tourist Authority, after full consultation with the industry, for the whole of 2001.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions she has had with the European Investment Bank regarding assistance for tourism businesses affected by foot and mouth disease. [135]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* I have had no discussions with the European Investment Bank. However, Government Ministers have discussed the problems of business affected by the outbreak with the British Bankers Association. The association has undertaken to help businesses by providing extra lending, deferring repayments, waiving arrangement fees and providing information and advice.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she was first informed about deduction of VAT from the money paid to the British Tourist Authority as part of the tourism recovery plan; and if she will make a statement. [3852]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The British Tourist Authority brought to my Department's attention on 24 May that, under their long-standing agreement with Customs and Excise, VAT would need to be payable for goods and services paid for with the additional funds allocated for the authority's recovery plan. We are assessing the implications of this with BTA, and the recovery plan is going ahead as planned.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what proposals she has to encourage domestic tourism in England. [2435]

Dr. Howells *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Building on "Tomorrow's Tourism", the sound strategy for tourism that we developed in our previous term of office, we will also consider giving greater emphasis to three areas: (a) changing the perception of the industry as an employer through further Government-industry partnerships; (b) continuing to drive for better and less regulation so that the industry can concentrate on growth and increasing our international competitiveness; and (c) examining whether the marketing of Britain as a tourism destination could be more efficiently co-ordinated.

The recent foot and mouth disease outbreak has highlighted the importance of tourism to the domestic economy and we will do what we can to ensure a speedy and sustained recovery. In addition to taking forward strategy, experience so far has shown that we clearly need better and more up-to-date statistics and economic data for the sector and we will need to work with the industry to that end.

British Museum

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many British Museum staff have been made redundant, dismissed, or taken early retirement over the past 12 months; at what costs; and with what period of notice in each case. [90]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* During the 12 months from 1 June 2000:

a) There were no redundancies.

b) One member of staff was dismissed on 5 October 2000. He was given five weeks' notice, but did not work the notice period. The total cost for five weeks' salary was £2,227.

c) Six staff were retired early and two members of staff took voluntary early retirement. The costs were met from the Principal Civil Service Pension Fund, not from the Museum's budget.

d) The total cost of payments made by the British Museum during the period to staff who had been given notice before 1 June 2000, including out of court settlements, is £368,021.

BBC

Ms Shipley: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what representations she has received about *(a)* the BBC's application for new children's channels and *(b)* network digital radio channels. [3709]

Dr. Howells: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a range of representations on all the BBC's proposals for new digital television and radio services including the children's channels and network digital radio channels, both supporting and opposing the application. Those who have commented include broadcasters, production companies, regulatory bodies, platform providers, and organisations representing listeners and viewers.

Ms Shipley: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how she monitors the actions of the BBC in providing a distinctive schedule of benchmark quality programmes on all its services. [3708]

Dr. Howells: This is a matter for the BBC Board of Governors, who review and publish their objectives in the BBC Annual Report.

Drug Testing

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport who represented her Department at the meeting of the first international drug testing seminar on Wednesday 4 July; and if she will make a statement. [3733]

Mr. Caborn: Only 4 July, the Medicines Control Agency held a public seminar on the issue of sports supplements. The Director of the Anti-Doping Unit at UK Sport, and the Chair of the Nandrolone Review Group, which was set up by UK Sport, both attended that seminar. UK Sport is the non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Culture Media and Sport with responsibility for the drug testing programme in the UK.

The Nandrolone Review committee reported in January 2000 and gave a strong warning to sport about the potential dangers of using supplements which may be incorrectly or inadequately labelled. Since then, considerable research has been undertaken on supplements, both in the UK and abroad, to see whether they can be responsible for producing adverse findings among athletes. Doping remains a strict liability offence in sport in order to protect athletes from those who do seek to cheat by misusing drugs. This means that athletes must be confident that what they are putting into their bodies will not lead to an adverse finding. The Nandrolone Review Group will be considering research findings in further depth and are due to produce a follow up report shortly.

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many full-time equivalent staff have been employed to test for drug usage per sport in Britain in each of the last five years. [3732]

Mr. Caborn: Drug testing arrangements are organised on a UK rather than British basis to provide a consistent standard across all UK sportsmen and women subject to this type of testing. UK Sport is currently the agency with responsibility for the drug testing policy and programme and they employ 12 staff to oversee the testing operation, policy, education, information, research and international advocacy roles. UK Sport also contracts a team of 85 independent sampling officers to carry out sampling. This figure will rise and fall depending on need. For example, it will increase when international competitions are held in the UK, as next year when we host the Commonwealth Games.

Prior to the reorganisation of the GB Sports Council in UK Sport in 1997, five full-time officers, and a considerable number of part-time independent sampling officers were employed in the fight against doping in sport. It is also the case that a number of governing bodies of sport employ staff, on a full, or part-time or voluntary basis in the anti-doping field. To calculate the number of staff on a per sport basis would be extremely difficult as there are currently no centrally held statistics which would accurately reflect the individual arrangements of all governing bodies. Also, calculation on a per sport basis would not provide an accurate reflection of the complexity of anti-doping procedures in the UK.

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many drugs tests were conducted per sport *(a)* in Britain and *(b)* outside Britain on British sportspeople in each of the last five years. [3731]

Mr. Caborn: Drug testing arrangements are organised on a UK rather than British basis to provide a consistent standard across all UK sportsmen and women subject to this type of testing. UK Sport is currently the agency with responsibility for the drug testing policy and programme. The complexities of the drug testing programme are such that it is not possible to break down figures in the way which my hon. Friend has requested. For example, footballers playing in the football league in England and Wales might not be British but may be subject to testing as they are participating in a domestic competition. Also, UK Sport does not have records of all UK athletes tested overseas unless they have commissioned the testing themselves. Where UK athletes are tested overseas at the request of the International Federation or as part of the host nation's testing programme, this information is relayed to individual governing bodies, not to the national anti-doping organisation of the athlete.

A summary of the UK drugs testing programme for each of the last five years is as follows:

	Total number of samples	*Number of findings*
1995–96	4,327	89
1996–97	4,469	90
1997–98	4,574	79
1998–99	5,147	76
1999–2000	6,141	119

A full breakdown by sport is available in UK Sport's Anti-Doping Programme Annual Reports. I will arrange

for copies of these for each of the past five years to be placed in both Libraries of the House, and for copies to be sent to my hon. Friend directly.

Formula One

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent discussions she has had with the motor racing industry about the future of Formula One racing facilities; and if she will make a statement. [3851]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* My right hon. Friend the Minister for Sport has met representatives of the industry.

Digital Radio

Mrs. Brinton: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to encourage the introduction of commercial digital radio. [3745]

Dr. Howells *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The Broadcasting Act 1996 established a framework of legislation which has encouraged the take up of digital radio. There are currently two national radio digital multiplexes and 28 local digital radio multiplexes with more to come. These are already carrying 135 stations (including 50 broadcasting simulcast on an analogue licence). In London there are currently 17 stations broadcasting, with a further 11 more to come by the end of the year.

We expect to conduct a review of progress made in digital radio in 2003, by which time we shall have a much clearer idea of where digital radio development is placed.

I welcome industry plans to produce cheaper digital radio sets.

Voluntary Sports Clubs

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what measures her Department is taking to encourage the work of voluntary sports clubs; [4042]

(2) what recent representations she has received on taxation of voluntary sports clubs; and if she will make a statement. [4041]

Mr. Caborn: Since my appointment, the Department has received a number of representations concerning the current taxation treatment of voluntary sports clubs. Following the announcement from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget of plans to consult on the best way for tax relief to help community amateur sports clubs, I am now working closely with Treasury colleagues and the sports organisations, including Sport England, The Central Council for Physical Recreation and The National Playing Fields Association, on the shape of a possible relief. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will publish a consultation paper later this year which will invite comments on the proposed relief and I have asked that copies be forwarded on to all those who have previously written to the Department on this issue.

Millennium Dome

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what has been the total amount spent on the dome by the Millennium Commission and NMEC Ltd. since 31 December 2000; and what is the estimated total for the end of the current financial year. [3648]

Dr. Howells *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* There has been no direct spend by the Millennium Commission on the Millennium Dome since 31 December 2000. Grant is made to the New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC) who have incurred a spend of around £7.5 million for the period of 1 January to 30 June 2001. This sum falls within the £628 million allocated by the Millennium Commission.

Responsibility for the dome passed to English Partnerships on 1 July 2001.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by her Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by her Department. [3494]

Tessa Jowell: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport's predecessor, the Department for National Heritage, was established in April 1992 so information can be provided only from that date. My Department has let only one information technology contract in excess of £500,000. This is the ongoing contract for outsourced IT support and services let to Sema, now SchlumbergerSema, in May 1993 which is worth about £1 million per annum.

Gambling Review Body

Jeff Ennis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she will publish the report of the Gambling Review Body. [4980]

Tessa Jowell: I am today laying copies of the report before Parliament. It is being published as a Command Paper, and the full text will be available on my Department's website (www.culture.gov.uk).

I am very grateful to Sir Alan Budd and his fellow members of the Review Body for their work. They have done a fine job. They were given a wide and challenging remit: to modernise the regulation of gambling in Great Britain, taking account of all relevant factors, including its social impact. Their report, based on extensive evidence and research, provides a thorough analysis of the issues and a coherent package of proposals. We are all in their debt.

All around the world legislators have grappled with the problem of how best to regulate gambling. There is no single solution which is right for all times and for all places. Gambling itself is continually evolving. Our present gambling laws were, for example, enacted before the internet was created and they make no provision for its use as a gambling medium. Regulation equally needs to take account of changing social circumstances and public expectations. There is no doubt that our current

laws, as well as being too complex and out of date, fail to reflect the extent to which gambling has become an everyday part of the way in which millions of people choose to spend their leisure.

The Gambling Review Body has identified a number of proposals which would lift regulatory constraints which may no longer be justified. At the same time there are proposals which would provide additional safeguards which the Review Body sees as needed to achieve the overall policy aims of protecting children and the vulnerable, ensuring fairness to the punter and keeping crime out of gambling. The report accordingly recommends a new balance of regulation in the public interest. It is also clear from the report that we are looking at the scope for improving a system with many strengths: through its own and its regulators' efforts British gambling is among the world leaders.

We now plan to discuss with interested bodies the issues which implementation of the Review Body's recommendations would raise. We shall also welcome comments from members of the public and all sources: these should be sent to my Department by the end of October. I shall want to take these consultation and comments into account before reaching final decisions on the way ahead. I shall also want to consider carefully the potential impact of the Review Body's proposals on the National Lottery before deciding how to proceed.

In the meantime there is no reason to halt all work on changes which are consistent with the Review Body's conclusions and which can be taken forward without cutting across future legislation. We shall, for example, continue to work on plans to sell the Tote to racing and to end the horserace betting levy; and there are also regulatory reform proposals which are already subject to public consultation or parliamentary scrutiny. We need to consider them again in the light of the Review Body's work, but where progress can sensibly be made which will bring early benefits to the public and the industry alike, it should be made.

TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the contracts awarded to W. S. Atkins, Buro-Happold and Kvaerner by his Department and its predecessor, agencies and non-departmental public bodies from May 1999 to the latest date for which information is available. [3241]

Dr. Whitehead: Details of contracts awarded to W. S. Atkins, Buro-Happold, and Kvaerner by the former Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, its agencies and non-departmental public bodies from May 1999 to the current date are listed:

1999–2000

W. S. ATKINS

DETR (C)

- IT support and ECommerce
- Advice on working environment issues
- Aspects of noise impacts
- Regional airspace co-ordination study
- Research management support
- Co-ordination of regional air services studies
- Assistance with investigation of drinking water quality incidents 1999–2000 and audit of water companies
- Feasibility report on relocation of Audit Commission
- A50 Stoke to Derby (PPP/PFI)
- A30/A35 Exeter to Bere Regis (PPP/PFI)
- Scientific research management support

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

Countryside Agency

- Planning support
- Review of recreation strategies
- Local heritage initiative marketing survey

DSA

- IS strategy project management

DVLA

- Training needs analysis
- Evaluation of project management
- Support for project assurance unit

Environment Agency

- Engineering consultancy (feasibility design and supervision of flood defence work)
- Environmental consultancy and flood plain mapping and modelling

Health and Safety Executive

- Safety Assessment of Carmarthen Bus Station
- Review of the applicability of Large Eddy Simulation Techniques to Safety Studies
- Effects of Secondary Containment on Source Term Modelling
- Updating and Support of Poolfire6
- Scientific Support—Explosives In Demolition
- Structural Risk Study
- Thermal Radiation Criteria for Vulnerable Populations
- Scientific Support—Crashworthniess Project
- Fire Risk Assessment for Workplaces Containing Flammable Substances
- Preparation of Maps for Use by NII
- Rovie Level Crossing Review
- Survey of Characteristics of People Working with Chemicals and the Companies They Work For
- ACE Model, Code Development
- Methodology for On-Site Ignition Probability
- System Reliability Updating Using Results from Underwater Joint Inspections
- Ladbroke Grove Accident Investigation
- Ladbroke Grove: Vehicle Storage Costs
- Presentation of Information on Momentum Releases
- Assessment of AGR Concrete Pressure Vessel Behaviour in Loss of Cooling Fault Conditions
- Dense Gas Dispersion Studies Using the MLFP Method with HSE Software
- IRR 99 Training
- Assessment of Railtrack's response to two Improvement Notices issued as a result of a accident at Ladbroke Grove on 5 October 1999
- OFGEM's inquiry to HSE dated 12 October 1999
- Investigation of a Gas Explosion at lark Hall, Hamilton
- Topographical Survey at Lark Hall, Hamilton
- Risk and Safety Implications—Geotechnical Characterisation and Analysis
- Nuclear Reactors (Environmental impact assessment for decomissioning) Regulations 1999 (EIAD) 1999

Highways Agency

Area 18 Design Commission

M25 CCTV Enhancement (Areas 3/4/5)

A23 Coulsdon Relief Road Employers Agent

R and D Advisory Service 99/02 for Pavement Engineering Group

Specialist Traffic Transportation and Economic Advice

NAD Execution of Steel Structures—Bridges

Managing Integration

Trial Application and Sample Survey in Respect of Draft Fatigue Assessment Requirements

Abnormal Indivisible Loads Notification—System Trial

Management of NMCS2 Specification

Framework Agreement Research Service Contract—Pavement Engineering

Review of Highway Drainage Maintenance Practice—Phase 2

South East England Development Agency

Heat and power study

BURO-HAPPOLD

DETR (C)

Constructing a prototype cardboard building

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

English Partnerships

Multi modal interchange

South East England Development Agency

Framework study

KVAERNER

DETR(C)

Dartford river crossing (PPP/PFI)

Birmingham northern relief road (PPP/PFI)

M1-A1 link road (PPP/PFI)

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

Highways Agency

Yorkshire Driver Information System

2000–01

W. S. ATKINS

DETR (C)

Additional aspects of noise impacts

Health and Safety

Assistance with investigation of drinking water quality incidents 2000–01 and audit of water companies

Review of drinking water quality aspects of serviceability relating to infrastructure and non-infrastructure assets

Groundwater protection code for petrol stations

Responding to water consultation documents

Environmental impact of metals—review of nickel in the UK

GMOs for the bioremediation of organic and inorganic pollutants

Provision of scientific and technical advice

Technical support standards and assessment Branch of the Air and Environmental Quality Division

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

Countryside Agency

Chilterns integrated access research contract

Health and Safety Executive

Rough Weather Rescue

Gas Releases from Buildings—Enhancement to GRAB-T

Source Terms Modelling of Releases Within Building Complexes

Specialist Support to Risk Assessment and Probablistic Aspects of Ind. Intro of Probablistic Structural

Reliability Based Land Pipeline Design

Peer Review of MSDU Land Use Planning Methodology

Specification for a Study into Sources of Variability and Uncertainty in Probablistic Safety Assessments

Graphics of Larkhall Explosion Site

Fire Compartmentation in Chemical Warehouses

New Information Leaflet—Asbestos Based Gasket Alternatives

Software (PAN) Support

Inspection of Waulkmill Reservoir

Comparisons of Safety Levels Implicit in Structural Codes

Carmarthen Bus Station—Appeal against Improvement Notice

Decommissioning and removal of the concrete gravity structures in the UKCS

Specification to Study Performance Indicators for Use in Nuclear Facilities

PIPIN Revision to Provide NT4 Compatibility and Additional Datasets

Provision of Maps with LUP Zones

Review of Railtracks Maintenance Strategy for the Forth Bridge

International Common Cause Failure Data Exchange

Development of Methodology to Assess Pipeline Safety Cases

Accident Investigation, Linfield Street, Dundee Gas Explosion

Phase 2, Accident Investigation, Linfield Street, Dundee Gas Explosion

Development of the ACDC Database

Level 3 Guidance Update

General Management of the Technical Support Framework Agreement

Ad Hoc Support

Assessing Investigations into Signals Passed at Danger (SPADS)

Research on the effect of HSE campaigns and their effects on rooflights and nets

Advanced Fluid Loading Models

Assessment of Railtracks's response to two improvement notices

Conference on Risk in Civil Engineering

PCPV Structural Integrity: Prolonged Natural Circulation/Loss of PVCS Fault Condition: Phase 1

HSE intranet database for Offshore Division HF support

Performance Indicators for Fixed Structures

Characteristics of extended survival in the North Sea

Fall of Stanchion A10, Project Arrow

Highways Agency

Area 16 Design Commission

M62 New Junction 8 and J8–9 Widening

A47 Thorney Bypass

Framework Agreement for Structural Bearings Advice

Framework Agreement Advice on Steel and Composite Bridges

Framework Agreement for SLVR Consultancy

Environment Research and Development Framework Arrangements

Tactical Traffic Control—Alternative Vehicle Detectors (for Elevated Motorways and 5/6 Lane Motorways)

Health and Safety Assessment of HA's offices

Scheme Forecast Monitoring/Post Implementation Evaluation

Consultancy Framework for TSE 2000–03

Implementation of Eurocodes

Foresight Vehicle Probe-IT (collaboration agreement)

BURO-HAPPOLD

DETR (C)

Facilitating the benefits of technological innovation

Capturing how to construct a timber gridshell safely

Capture and analysis if vibration data from an unfinished laboratory floor

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

South East England Development Agency

Eastbridge master plan

KVAERNER

DETR (C)

Nil

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

Highways Agency

M1/M45 Northamptonshire Control Office Area NMCS (Design and Build)

2001-to date

W. S. ATKINS

DETR (C)

Nil

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

Health and Safety Executive

Sources of Variability and Uncertainty in Nuclear Reactor PSAs

Assistance with NSD Emergency Arrangements

Forth Bridge TG2

Case-by-case support on Nuclear Reactors (Env. Impact Assessment for Decommissioning) Regs 1999

Assessment of layout of Buchanan Bus Station, Glasgow

International Common Cause Failure Data Exchange

Assessment of railway industry SPAD investigations

Tay wastewater project: assessment of ground conditions

Expert Report on the security of temporary traffic signs and sign frames

ACE Model Development

Highways Agency

Maintaining Agency Contracts: Area 6 (Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk)

BURO-HAPPOLD

DETR (C)

Nil

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

South East England Development Agency

Boiler shop disposals

Sector works

KVAERNER

DETR (C)

Nil

Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies

Nil.

Lorries

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on what date the impounding of trucks running without O licences will be implemented by the Vehicle Inspectorate. [3463]

Mr. Spellar: The Transport Act 2000 gave the Government powers to make regulations which would enable the Vehicle Inspectorate to detain the vehicles of unlicensed goods vehicle operators. I intend to lay these regulations before this House shortly. Subject to the approval of the House, we aim to bring the regulations into effect in October 2001.

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he intends to introduce HGV lanes on strategic routes; and at what locations he has trialed such schemes. [R] [3548]

Mr. Jamieson: We have not yet identified any locations on the strategic network where designated lanes would improve the flow of traffic for HGVs.

Air Traffic Control

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what mechanism will be used to allocate the 5 per cent. stake in NATS to staff under the Government's proposals for the part-privatisation of the National Air Traffic Service. [3698]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government, in conjunction with the Airline Group and NATS staff representatives are working together on the precise detail of the employee share scheme. In broad terms, the shares will be allocated via an Employee Share Ownership Plan, to be approved by the Inland Revenue, which will be administered by a new subsidiary of NATS called NATS Employee Sharetrust Limited. The directors of this new company will be appointed by the Government, the Airline Group and the NATS trade unions. A fundamental principle of the scheme will be that all employees, regardless of grade or length of service will have the same entitlement to shares from this scheme.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what meetings *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials have held in the last month with representatives of the airline consortium which is purchasing NATS. [3696]

Mr. Jamieson: Ministers held a number of meetings with bidders for the National Air Traffic Services public-private partnership, including the Airline Group, as part of the bidding process. No meetings between Ministers and the Airline Group have taken place since the preferred bidder was selected.

Officials meet regularly with representatives of the Airline Group as part of the preparations for putting the PPP in place.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he last travelled on the London Underground in the course of his official duties. [3678]

Mr. Jamieson: Ministers travel by public transport on a regular basis in the course of their official duties and under the Ministerial Code are required to always make efficient and cost-effective travel arrangements.

Since being appointed as a Minister for the Department, I have used the London Underground on several occasions in connection with my duties.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what directions he has given to London Underground Limited and London Transport regarding future arrangements for the London Underground; what decisions by those organisations have been taken following discussions with Government representatives which complied with agreements reached at those discussions; and if he will make a statement. [4724]

Mr. Byers: No directions have been given to either London Underground or London Transport regarding future arrangements for the Underground.

I have today written to Mr. Kiley, informing him that his appointment as chairman and member of London Regional Transport is terminated forthwith.

Mr. Kiley was appointed chairman of London Regional Transport on 8 May to lead negotiations on contracts for the modernisation of London Underground. On 29 June, he wrote to the Prime Minister reporting that he had been unable to reach agreement with the bidders which met his objectives and the key criteria for modernising the Tube. In the light of Mr. Kiley's inability to reach an agreement with the bidders, the Government asked London Underground to proceed with their plans for improving and updating the Tube's infrastructure within parameters acceptable to them and the bidders.

When the Government decided on 5 July that London Underground should be invited to press ahead with their plans for investment in a publicly-run, privately-built Tube, we hoped that Mr. Kiley would continue to be able to play a fully co-operative role. This has not been the case. Mr. Kiley has tried to use his board position to block negotiations with the bidders. He has, without authority from the board, issued instructions to senior management to halt those negotiations.

I have today received a letter signed on behalf of a majority of the London Transport Board saying they cannot work with Mr. Kiley and thus it is impossible for the London Transport Board to function effectively. I have therefore decided to end Mr. Kiley's appointment as chairman and as a board member and to re-appoint Sir Malcolm Bates as chairman of the London Transport Board.

Integrated Transport

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on progress towards better integration between railway stations and *(a)* cars, *(b)* buses, *(c)* taxis and *(d)* bicycles. [3552]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government are committed to delivering long-term improvements for the travelling public, and recognise that an important aspect of doing so is to ensure better integration between modes of transport.

We have seen a number of new and improved rail interchanges opened since 1997 including—Warwick Parkway, Clitheroe Interchange, Canning Town Transport Interchange, North Greenwich Station, Stratford Regional Station, Feltham Gateway and Tottenham Hale Station. There is also a new London Underground Interchange at Canada Water and a number of new bus interchanges, notably St. Paul's Bus Station, Walsall.

The Safe Routes to Stations project, on which the Department is collaborating with Sustrans, Railtrack and other bodies, is progressing well. It will open up new opportunities for people to access rail and bus stations by bicycle and on foot, and demonstrate the advantages of combining public transport with cycling and walking. Work has already been carried out at a number of locations around the country, including Peterborough, Norwich, Tiverton Parkway, March in Cambridgeshire, Temple Meads in Bristol, Waterloo in London and a cycle/pedestrian access bridge linking Bodmin with Bodmin Parkway station.

Last December we gave full or provisional approval to three major local transport schemes, the Allerton Interchange in Merseyside, and the Outer Circle bus showcase and Wolverhampton Centre Access in the West Midlands, which each include better interchanges between rail and public transport.

Authorities have also included a range of smaller-scale interchange improvements in their local transport plans. The exact choice of measures will be for authorities to determine, but we will be monitoring closely the implementation of local transport plans—including progress on interchange facilities—through an annual progress report system. The first reports are due to be submitted by local authorities at the end of August 2001.

We expect to see further progress towards integration between modes as a result of the increased investment under the 10-Year Plan.

Rail Freight

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on his plans to upgrade rail freight routes to major ports. [3553]

Mr. Jamieson: The amount of freight moved by rail has grown steadily over the period of this Government. Our 10-Year Plan for transport reinforces our commitment to ensure that that growth continues.

We have established the Strategic Rail Authority to implement detailed plans for rail freight. The SRA published its Freight Strategy in May. This includes plans for delivering a major programme of improvements to rail links to major ports.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the potential for switching imports of fruit and vegetables from road to rail; and if he will make a statement. [4290]

Mr. Jamieson: The import of fruit and vegetables represents a significant opportunity for rail. The SRA's Freight Strategy, published in May, discusses a number of actions aimed at realising the potential of this market and at facilitating the establishment of sustainable international services through the Channel Tunnel.

Park-and-ride Schemes

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made in the last 12 months with introducing park-and-ride schemes in towns. [3459]

Ms Keeble: Last December as part of the Local Transport Capital settlement for 2001–02 we gave full or provisional approval to a number of major local transport schemes, including the Allerton Interchange in Merseyside, Somerset's North West Taunton Package, Plymouth's Northern Corridor improvement, South Bradford's and Salisbury's integrated transport packages, each of which contains park-and-ride as an element of the proposals.

Authorities have also included a wide range of smaller-scale measures in their local transport plans (LTPs), including park-and-ride schemes. The exact choice of measures will be for authorities to determine, but the capital settlement should enable authorities to start work on as many as 120 new and extended park-and-ride facilities over the five-year LTP period. We will be monitoring closely the implementation of LTPs—including park-and-ride schemes—through an annual progress report system. The first reports are due to be submitted at the end of August 2001.

Roads

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how much of the trunk road network has been given a lower noise surface in the past 12 months; and when he intends that *(a)* 10 per cent., *(b)* 25 per cent., *(c)* 50 per cent. and *(d)* 60 per cent. of the trunk road network will have received such a service. [3549]

Mr. Jamieson: Over 3 per cent. of the network received a lower noise surface during the last year. A target has been set in Transport 2010, the 10-year Plan, for 60 per cent. of the trunk road network to have lower noise surfacing by March 2011, including all concrete surfaces. A detailed 10 year programme is not available, but approximately 6 per cent. of the network is expected to be treated annually. On this basis 10 per cent. would be achieved by 2002, 25 per cent. by 2005, 50 per cent. by 2009 and 60 per cent. by 2011.

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list each of the roads in the Highways Agency Targeted Programme of Improvements indicating in each case *(a)* when work is likely to commence and *(b)* when the road is likely to be opened. [R] [3550]

Mr. Jamieson: Contracts have been let and in most cases work has begun on the following 14 schemes in the Government's Targeted Programme of Improvements (TPI) to the trunk road network. The planned completion date is as shown:

	Planned completion
A1 Willburn-Denwick Improvement	Winter 2002
A6 Clapham Bypass	Spring 2003
A6 Great Glen Bypass	Winter 2002
A11 Roundham Heath-Attleborough Dualling	Spring 2003
A27 Polegate Bypass	Summer 2002
A41 Aston Clinton Bypass	Summer 2003
A43 Whitfield Turn-Brackley Hatch Improvement	Summer 2002
A43 Silverstone Bypass	Summer 2002
A43 M40-B4031 Dualling	Summer 2002
A63 Selby Bypass	Winter 2003
A66 Stainburn and Great Clifton Bypass	Winter 2002
A500 Basford, Hough, Shavington Bypass	Summer 2003
A650 Bingley Relief Road	Winter 2003
A1033 Hedon Road Improvement, Hull	Summer 2003

The following contracts are still to be let in the years stated. The precise timing of the start of work will be a matter for the contractor:

2001–02

A5 Nesscliffe Bypass

A6 Rothwell-Desborough Bypass

A6 Rushden and Higham Ferrers Bypass

A10 Wadesmill-Colliers End Bypass

A21 Lamberhurst Bypass

A46 Newmark-Lincoln Improvement

A120 Stansted Braintree

2002–03

A6 Alvaston

M25 J 12–15 Widening

A1(M) Ferrybridge to Hook Moor

A1(M) Wetherby to Walshford

2003–04

A249 Iwade-Queensborough Improvement

M60 J 5–8 (formerly M63 J6–9 Widening).

Start dates for construction of the remaining schemes in the TPI cannot yet be set as they are still subject to the completion of the remaining statutory procedures. Those schemes are:

A2 Bean-Cobham Widening Phase 1

A2 Bean-Cobham Widening Phase 2

A11 Fiveways to Thetford Improvement

A11 Attleborough Bypass Improvement

A34 Chieveley/M4 J13 Improvement

A2 A2/A282 Dartford Improvement

A5 Weeford-Fazeley Improvement

A14 Rookery Crossroads Grade Separated Junction

A47 Thorney Bypass

A63 Melton Grade Separated Junction

A74 Carlisle-Guardsmill upgrading to motorway

A303 Stonehenge

A421 Great Barford Bypass

A500 City Road/Stoke Road.

Eight schemes were added to the TPI on 28 March 2001. Two schemes, A3 Hindhead Improvement and A30 Bodmin—Indian Queens Improvement, are subject to statutory procedures. For the remaining six schemes the next stage is under review:

M62 Junction 6 Improvement

A1 Peterborough-Blyth Grade Separated Junctions

A14 Haughley New Street—Stowmarket Improvement

A38 Dobwalls Bypass

A46 Newmark—Widmerpool Improvement

A595 Parton—Lillyhall Improvement.

East Thames River Crossing

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to construct new East Thames river crossings for *(a)* road and *(b)* rail; and what the timetable for construction is in each case. [3540]

Mr. Jamieson: None. Proposals for new East Thames river crossings are now a matter for the Mayor of London. The crossings are discussed in his Transport Strategy published on 10 July. Copies of the Strategy are available in the Library.

Multi-model Transport Studies

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he expects to make a decision on the findings of the *(a)* West Midlands to North West, *(b)* North/South movements in East Midlands, *(c)* London to South West and South Wales, *(d)* London orbitals, *(e)* South East Manchester, *(f)* West Midlands areas, *(g)* Tyneside areas, *(h)* access to Hastings, *(i)* Cambridge to Huntingdon and *(j)* A453 M1-Nottingham multi-modal studies. [R] [3462]

Mr. Jamieson: Each study is expected to report to the relevant Regional Planning Body as follows:

Multi-modal study	*Date expected to report*
(a) West Midlands to North West	Autumn 2001
(b) North/South Movements in East Midlands	Early 2002
(c) London to South West and South Wales	April 2002
(d) London Orbital	April 2002
(e) South East Manchester	September 2001
(f) West Midlands Area	September 2001
(g) Tyneside Area	February 2002
(h) Access to Hastings	Reported December 2000 Decision announced 12 July 2001
(i) Cambridge to Huntingdon	July 2001
(j) A453 M1—Nottingham	Early 2002

Regional Planning Bodies will consider these reports and make recommendations to the Secretary of State in due course.

In regard to the Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study decision, I refer to the answers given on 12 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 635–37.

Rail Safety

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many fatalities there were per million passenger miles on the railways in each of the last 10 years; what the projected costs of current plans to improve safety are; and what percentage increase in safety is planned to result from them. [3838]

Mr. Jamieson: The Health and Safety Executive's Railway Inspectorate, publish fatality and injury rates to passengers in their Annual Report on Railway Safety, copies of which are placed in both House Libraries. The information is compiled per billion passenger rail miles. Fatality rates per billion passengers miles for each of the last ten years are reproduced in the following table.

Fatality rate passengers—all railways 1990 to 1999–2000

Year	*Train incidents per billion passenger miles*	*Movement incidents per billion passenger miles*	*Non-movement incidents per billion passenger journeys*
1990	0	1.43	1.29
1991–92	0.08	1.16	0.63
1992–93	0	0.68	1.29
1993–94	0	0.62	1.30
1994–95	0.14	0.55	1.26
1995–96	0.04	0.29	1.23
1996–97	0.04	0.48	1.79
1997–98	0.24	0.51	2.24
1998–99	0	0.56	1.60
1999–00	0.90	0.43	2.01

Key to table headings:

"Train Incidents" include: collisions, derailments, trains running into obstructions, fires on board trains and missile damage to train windows;

"Movement Incidents" are injuries caused by the movement of the train excluding train incidents e.g. a passenger falling off a platform and struck by a train; and

"Non-movement Incidents" are injuries not caused by trains, e.g. A passenger slipping on the station platform.

Figures for 2000–01 are still being compiled.

All aspects of railway industry activity have potential safety impacts. These safety impacts are not always separately identified in the business planning process. Therefore, the projected cost of current industry plans to improve safety cannot be estimated.

In the 1999–2000 Railway Group Safety Plan, the railway industry set itself a target to halve the annual number of accidental equivalent fatalities by 2009. (In calculating an 'equivalent fatality' 10 major injuries equate to one fatality and 200 minor injuries equate to one fatality.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has *(a)* made to and *(b)* received from Railtrack about the continued enforcement of speed restrictions; and when he estimates all restrictions will be lifted. [4649]

Mr. Spellar: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the Railtrack chairman last month expressing concern about the continued enforcement of speed restrictions on the national rail network and pressing for a firm timetable for reducing further the number outstanding, without in any way compromising safety. Railtrack will respond substantively once it has reached agreement with the train operating companies on the best balance between early removal of the restrictions and additional disruption to services that the necessary engineering work might cause.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has *(a)* made to and *(b)* received from each of the train operating companies about the continued enforcement of speed restrictions; and if he will make a statement. [4650]

Mr. Spellar: Ministers have met representatives of the train operating companies on several occasions and discussed, among other issues, the continued enforcement

of temporary speed restrictions, and the steps that Railtrack and the operators, working together, can take to minimise their impact.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will set out the timetable for completion of the inspection schedule used by Railtrack to assess track conditions; and if he will make a statement. [4651]

Mr. Spellar: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

PPG25

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what action his Department intends to take to develop Planning Policy Guidance Note Number 25; and if he will make a statement. [4008]

Ms Keeble *[holding answer 13 July 2001]*: The Government today published the new Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 25 "Development and flood risk", following the fast-track consultation in February-March this year. It substantially follows the recommendations of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee in their December 2000 report on "Development on, or affecting, the flood plain", and strengthens the guidance that was previously contained in Department of the Environment Circular 30–92, which is now cancelled.

The new PPG makes clear that building should be wholly exceptional in areas of flood plain that are currently undefended or defended to a relatively low standard and thus effectively function regularly as flood plains where water flows or is stored at times of flood.

A risk-based sequential test outlines the appropriate planning responses to levels of flood risk to help to ensure that the problems that have occurred due to inappropriate development in flood-risk areas are reduced in future. This test gives clear priority to the development of areas that are not at high risk of flooding. It is intended to operate alongside the sequential test in PPG 3 "Housing", by which previously developed land is the first choice for housing, and to be consistent with sustainable development objectives in other PPGs.

Application of this test through the development plan system and in the determination of individual applications will require planning authorities and developers to consult closely with the Environment Agency. Applicants will be required to assess the flood risk and impact of their proposals and to incorporate sustainable drainage systems as far as possible. Where flood defences and other mitigation measures are needed because of development, these should be fully funded as part of the development, including the necessary arrangements to maintain them for a 30-year period, after which they will be regarded as public assets and liabilities. The Government are preparing supplementary guidance on flood-resistant construction techniques to enable buildings to cope better with flooding and to recover faster.

The emphasis on looking at flooding on the wider scale of the whole river catchment or coastal cell will be complemented by the initiative on catchment flood management plans being undertaken by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency.

The implementation of PPG 25 will have some impact on construction costs and the running costs of planning authorities and the Environment Agency. However, the events of last autumn have clearly demonstrated that these are far outweighed by the future costs to householders, businesses and a range of public authorities, including local government and the Environment Agency of not adopting it as current policy on development and flood risk.

Mr. Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will publish new planning guidance on flooding. [4646]

Ms Keeble: The Government today published the new Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 25 "Development and flood risk", following the fast-track consultation in February-March this year. It substantially follows the recommendations of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee in their December 2000 report on "Development on, or affecting, the flood plain", and strengthens the guidance that was previously contained in Department of the Environment Circular 30–92, which is now cancelled.

The new PPG makes clear that building should be wholly exceptional in areas of flood plain that are currently undefended or defended to a relatively low standard and thus effectively function regularly as flood plains where water flows or is stored at times of flood.

A risk-based sequential test outlines the appropriate planning responses to levels of flood risk to help to ensure that the problems that have occurred due to inappropriate development in flood-risk areas are reduced in future. This test gives clear priority to the development of areas that are not at high risk of flooding. It is intended to operate alongside the sequential test in PPG 3 "Housing", by which previously developed land is the first choice for housing, and to be consistent with sustainable development objectives in other PPGs.

Application of this test through the development plan system and in the determination of individual applications will require planning authorities and developers to consult closely with the Environment Agency. Applicants will be required to assess the flood risk and impact of their proposals and to incorporate sustainable drainage systems as far as possible. Where flood defences and other mitigation measures are needed because of development, these should be fully funded as part of the development, including the necessary arrangements to maintain them for a 30-year period, after which they will be regarded as public assets and liabilities. The Government is preparing supplementary guidance on flood-resistant construction techniques to enable buildings to cope better with flooding and to recover faster.

The emphasis on looking at flooding on the wider scale of the whole river catchment or coastal cell will be complemented by the initiative on catchment flood management plans being undertaken by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency.

The implementation of PPG 25 will have some impact on construction costs and the running costs of planning authorities and the Environment Agency. However, the events of last autumn have clearly demonstrated that these are far outweighed by the future costs to householders, businesses and a range of public authorities, including local government and the Environment Agency of not adopting it as current policy on development and flood risk.

Second Homes

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what estimate he has made of the number of *(a)* second homes entitled to a 50 per cent. council tax discount and *(b)* holiday homes for which a business rate is payable in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement. [4329]

Dr. Whitehead: (a) We estimate that approximately 220,000 second homes (defined as furnished and no-one's main residence) in England were entitled to a 50 per cent. council tax discount as at October 2000.

(b) No estimate is available for the number of holiday homes in England for which a business rate is payable. This is because many holiday homes form part of a larger site, and in many cases it is the site as a whole—rather than individual properties—that is liable for business rates.

Information on council tax and business rate liability in Wales is a matter for the National Assembly of Wales.

Council Tax

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many *(a)* second homes and *(b)* other dwellings entitled to the 50 per cent. council tax discount there are in each district and county/unitary authority area; and what percentage they represent of domestic housing stock in each area. [4330]

Dr. Whitehead: We estimate that approximately 220,000 second homes (defined as furnished and no-one's main residence) and 370,000 other dwellings were entitled to the 50 per cent. council tax discount as at October 2000. These represent 1.0 per cent. and 1.8 per cent. respectively of the total domestic housing stock in England.

Comparable figures for each district and county/unitary area in England are not available.

Silverhill (A21)

Mr. Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will ensure that the storm drain for Silverhill on the A21 is reconstructed so that it drains into the river below the bypass. [3860]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Environment Agency, who are responsible for flood alleviation, has not suggested that any work is necessary to the A21 culverts to alleviate the flooding problems in and around Robertsbridge. The Highways Agency has no plans to reconstruct the storm drain at Silver Hill.

Private Finance Initiatives

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the PFI contracts on local authority leisure centres entered into since 1997, indicating *(a)* the value of the PFI, *(b)* the name of the successful contractor, *(c)* those PFIs which have benefited from refinancing arrangements, *(d)* the value of the benefit accrued to the company concerned and *(e)* the extent of the clawback. [4533]

Dr. Whitehead: No contracts have yet been signed for central government supported PFI leisure centres. No information is held on PFI schemes funded entirely by a local authority.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many *(a)* PFI and *(b)* PPP contracts have been agreed by his Department over the last five years; how many have been satisfactorily completed; and in how many has compensation been (i) paid and (ii) claimed for performance failure. [4599]

Dr. Whitehead: The table provides details of DTLR's PFI and PPP contracts signed in the past five years. It states whether the service is operational, and whether service charge payments have been withheld. Should PFI and PPP contractors fail to provide the contracted service they will not receive the full unitary service charge payment for the relevant month.

PFI and PPP contracts signed since 1997

Year contract signed	*Name of contract*	*Status of service*	*Has part of service charge payment been withheld?*
PFI			
1997	Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre—Catering	Operational	No
2000	Highways Agency—A13 "Thames Gateway"[1]	Under construction	n/a
2000	Vehicle Inspectorate—MOT computerisation	Under construction	n/a
2001	Highways Agency—Traffic Control Centre	Under construction	n/a
PPP			
1997	Manchester Metrolink—extension to Salford Quays and Eccles[2]	Operational	No
1999	Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust	Operational	No
2001	National Air Traffic Control Services (NATS) PPP	—[3]	n/a

[1] The A13 Thames Gateway contract has been transferred to Transport for London.

[2] The Manchester Metrolink contract was let by Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive and received substantial funding from DTLR.

[3] NATS have announced their preferred partner—Airlines Group (British Airways, British Midland, Virgin, Britannia, Monarch, Easy-Jet and Airtours) and is due to let the contract shortly.

Channel Tunnel (Rail Freight)

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what work his Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on the viability of freight traffic using the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (i) on the tracks currently under construction and (ii) using the same corridor; and if he will make a statement. [3641]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* My Department, and its predecessors, have not commissioned any studies of freight use of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and the same corridor. In 1993 Union Railways evaluated the impact of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link on rail freight traffic. The results of this work were used by the Department to inform the decisions to go ahead with the construction of the Link.

Central Railway

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what evaluations his Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* reviewed into the operation of Central Railway. [3640]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* My Department has not commissioned any evaluation of Central Railway's proposals. The Strategic Rail Authority's Freight Strategy outlines a programme of infrastructure and freight-specific investment, and discusses the concept of a new strategic route between the Channel Tunnel, the West Midlands and the north. It is in this context that the SRA initiated a high-level review of Central Railway's proposals. The SRA's consultants have now delivered their report and the SRA will advise the Government of its findings in due course. We will respond to Central Railway taking the SRA's conclusions into account.

Train Passengers

Siobhain McDonagh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what measures exist to require train companies to regulate the number of passengers that trains may safely carry *(a)* at peak times of travel and *(b)* at other times; and how such measures are enforced. [4590]

Mr. Jamieson: The Health and Safety Executive consider overcrowding on trains to be a matter of comfort rather than one of safety. Accordingly there are no statutory safety limits on the number of passengers that can travel on trains. For commuter routes into London and Edinburgh train operators are required to keep overcrowding within specified thresholds. All trains in use have a nominal capacity, and operators must plan their services to ensure that the aggregated number of Passenger's In Excess of Capacity is kept to 3 per cent. over the morning and evening peaks or 4.5 per cent. for either peak in isolation. Train operators conduct annual passenger counts to demonstrate compliance. If the thresholds are breached the company is required to produce an action plan to remedy the problem.

Boundary Changes

Mr. Wyatt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will decide on the recommendations of the Local Government Commission regarding the boundary changes in the Swale borough council area; and when he will issue an order with regard to such changes. [4609]

Dr. Whitehead: I have made the preliminary decision to accept the recommendations of the Local Government Commission for Swale borough council without amendment. We are now consulting on a draft Order which, if made, would give effect to the Commission's recommendations. Subject to the consultation I envisage making the Order implementing the revised electoral arrangements in Swale in the autumn.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to his answer of 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 1408W, concerning rough sleepers, how many rough sleepers are aged *(a)* under 16, *(b)* 16 to 25, *(c)* 26 to 35, *(d)* 36 to 45, *(e)* 46 to 55, *(f)* 56 to 65, *(g)* 66 to 75 and *(h)* over 75 years. [4182]

Ms Keeble: "Coming in from the Cold", the Government's strategy on tackling rough sleeping, has delivered a raft of policies and services that are preventing vulnerable people coming on to the streets and rebuilding the lives of former rough sleepers.

The RSU has introduced a range of services in London to help vulnerable rough sleepers off the streets. A recent analysis of rough sleeper ages recorded by London Contact and Assessment Teams from 1 December 2000 to 31 March 2001 showed that around 40 per cent. of rough sleepers were aged between 26 and 35, with roughly 20 per cent. aged between 16 and 25, and 36 and 45. Around 10 per cent. were aged between 46 and 55 and roughly 10 per cent. were aged over 56 years of age, of which a very small percentage were between 66 and 75 and over 75. Contact and Assessment Teams found no rough sleepers under 16 during the period.

A similar picture showing the greatest proportion of rough sleeping in the 26–35 age band is also found in other areas of the country.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the Information Technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3508]

Mr. Byers: The information my right hon. Friend requests is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

M25 (Resurfacing)

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will publish the timetable for decision making and the subsequent development and execution of plans to resurface the M25. [4562]

Mr. Jamieson: I have asked the Chief Executive of the Highways Agency, Mr. Tim Matthews, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Tim Matthews to Mr. Humfrey Malins, dated 17 July 2001:

The Transport Minister, David Jamieson, has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about plans to resurface the M25.

The Highways Agency have published a leaflet giving advance notice of roadworks, including resurfacing, on the M25 motorway. The leaflet, which is updated quarterly, is widely available and currently covers the period July to September 2001. A copy is enclosed and copies have been placed in the Library.

The trunk road network is regularly monitored by the Highways Agency who will continue to make maintenance a priority over the next 10 years, with a maintenance programme of around £7 billion between 2001–10.

If you would like more details: Peter Rix in the Agency's Dorking Office will be able to help. His telephone number is 01306 878356.

Fleet Driver Training

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what discussions he has had with the Driving Standards Agency regarding fleet driver training and the applicability of police advanced training standards based on the National/ International Roadcraft Manual; and if he will make a statement. [4563]

Mr. Jamieson: When setting appropriate standards for fleet driver training we will consider carefully all comments received in response to the recent consultation exercise undertaken by the Driving Standards Agency, together with the work that the Agency has been undertaking in partnership with the police service developing national standards for police drivers.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what consultations the Driving Standards Agency is undertaking regarding fleet driver training; and when these consultations will be concluded. [4561]

Mr. Jamieson: The Driving Standards Agency issued a consultation paper in February about registering driving instructors who specialize in fleet driver training. The consultation period ended in May. Responses are now being considered together with our proposals for the wider reform of the regulation of driver instruction, which was announced in our Road Safety Strategy: "Tomorrow's Roads—Safer for Everyone," and suggestions for improving "work related" road safety. I hope to be in a position to make announcements later in the year.

Jubilee Line

David Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on how many weekdays this year the Jubilee underground line has been run without interruption. [4504]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground who inform me the standard they used to measure "without interruption" is that there are no service delays of 15 minutes or more. They have provided the following information for this financial year to date (1 April 2001 until 23 June 2001): the Jubilee line has run for 24 days out of 56 without interruption. The 24 days does not include four bank holidays which are treated as weekends rather than weekdays. Of the remaining 32 days, there were three in which the delays were attributable to external factors, such as a person on the track, and two where suspect packages caused delays.

Regional Chambers

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the outcome was of the Government's consultation on the proposed fund for regional chambers. [4971]

Mr. Raynsford: We have had a very positive response to the consultation on strengthening the regions which my right hon. Friends the Deputy Prime Minister and the Chancellor launched earlier this year.

I am therefore announcing today the go-ahead for the new £15 million fund for regional chambers—£5 million this year, and in each of the next two years. This will help them to enhance their role in providing regional input to, and scrutinising, the plans and work of the Regional Development Agencies, and to develop their position as the strategic focal point for the regions. The aim is to provide a stronger framework for representing the regions' views, not to impose burdensome new procedures on the RDAs or others.

In 2001–02, £500,000 is available for each chamber to develop its scrutiny role, with a further £1 million set aside for initiatives, supported by the chambers collectively, on setting up the new regime. While we envisage that bids would normally be for the first year only, we have not ruled out the possibility of bids for two, or even three, years' worth of funding where that is what the chambers want. The deadline for receiving bids has been extended to 29 July.

Detailed arrangements for allocating the funding in the following two years will be settled in the light of further discussions with the chambers. The future of the funding beyond the current three-year period will be a matter for the next spending review.

Local Government Commission for England

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made on the transfer of the Local Government Commission for England to the Electoral Commission; and if he will make a statement. [4972]

Mr. Raynsford: We have now consulted the Electoral Commission, the Local Government Commission for England and other interested parties, on a draft of an order to be made under section 18 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, which would provide for the transfer of functions with effect from 1 April 2002. In the light of comments received, our firm intention is now, subject to parliamentary approval of a draft, to make this order as soon as practicable.

Flooding (Kimpton)

Mr. Lilley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will provide financial assistance to North Hertfordshire district council

under the Bellwin Scheme in respect of costs incurred following the severe flooding in the village of Kimpton on 24 and 25 February. [4973]

Mr. Raynsford: I am satisfied that financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme is justified in the case of North Hertfordshire district council, given the exceptional nature of flooding. A scheme will, therefore be established under section 155 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Grant will be paid to cover 100 per cent. of the eligible costs above a threshold, which the authority has incurred in dealing with the flooding.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Solicitor-General if she will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by her Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by her Department. [3502]

The Solicitor-General: The information is as follows:

Crown Prosecution Service

A list of contracts awarded by the Crown Prosecution Service since 1993 is shown in the table. Records are not available for the period before April 1993.

Serious Fraud Office

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) signed a PFI contract with IBM in January 1998 to develop an integrated document management system for the SFO. As an additional service, IBM took on the management of the internal IT services. This latter contract was to run for seven years, with the option to extend for a further three years. The estimated value of the contract over its life was £15 million. Since 1998 £4.8 million has been paid to IBM. In September 2000 a variation to the contract was agreed under which IBM continued to provide internal IT systems for a further three years.

In 2000 it was recognised by SFO and IBM that it was no longer appropriate to continue with the development of the document management system due to changes in the SFO's business environment and in technology. No payments have been made to IBM in respect of their work on the integrated document management system.

Treasury Solicitor's Department

The Treasury Solicitor's Department has not entered into any information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 since April 1991.

Project	*Estimated and actual cost (£ million)*	*Estimated and actual completion date*	*Major contractor*	*Other contractors and consultants*
SCOPE Case Tracking System	Est. 8.0 Act. 10.6	Est. March 1994 Act. April 1997	Unisys	
SPIRE Payroll System	Est. 3.0 Act. 3.0	August 1996 August 1996	ADP Chessington[1]	
Finance System	Est. 2.1 Act. 2.3	Est. April 1997 Act. April 1997	HBOC	
Connect 42 Office Automation	[2]Est. 18.0 Act. 23.5	Est. July 2001 Planned November 2001	Integris[3]	MG Admiral[4]; DSCe Integration Ltd.; Donaldson Ericsson Ltd.; Farebrother Engineering Services Ltd.; GCat Computacentre (UK) Ltd.; Harold Palfreyman Ltd.; Hays Accountancy Personnel; Xansa UK Ltd.[5]; Parity Resources Ltd.; SQA-Herman Miller Ltd.; Workplace by Design Ltd.; Yale Data Management Consultants Ltd.

[1] Formerly Chessington Computer Services
[2] Plus £5.5 million expenditure on ergonomic furniture, building and electrical works
[3] Formerly Bull Information Systems
[4] Formerly Admiral Management Service
[5] Formerly Kermon Management Consultants

Homosexual Convictions (Appeal to ECHR)

Dr. Iddon: To ask the Solicitor-General if the appeal made by five of the men convicted at Bolton Crown court of homosexual activity in private has been listed for a hearing at the European Court of Human Rights; and if it is the British Government's intention to defend the appeal. [3460]

Mr. Keith Bradley: I have been asked to respond on behalf of the Solicitor-General. The case of Connell and others *v.* UK has not been listed for hearing by the European Court of Human Rights. The court has extended the period in which the Government can submit written observations on the case to allow it to negotiate a friendly settlement with the applicants. We are actively pursuing such a settlement with the applicants' representatives.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Prime Minister when he last travelled on the London underground in the course of his official duties. [3671]

The Prime Minister: I travel making the most efficient and cost-effective arrangements, and use the underground as and when appropriate.

Energy Policy Review

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the expertise available to the energy policy review. [3963]

The Prime Minister: The PIU energy policy review will draw on expertise from:

the energy review team led by Nick Hartley, on secondment from OXERA;

the advisory group chaired by the Minister for Industry and Energy;

Government bodies including central Departments and FCO posts; and

an experts group consisting of academics and other experts.

Details of the energy review team, including short biographical notes, and the full membership of the advisory group will be published on the PIU website next week. The membership of the experts group will also be posted on the website.

As the project proceeds, the review team will commission discrete research projects as required, receive submissions from key organisations and meet with stakeholders.

Sustainable Development

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister which is the lead Department for delivering the Government's sustainable development policy following the reorganisation of Government Departments; and how his office deals with sustainability issues. [3949]

The Prime Minister: The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has the lead in driving forward UK sustainable development policy. However, delivery of sustainable development remains, as in the last Parliament, a cross-Government responsibility. That is why we have established a committee of Green Ministers from every Department, ENV(G), to consider the impact on sustainable development of Government policies and improve the performance of Departments in contributing to sustainable development. In that way we can ensure that sustainable development is integrated into decision making across Government, including in my office.

Sellafield

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations he has received in respect of nuclear reprocessing at Sellafield. [3955]

The Prime Minister: I understand that I have received a small number of representations.

Peers

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 566W, which peers created since 2 May 1997 were working peers; and which were not. [4369]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* All peers are appointed in the expectation that they will make a valuable contribution to the work of the House of Lords.

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to distinguish formally between those peers that *(a)* were and *(b)* were not ennobled through the Appointments Commission. [4368]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* None. All peers have the same status. With the exception of peerages created to enable individuals to serve as Ministers, all recommendations that I make to the Queen are referred to the House of Lords Appointments Commission for scrutiny. This includes all recommendations from leaders of political parties, and a very limited number of recommendations for holders of high public office. The decision on whether to recommend candidates in these last two categories rests with me, unlike those non-political recommendations proposed by the Commission itself, which I submit automatically to the Queen.

Srebrenica Massacre

David Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what plans the heads of Government of European Union member states have to mark the sixth anniversary of the massacre at Srebrenica. [4509]

The Prime Minister: The sixth anniversary of the massacre at Srebrenica took place on 11 July. EU Ambassadors in Sarajevo, including the British Ambassador, attended the commemorative event and unveiling of a memorial stone, funded by the British Government, to the victims of the massacre.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Capitol Publishing

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations her Department has received on the homeworking company Capitol Publishing. [3382]

Miss Melanie Johnson: We have checked through the Department's records in relation to homeworking activities for the last 12 months and can find no record of any representations received on Capitol Publishing.

Miners' Compensation

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many claims for miners' compensation are outstanding in *(a)* Cynon Valley and *(b)* the rest of Wales. [3230]

Mr. Wilson: IRISC, the Department's claims handlers, have registered 3,559 outstanding claims in respect of respiratory disease in the region of Cynon Valley as defined by the postcodes with prefixes CF 37, 44 and 45. There are 25,155 outstanding claims in the rest of Wales.

With regards to vibration white finger, VWF, there are 1,736 outstanding claims in Cynon Valley and 11,641 outstanding claims in the rest of Wales.

Following recent significant progress, the rate of assessments has increased from 8,000 at the beginning of the year to over 25,000 now. In Wales alone assessments have increased from 2,000 to 5,000. Around 500 claims a week are now being reviewed following the Medical Assessment Process.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by her Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by her Department. [3507]

Ms Hewitt: The information requested by my right hon. Friend which is readily available from central records is listed in the table. In several cases contracts are still running and a final cost figure cannot yet be provided. Expenditure within some contracts cannot be precisely estimated, because it is affected by volume of business or because the contracts concerned allow the development of solutions to changing business requirements not originally foreseeable. In no contracts were consultants retained (or are there plans to retain consultants) beyond completion of their assigned tasks.

	Original		*Actual*		
Contract	*Cost (£ million)*	*Completion*	*Cost (£ million)*	*Completion*	*Contractor*
Mainframe computer services	6.0	1995	6.0	1995	Capita Managed Services
Mainframe computer services	6.3	1999	6.3	1999	Cap Gemini
Mainframe computer services	8.0	2004	[1]—	[2]—	Hyder Business Services
Document processing (devpmt)	1.0	2000	1.0	2000	IBM UK
Document processing (support)	1.8	2000	1.8	2000	IBM UK
Document image storage (devpmt)	1.0	1997	1.0	1997	IBM UK
Document image storage (support)	1.5	2002	[1]—	[2]—	IBM UK
Internet managed services	6.0	2002	[1]—	[2]—	Orchid Telematics Ltd.
Financial Systems Application	1.6	2006	[1]—	[2]—	QSP Group plc
Local Office Information System	5.1	1994	5.4	1995	Sequent Computer Systems
Batch Accounting and Nominal Ledger Control System	0.6	1994	0.8	1996	AMP Systems Ltd.
Local Office Ledger Accounting	0.6	1996	0.7	1996	Radius Computer Services
Integrated Bibliographic and Image System	1.9	1999	1.9	2001	ICL Ltd.
Open Individual Export Licence system development	0.6	2001	[1]—	[2]—	SEMA
Export Control Licensing System (ECLIPS)	0.7	1993	0.9	1995	UNISYS
CWC Database System	0.5	1995	0.7	1996	Cap Gemini
IT support	1.1	2003	[1]—	[2]—	Cap Gemini
IT services	2.5	2014	[1]—	[2]—	ICL
Data Communication Services	1.1	2006	[1]—	[2]—	Cable and Wireless
OSPREY Office System	23.1	1999	24.1	1999	ICL Ltd.
Electronic Government via Administrative Re-engineering	200	2014	[1]—	[2]—	ICL Ltd.
Century Date Change (Year 2000) Support	0.5	1999	0.5	1999	CMG Ltd.
Personnel and Related Information System	0.8	1997	—	[3]1999	Unisys Ltd.

[1] On track
[2] Still running
[3] Contract terminated

Note:
The table excludes details of an IT services contract let to Gap Gemini which ran from 1995 to 1999. This was a 'framework' contract covering a number of projects and services of varying values. Information on this contract would involve disproportionate cost arising from the need for a manual search of relevant registered files

Broadcasters (Fair Trading)

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what powers the Office of Fair Trading has to prevent the abuse of market power by broadcasters. [4507]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Under UK competition law the Director General of Fair Trading is required to apply and enforce the provisions of the Competition Act 1998 to prevent conduct by one or more undertakings which amounts to the abuse of a dominant position in a market in the UK (or a part thereof) and which may affect trade within the UK (the Chapter II Prohibition).

Sub-Post Offices

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many sub-post offices closed in the first quarter of the 2001–02 financial year. [4656]

Ms Hewitt: I understand from Post Office Network that the figures are not yet available.

Business Regulation

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action she intends to take in respect of the reports *(a)* 'Economic Regulators' and *(b)* 'Local Shops: a Progress report on Small Firms Regulation'. [4754]

Ms Hewitt: We expect to publish Government responses to these two Better Regulation Task Force reports in September.

Enterprise Grants

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many enterprise grants were awarded in the south-west in *(a)* 2000 and *(b)* 2001. [4146]

Alan Johnson: The number of enterprise grants awarded in the south-west was *(a)* 13 in the calendar year 2000 and *(b)* 25 so far in the calendar year 2001.

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the size of the fund for enterprise grants in the south-west was in *(a)* 2000 and *(b)* 2001. [4145]

Alan Johnson: The budget for enterprise grants in the south-west was £450,000 in 2000–01. An indicative budget at the same level has been set for 2001–02.

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many enterprise grants were awarded to businesses in the Forest of Dean in *(a)* 2000 and *(b)* 2001. [4030]

Alan Johnson: The number of enterprise grants awarded in the Forest of Dean was *(a)* one in the calendar year 2000 and *(b)* nil so far in the calendar year 2001.

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the *(a)* largest and *(b)* smallest amount awarded in enterprise grant in the south-west in (i) 2000 and (ii) 2001. [4029]

Alan Johnson: The largest and smallest amounts awarded in enterprise grant in the south-west in the calendar year 2000 and so far in the calendar year 2001 were:

£

Enterprise grant	*2000*	*2001*
Largest	74,250	75,000
Smallest	1,815	1,150

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she last travelled on the London underground in the course of her official duties. [3686]

Ms Hewitt: In the course of my official duties, I travel using the most efficient and cost-effective mode of transport and travel on the underground as and when appropriate.

Energy Resources Review

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Performance and Innovation Unit's Energy Resources Review will examine the options set out in the report on interim storage of spent nuclear fuel, prepared by Harvard university and the university of Tokyo published in June. [3960]

Mr. Wilson: The review of energy policy will be considering what role, if any, the nuclear industry should play in meeting longer term environmental and security of supply objectives and will take into account any relevant information. I will refer the report referred to by my hon. Friend to the attention of the PIU team which is undertaking the review.

HEALTH

Older People

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what date the NHS and local councils will have concluded the work set out in paragraph 7.19 of the National Service Framework for Older People; and what he expects to be included in specialist residential care services. [4087]

Jacqui Smith: We are working with local councils, National Health Service agencies and care providers on an agreement to give greater direction to the commissioning of care for older people. This includes encouraging the development of specialist residential and nursing care services for people with dementia.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment the Task Force for Older People has made of delivery of the National Service Framework for older people to date. [4082]

Jacqui Smith: The National Taskforce for Older People has an advisory role on the implementation of policy. It gives advice on the basis of its members' expertise in the delivery of frontline services. However, it does not have an executive role to monitor performance of the National Health Service or social services against National Service Framework targets. This task is undertaken by the officials responsible for NSF implementation and the information is fed through to taskforce members to inform their discussions.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the remit, membership and reporting lines of the national implementation group for the National Service Framework for Older People are; and how the group relates to the Task Force for Older People. [4078]

Jacqui Smith: A national implementation group for the National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People met during development of the NSF in March 2001. A group of officials from the National Health Service and social care regional offices together with departmental policy officials continues to meet regularly to plan and monitor implementation of a range of policies, including the NSF. The discussions of this group are also fed through to the members of the Older People's Taskforce.

The Taskforce for Older People has an advisory role on the implementation of policy. It gives advice on the basis of its members' experience in their delivery of frontline services, which is fed into the policy making process. It does not have an executive role to monitor performance.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the extra numbers of staff required to establish the falls services described in paragraphs 6.37 and 6.38 of the National Service Framework for Older People; and what assessment he has made of the numbers of such staff *(a)* already trained and *(b)* in training. [4084]

Jacqui Smith: The detailed assessment of the number and appropriate skill mix of staff teams to establish the falls service described in Standard Six of the National Service Framework for Older People will be undertaken by the National Workforce Development Board, informed by the Care Group Workforce Team for older people which will be established shortly.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out how many *(a)* consultants in old age medicine and *(b)* consultants in rehabilitation there were in each of the last three years for which figures exist; how his Department calculated its estimate of old age medicine consultants on page 139 of the National Service Framework for Older People; and what his estimate is of the number of extra rehabilitation consultants required. [4086]

Jacqui Smith: The number of consultants employed in old age medicine and rehabilitation are set out in the table.

There are already a number of specialist registrars, based on the Specialty Workforce Advisory Group's assessment of demand, training in old age psychiatry and geriatric medicine. The figures quoted in the National Service Framework reflect the increases that would be achieved if those trainees are employed as consultants as they complete their training. The increases are offset by estimates of the annual number of retirements

The number of extra rehabilitation consultants required will be determined by the National Workforce Development Board informed by the Care Group Workforce Team for older people.

Hospital medical consultants within the geriatric and rehabilitation medicine specialities

Numbers

England as at 30 September	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*
Geriatric medicine	710	720	770
Rehabilitation medicine	70	70	80

Notes:
Figures are rounded to the nearest ten.
Source:
Department of Health medical and dental workforce census

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects the assessment working group to provide the further evidence referred to in paragraph 2.44 of the National Service Framework for Older People. [4085]

Jacqui Smith: Guidance on the introduction of a single assessment process across health and social care promised in the National Service Framework for Older People will be published shortly.

Respite Health Care

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will define *(a)* respite health care and *(b)* specialist health care support, set out in paragraph 16 of HSC 2001/015: LAC (2001)18. [4090]

Jacqui Smith: Respite health care is typically understood to describe packages of care to provide respite for the main carer of a person where the care being provided is primarily health care, for example continence care.

Specialist health care support is typically understood to describe the expertise of health care professionals available to patients with more specialised health care needs, such as tissue viability or continence, or the maintenance of domiciliary equipment.

Patient Consultation

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for reforming patient consultation in the national health service; and if he will make a statement. [1841]

Ms Blears: Sections 7 to 11 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 make provision for strengthening patient and public consultation and involvement in the operation of the national health service. Local authority overview and scrutiny committees will scrutinise the NHS including decisions on local NHS reorganisations and service change. NHS bodies will have a statutory duty to make arrangements with a view to securing that the public are involved in and consulted on the planning of NHS services and decisions affecting the operation of those services. We intend to build on these foundations to make sure patients and the public are at the heart of shaping and developing NHS services in the future.

National Cardiothoracic Transplant Service

Mr. Brady: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision will be made to meet the additional travelling expenses of transplant patients receiving extended post-operative care following the reorganisation of the National Cardiothoracic Transplant Service. [2832]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* Under the hospital travel costs scheme, transplant patients are treated in the same way as any other patients receiving treatment at specialist centres.

Patients who are in receipt of benefits including weekly Income Support, Working Families Tax Credit, Disabled Persons Tax Credit, or Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance are entitled to receive help with their hospital travel costs. Other patients may be eligible for full or partial reimbursement on the basis of a low income and patients who would not normally fall into the low income category might become entitled to receive help if they have to travel long distances frequently.

Antidepressants

Dr. Naysmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the World Health Organisation figures relating to SSRI antidepressants and benzodiazepines; and if he will issue further guidance to GPs on the prescribing of these drugs. [2955]

Ms Blears: The Medicines Control Agency (MCA) has on-line access to the World Health Organisation (WHO) data on adverse drug reactions (ADRs) and routinely evaluates these data. MCA contributes all United Kingdom suspected ADR reports to the WHO database. Prescribing information on selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and benzodiazepines in the UK is consistent with the known safety profiles of these medicines.

Guidance on how to prescribe SSRIs and benzodiazepines, including information on dose and duration of treatment and possible adverse effects, is available in the authorised summary of product characteristics for these medicines. Guidance is also provided to general practitioners in the British National Formulary.

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his assessment is of the therapeutic value of antidepressants compared with placebos. [2377]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* There is a large scientific literature that indicates that antidepressant medication is superior in efficacy to placebo. This is particularly the case where depression is more severe. Placebos have been noted to be of some benefit and there is a range of so-called non-specific factors (care, interest and attention from the clinician) which are relevant.

An example is the National Institute of Mental Health Treatment of Depression Research Program in the United States reported in the mid 1990s. They compared two forms of psychotherapy, antidepressant medication (imipramine) and placebo. The latter two treatments also involved "clinical management" which included a weekly meeting with the clinician to discuss symptoms, side effects and progress. For mild depression no significant differences were found between the treatment groups. However for the more severely affected patients the antidepressant treatment was the most effective.

Early studies with tricyclic antidepressant drugs showed that 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. of patients with depression will respond to antidepressant drug treatment as compared with 15 per cent. to 30 per cent. of those treated with placebo. The response to antidepressant medication will take at least two weeks but in some cases up to four weeks or more. The newer antidepressant drugs have been shown to have similar, but not greater, efficacy to the older style medications. The advantage of the newer drugs lies in lower toxicity and different side effects.

RSI and Fibromyalgia

Dr. Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines he has issued to general practitioners and hospitals regarding RSI and fibromyalgia; and what recent clinical studies of these have been commissioned by the Department. [2960]

Mr. Hutton: The Department has not issued guidelines in respect of repetitive strain injury and fibromyalgia. However we are constantly reviewing the subjects in the light of research which is being commissioned. One such research project is entitled "A Randomised Control Trial of exercise prescription in fibromyalgia" which is due to be completed in September 2001.

The Department also provides support funding for research commissioned by the research councils and charities that takes place in the national health service. We are currently supporting 13 such ongoing projects on fibromyalgia and one on RSI. Full details can be found on the national research register.

National Institute for Clinical Excellence

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what means NICE defines and identifies experts to advise their appraisal committees. [3289]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* Details of the appraisal process are a matter for the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. NICE has recently published details of the process, including a full description of the selection of experts. Experts are now nominated by stakeholder bodies, and the selection is made by the chairman of the appraisal committee using published criteria.

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the membership of the Appraisal Committee following recent appeals against NICE. [4166]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* No. Appeals are a part of the Institute's process for developing robust and reliable guidance.

Road Accident Casualties

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money NHS hospitals have claimed from motor insurance providers to recover the cost of treating road accident casualties over the last three years. [4072]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Prior to 5 April 1999, National Health Service trusts had responsibility for collecting charges for hospital treatment following road traffic accidents under the provisions of sections 157 and 158 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. The system changed with the introduction of the Road Traffic (NHS Charges) Act 1999, which came into effect on 5 April 1999 and there is now a new centralised recovery system, which is undertaken by the Compensation Recovery Unit (CRU). The table gives income collected for the last three years during which the system for recovery changed.

NHS trusts (England) income from activities: Road Traffic Act

	£ million
1998–99[1]	19.6
1999–2000[2]	26.4
2000–01[3]	67

[1] Income collected under the old scheme taken from NHS Trusts (England) Summarisation Schedules.

[2] Transitional year, this is income collected by the CRU under the new scheme as other income received by trusts as a spill over from the old arrangements cannot be identified separately in Trust Accounts.

[3] Income collected by the CRU under the new scheme.

Fraud (NHS)

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he will take to tackle the rise in fraud in the NHS. [4612]

Mr. Hutton: Losses to fraud in the National Health Service have fallen since the creation of the NHS Counter Fraud Service (CFS) in 1998 and will continue to fall. The NHS CFS have achieved a reduction of £48 million in losses to patient fraud within pharmaceutical services and have recovered over £5 million within cases of fraud by pharmaceutical contractors.

The NHS CFS objectives are to minimise all fraud and corruption in the NHS and to ensure that money is not lost to fraud but is spent on providing better patient care and services. We will continue to work closely with all the associations representing those that deliver or use NHS services. This inclusive approach means we will be able to continue to take positive action that is in the best interests of the NHS.

Children Act

Dr. Naysmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Government will report on the operation of the Children Act 1989. [4628]

Jacqui Smith: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Health, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills and the Lord Chancellor have today published a report on the Children Act 1989, pursuant to their duties under section 83 of the Act. Copies are available in the Library and Vote Office; and are being sent to all local authorities in England and to a wide range of organisations. A copy of this document can also be found at the following website address: www.doh.gov.uk/scg/childrenactreport2000.htm.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he plans to fulfil the pledge made in the NHS Plan to introduce free nursing in nursing homes. [5031]

Jacqui Smith: We have today issued draft guidance and directions on implementing free nursing care in England and copies have been placed in the Library. The Department will introduce this from 1 October for those who pay for their care themselves. This will bring financial benefits to approximately 35,000 people who currently pay for their care from their own resources and could save up to just over £5,000 in a full year for some people.

It will also end the anomaly of people having to pay for care that is provided free of charge by the National Health Service in other settings.

Those people whose care is currently provided by councils and who receive free nursing care anyway will receive it free via the NHS from April 2002.

Organ Donors

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people in the United Kingdom of Asian heritage have registered as organ donors; what percentage of the total this represents; and if he will make a statement; [3840]

(2) how many patients of Asian heritage are waiting for organ transplants; and what percentage of the total number of patients this represents. [3839]

Mr. Hutton: The National Health Service organ donor register does not provide any information on ethnicity.

The Department launched the South Asian community campaign in 1999 to recruit more donors from the community. The campaign involves a variety of community lead initiatives, using advertising in the broadcast media, press as well as public relations activities. This campaign has generated a great deal of interest—both in transplantation and in preventing the underlying causes of renal failure. The campaign is ongoing.

Patients on the national organ transplant waiting lists at centres in the United Kingdom is shown in the table.

Organ awaited	*Total*	*Total where ethnic origin is recorded*	*Asian/ Asian-British*	*Asian/Asian-British as a percentage of total where origin recorded*
Renal (kidney, pancreas kidney/pancreas)	6,220	5,793	827	13.9
Cardiothoracic (heart, lungs, heart/lungs)	464	430	18	4.2
Liver	159	157	14	8.9
Total	6,843	6,557	859	13.1

Source:
This information was provided by United Kingdom Transplant

Acute Services

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent assessment he has made of staffing levels in acute NHS hospitals in respect of the ability of the service to provide comprehensive diagnosis and treatment within the agreed national clinical standards. [4342]

Mr. Hutton: The work force commitments to recruit additional nurses, doctors and therapists in the NHS Plan take account of the need to increase the number of staff necessary to deliver diagnosis and treatment within the agreed clinical standards set out in the National Service Frameworks.

Nurses

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the support available to those adults on low incomes and with child care needs who wish to enrol as *(a)* a trainee nurse and *(b)* for a nursing qualification. [4344]

Mr. Hutton: National Health Service funded students are provided with a favourable level of non-repayable bursary and have their contribution to tuition fees, currently £1,050, paid in full on their behalf.

The diploma level route into nursing provides a generous level of bursary which is non-means-tested. No contribution is therefore required from the family income.

The means-tested bursary, available to degree level students, targets low income families as it provides a higher level of support for those in the greatest need. In addition, degree level students are also eligible for assistance through Student Loans (available from the Student Loan Company), Hardship Loans and NHS Hardship Grants.

Although the NHS bursary does not specifically provide help with childcare costs, extra allowances are available for single parents and for those who have dependants (including children).

A number of NHS hospitals have started schemes where they employ individuals as healthcare assistants/ nursing auxiliaries, train them to entry level standard for nurse training and allow them to retain their salary while they undertake the diploma nurse training programme.

Student families on low income are also eligible to claim Working Families Tax Credit.

Assistance with childcare costs is also provided for some students through charitable organisations.

Ministers aim to provide the widest possible access to nurse training, and continue to take a close interest in ensuring that student support arrangements promote this objective.

Bursaries (Nurses)

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the estimated saving is from the proposal to withdraw bursaries from nursing students from non-European countries. [4334]

Mr. Hutton: No cost saving is anticipated.

The change to the student support arrangements was not introduced as a cost-saving measure but to bring conditions for access to the National Health Service bursary for applicants to diploma nursing and midwifery courses into line with those for degree nurses, and students in higher education as a whole.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the impact on the recruitment of nurses in the United Kingdom of the proposal to withdraw bursaries from student nurses from non-European countries. [4332]

Mr. Hutton: We do not expect any impact on student nurse recruitment.

The change to the National Health Service bursary regulations requiring applicants to diploma level pre-registration courses in England to meet a prior residence requirement, will be phased in over a 15 month period. The staging of the changes will minimise the impact on higher education institutions. This change will bring diploma level courses into line with degree courses.

In areas which traditionally have recruited significant numbers of students from beyond the European Union, NHS workforce confederations will work closely with Higher Education Institutions to ensure that places on nursing/midwifery courses continue to be filled.

A 10.4 per cent. increase in the basic rate of bursary, effective from September 2001, will also assist in the recruitment and retention of nursing and midwifery students.

This year we are on course to deliver just under 21,000 nursing and midwifery training places, in English higher education institutions, nearly 6,000 more than four years ago.

By 2004, on current plans, we expect more than 45,000 new nurses and midwives to come out of training.

Student nurse recruitment in other parts of the United Kingdom is a matter for the devolved assemblies.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the provision of bursaries to nursing students from non-European countries. [4335]

Mr. Hutton: With effect from 1 November 2001 applicants to diploma level pre-registration courses in nursing and midwifery in England who wish to access the National Health Service bursary will be expected to meet a prior residence requirement. This brings the NHS bursary regulations for these courses into line with those for degree level nursing and midwifery courses, and for higher education as a whole.

The changes are staged over a 15 month period in order to minimise the impact. In areas which traditionally have recruited significant numbers of students from beyond the European Union, NHS workforce confederations will work closely with higher education institutes to ensure that places on nursing/midwifery courses continue to be filled.

Officials consulted fully with the representative bodies for higher education before Ministers decided to change the residence requirement.

Ministers will continue to take a close interest in the effective operation of these new arrangements.

Strategic Health Authorities

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will announce the borders of the new strategic health authorities. [4132]

Mr. Hutton: The boundaries of the new strategic health authorities, of which we expect there to be around 30, will be announced after a formal public consultation that will take place in the autumn.

Hospital Readmissions

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were readmitted to hospital within two months of being discharged for each of the past 10 years. [4061]

Mr. Hutton: Information for 1998–99 on emergency re-admissions to hospital within 28 days of discharge was published in graphical form in July 2000 in "Quality and

performance in the National Health Service: NHS Performance Indicators", copies of which are available in the Library. Standardised rates for England for 1998–99 and for the years 1997–98 and 1996–97 are available from the Department's website: http:/www.doh.gov.uk/nhsperformanceindicators/hlpi2000/h1137.html.

Bed Blocking

Mr. Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many operations have been cancelled in east Sussex, in each quarter of 2000 and 2001, as a result of hospital beds being occupied by *(a)* delayed discharge patients who were awaiting social services funding or assessment and *(b)* delayed discharge patients who had fully funded social services packages arranged. [4022]

Ms Blears *[holding answer sent 16 July 2001]:* Information is not collected centrally in the format requested.

Information on the number of operations cancelled at the last minute for non-medical reasons, and breaches to the standard to re-admit patients within one month following such cancellations, are collected on a quarterly basis at health authority level and placed in the Library. The latest figures cover the five quarters up to quarter 4 (January to March 2001) of the 2000–01 financial year.

Mr. Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many acute hospital beds were unavailable in east Sussex to incoming patients as a result of their occupation by *(a)* delayed discharge patients who were awaiting social services funding and *(b)* delayed discharge patients who had fully funded social services packages arranged, in each quarter of 2000 and 2001. [4023]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Bed statistics are not collected centrally in the format requested. Figures on the average daily number of beds for each national health service trust are published annually in "Bed Availability and Occupancy, England", copies of which are in the Library.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act

John Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish an annual report under section 22 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. [4626]

Jacqui Smith: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is publishing today the annual report for 1999–2000, and copies are being placed in the Library. The report covers research and development work carried out by (or on behalf of) Government Departments in relation to equipment that might increase the range of activities and independence or well-being of disabled people, and in particular such equipment that might improve their indoor and outdoor mobility.

The current report places such research in the context of the NHS Plan, and outlines the role of assistive technology in making independent living easier for older people and people with disabilities. The report describes the wide range of Government-funded projects supporting the development, introduction and evaluation of assistive technology. Relevant projects funded by the European Union are also listed.

Hospital Waiting Times (Essex)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in the Mid Essex Hospital Services Trust area were waiting for in-patient treatment for *(a)* more than 18 months, *(b)* up to 18 months, *(c)* up to 15 months and *(d)* up to 12 months on (i) 31 March 1997 and (ii) 31 May 2001. [3756]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is shown in the table.

The number of patients waiting more than 18 months, up to 18 months, up to 15 months, and up to 12 months for in-patient treatment at Mid Essex Hospital Services National Health Service Trust on 31 March 1997 and 31 May 2001

	End of March 1997	*End of May 2001*
Number waiting over 18 months for in-patient treatment	0	0
Number waiting less than 18 months for in-patient treatment	8,391	8,868
Number waiting less than 15 months for in-patient treatment	8,381	8,676
Number waiting less than 12 months for in-patient treatment	8,287	8,159

Source:
KH07 quarterly return/monthly returns

Nursing Care

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what deadline strategic health authorities will have to align continuing NHS health care criteria, described in HSC 2001/015: LAC (2001)18. [4093]

Jacqui Smith: It is intended that strategic health authorities will be established from April 2002. Any alignment of continuing care criteria that may be required should be an early priority of the new SHAs. This should build on the request in Health Service Circular 2001/015: Local Authority Circular (2001)18 that existing health authorities ensure that continuing health care policies comply with the new guidance. Any action arising from this review should be commenced from October 2001.

Carers

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 343W, concerning carers, for what reasons his Department is revising the Hospital Discharge Workbook; what status the workbook has; and how compliance with its guidance is monitored. [4181]

Jacqui Smith: The Hospital Discharge Workbook issued in 1994, needs to be updated to take into account the new policy changes introduced by the NHS Plan, including the use of intermediate care services.

The workbook is a framework for good practice. Health authorities, in consultation with local authorities, general practitioners and other agencies, should ensure that

hospitals and community health services keep discharge procedures under review and should regularly audit performance.

Stroke Patients

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans he has to ensure that all those who suffer a stroke are admitted to a specialist stroke unit; [3922]

(2) what measures he plans to increase the number of specialist stroke units in hospitals; [3921]

(3) if he will take steps to improve the quality of stroke aftercare. [3923]

Mr. Hutton: The Department published the National Service Framework for Older People (NSF) on 27 March 2001. Its sets out a comprehensive strategy to ensure fair, high quality integrated health and social care and reduce variations in services for older people.

The NSF addresses a number of specific conditions, which are significant for, although not limited to, older people. It includes a standard on stroke and service models, which should apply to all who need them regardless of age.

The stroke standard provides for stroke prevention, immediate care, early and continuing rehabilitation, and long-term support as components of a service model for integrated specialist stroke services which will build on current arrangements and be in place in all general hospitals which care for people with stroke by April 2004.

Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he *(a)* has taken and *(b)* plans to take to give assistance to carers of people with Alzheimer's and dementia. [3925]

Jacqui Smith: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 2 July 2001, *Official Report,* columns 30–31W.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he *(a)* has taken and *(b)* plans to take to improve the quality of life of those with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. [3924]

Jacqui Smith: The National Service Framework for Older People, launched in March 2001, will, for the first time, set national standards and define service models for older people's health and social care, driving up the quality and reducing the variations of that care.

Doctor Numbers

Mr. Hopkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* doctors and *(b)* consultants she estimates are employed full-time in private sector acute hospitals. [4419]

Mr. Hutton: Information about the number of doctors and consultants employed in the private sector is not collected centrally.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Palestinian Authority

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what action she is taking to encourage economic development in the Palestinian Authority areas. [1274]

Clare Short: The UK is working within the middle east peace process to support the building of the Palestinian nation's ability to generate economic and social development that benefits the poor. DFID's support includes technical assistance to increase Palestinian capacity to negotiate with the Israelis on economic and other issues to build institutions and to improve health, education and water and sanitation services. DFID has recently approved a contribution of £1.5 million to the World bank's emergency employment generation programme to the West bank and Gaza Strip, aimed at protecting vulnerable groups from falling further into poverty.

However, economic and social benefits are being eroded by the continuing conflict. A report by the Office of the United Nations Special Co-ordinator for the period 28 September to 26 November 2000, estimated that confrontations, mobility restrictions, and border closures are costing the Palestinian economy at least US$8 million per day.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Burundi

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy on establishing a UN tribunal on Burundi; and if he will make a statement. [1403]

Mr. Bradshaw: We are concerned over growing instability in Burundi and continue to press all parties to make progress on implementing the Arusha peace process. The international community is not currently considering the establishment of an international criminal tribunal for Burundi. Issues of accountability arising from the conflict are part of the ongoing Burundi peace process.

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are being made to investigate war crimes and human rights abuses in Burundi; and if he will make a statement. [1404]

Mr. Bradshaw: Our emphasis now is on supporting the Arusha peace agreement, which offers the best chance for bringing peace and stability to Burundi. We support fully last week's UN Presidential Statement (SPRST2001/17), which calls for the suspension of hostilities, and reaffirms the international community's concern over continuing human rights abuses and violations of humanitarian law.

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support he gives to NGOs and human rights groups investigating war crimes and human rights abuses in Rwanda and Burundi; and if he will make a statement. [1405]

Mr. Bradshaw: The UK is playing its role in supporting NGO groups working in Rwanda and Burundi. DFID are providing approximately £500,000 over three years to improve the quality of the judicial system. They also plan to establish a civil society fund to support local NGOs involved in human rights reconciliation activities. Our embassy in Kigali (Rwanda) uses a significant portion of its small grant scheme (worth £200,000) to support human rights NGOs in Rwanda and Burundi.

In 2001 the UK will provide the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda with over £3 million. The tribunal does significant work with victims and witnesses.

Ian Stillman

Mr. Laxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the case of Ian Stillman; and what action he has taken on his behalf. [2674]

Mr. Bradshaw: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about Mr. Stillman's welfare at a meeting on 26 June with the Indian High Commissioner and Prime Minister Vajpayee's Principal Secretary. The Indian High Commissioner asked for a written note highlighting our concerns and the Foreign Secretary duly wrote to the High Commissioner on 28 June.

We will continue to speak to the Indian authorities to ensure that his appeal is heard swiftly.

Israel

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken by the UK Government to encourage the Israeli Government to lift the blockades in the Israeli occupied areas of the West Bank and Gaza. [3232]

Mr. Bradshaw: We have serious concerns with the Israeli policy of closures on political, legal and humanitarian grounds. It is hard to justify the closures, even on the narrow security grounds which Israel presents. The closures radicalise the Palestinian population and fuel violence in the occupied territories. They cannot, therefore, achieve their stated purpose. We continue to urge Israel to lift the closures, bilaterally, in ministerial and official level meetings, and collectively with our EU partners in statements and in the political dialogue established by the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

Lifting the closures also forms part of the Mitchell Committee recommendations. It is vital that the parties move ahead with full and early implementation of those recommendations.

Macedonia

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial aid his Department has provided to the Government of Macedonia since 1 January. [2824]

Mr. MacShane: So far this year Foreign Office funding for projects in Macedonia amounts to £687,000. This money is to fund projects in the fields of stability, conflict prevention and human rights, each with a particular emphasis on inter-ethnic relations. A large proportion of this money was given for the construction of the South-East Europe University in Tetovo, a project sponsored by the OSCE to provide higher education in the Albanian language for the first time in Macedonia.

HMG are also backing local projects: £56,160 for a disability rights project and £30,000 for a project against institutional violence.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office funding is in addition to the Department for International Development's pledge of £5 million to provide for technical assistance programmes, over a three-year period, and the European Union's euro 90 million stability assistance programme.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last travelled on the London underground in the course of his official duties. [3675]

Mr. Straw: I have not travelled on London underground in the course of my official duties since my appointment as Foreign Secretary on 8 June.

Shageldy Atakov

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further contact he has had with the Turkmen Foreign Minister concerning the continuing incarceration of Shageldy Atakov; and what representations he has made to the Turkmen authorities concerning the persecution of Christians in Turkmenistan. [3837]

Peter Hain: Since the then Minister for Europe's reply to the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Dr. Tonge) on 11 May 2001, *Official Report*, column 452W, the US embassy, with the agreement of the Turkmen authorities, offered Mr. Atakov asylum in the US. Mr. Atakov rejected this offer. The UK, together with EU partners, continues regularly to raise the case of Mr. Atakov with the Turkmen authorities. At a meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on 21 June, the EU Presidency pressed the Turkmen OSCE representative for Mr. Atakov's release. We also seek every opportunity to raise with the Turkmen Foreign Ministry the wider issue of persecution of Christians in Turkmenistan. Our ambassador in Ashgabat will raise the issue when he makes his introductory call on the new Turkmen Foreign Minister, Rashid Meredov.

Hezbullah

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the kidnapping of Elchanan Tannenbaum by Hezbullah. [3806]

Mr. Bradshaw: This Government condemn hostage taking under any circumstances. On 3 May the then Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and the then Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), met the families of the reservist Colonel Tannenbaum kidnapped by Hezbullah on 4 October and the three soldiers kidnapped on 7 October. The Government are doing what they can to help and have raised these cases, and continues to do so, with the relevant countries in the region pressing particularly for

access to the hostages for the ICRC. We strongly support all efforts to secure the release of all hostages, particularly efforts led by the United Nations Secretary-General.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in his Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement; [3894]

(2) what the terms of reference are for the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement. [3978]

Peter Hain *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report,* column 689W.

EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he has had to discuss the impact on the English legal system of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. [2615]

Peter Hain: I have not met the Lord Chancellor to discuss this issue. The Charter of Rights is a political declaration. It is not legally binding. It is addressed to the EU Institutions, and to member states, only to the extent that they are implementing EU law.

War Crimes Tribunal

David Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with the authorities of Republika Srbska regarding bringing Radovan Karadzic and General Mladic to the international War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague; and if he will make a statement. [4508]

Mr. MacShane: Primary responsibility for detaining indictees rests with the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We take every opportunity to raise this issue with the appropriate authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including in Republika Srbska. They are in no doubt of the importance we attach to co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal. I discussed this issue myself with political leaders when I was in Sarajevo on 12–13 July. I also told Bosnian Serb media that Karadzic and Mladic should be handed over to The Hague. We remain committed to ensuring that all of those indicted for war crimes in former Yugoslavia, including Karadzic and Mladic, are brought to justice.

David Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the failure by NATO forces to arrest Radovan Karadzic and General Mladic. [4505]

Mr. MacShane: Primary responsibility for detaining indictees rests with the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. NATO SFOR troops are mandated to detain any indicted individual they encounter during their operations. To date NATO has detained 25 of those indicted, demonstrating its commitment to support The Hague tribunal's efforts to ensure that all of those indicted for war crimes in former Yugoslavia, including Karadzic and Mladic, are brought to justice. Of the 25 detentions so far, over half have been carried out or supported by UK forces.

WALES

Flooding (North Wales)

Mark Tami: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly about flooding in north Wales. [4130]

Mr. Paul Murphy: I meet the First Secretary regularly to discuss a range of issues, including the flooding in north Wales.

The Assembly responded urgently to the autumn 2000 floods by offering local authorities additional funding in support of both current and capital costs.

The Assembly has also commissioned a review of flood defence arrangements in Wales, to determine what steps are needed to improve existing arrangements.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last travelled on the London underground in the course of his official duties. [3681]

Mr. Paul Murphy: In an official capacity I last used the underground when I travelled to the Millennium Dome. It was the most efficient and cost-effective mode of travel. However, as Secretary of State for Wales I have few official engagements in London that require the use of the underground.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3510]

Mr. Paul Murphy: Since it was established on 1 July 1999, the information technology requirements of the Wales Office have been met by the National Assembly for Wales under the terms of a service level agreement.

There is no central record of contracts entered into by the former Welsh Office prior to that date. However, one contract in excess of £500,000 has been identified—OSIRIS, a contract under the Private Finance Initiative for provision of networked office automation facilities, for which the requested details are as follows:

original estimated cost—£20 million (excluding VAT);

original estimated completion date—this is a service contract of seven years duration which ends in January 2004;

actual cost—the contract has yet to reach its full term. It is estimated that expenditure by January 2004 will be £55 million (excluding VAT);

actual completion date—January 2004 (the contract has transferred to the National Assembly for Wales); and

supplier—Siemens Business Services.

The cost of the contract is dependent on the number of users of the system. User numbers have risen both as a result of exploiting the opportunities offered by IT for changes to working practices and also by a variety of steps which have been taken to strengthen the democratic process in Wales.

HOME DEPARTMENT

James Ashley

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost of the internal police investigations which were established following the shooting of James Ashley. [3136]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 10 July, 2001]:* I am informed by the Sussex Police Authority that they have reimbursed costs of £6,443 for the investigation led by the former Chief Constable of Hampshire into the conduct of senior Sussex officers; and that Sussex Police have reimbursed Kent Police £313,000 for the costs of the investigations of other aspects of the case. Those costs exclude the costs of Sussex officers involved, and the costs of legal advice for the Police Authority and the force.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigations have been initiated to discover the source of the leak of documents relating to the internal police investigations into the shooting of James Ashley; and if he will make a statement. [3137]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* These documents are the property of the Sussex Police Authority and Chief Constable, and it is for them to consider what investigations should take place. The Police Authority wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on 25 May about this. He replied on 15 June that investigations into possible criminal offences are a matter for the police.

Nurses

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for granting leave to remain for nurses recruited from abroad to work in the NHS after their initial contract has expired. [3383]

Angela Eagle: The Immigration Rules enable nurses recruited from abroad to apply for leave to remain for a period of up to five years once they have obtained full registration with the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and where a work permit has been issued for their employment. The work permit arrangements allow health sector employers to apply for work permits to recruit and retain nurses who are not nationals of a European Economic Area (EEA) state. These applications are granted provided the criteria set by Work Permits (UK) are met. In common with other work permit holders, indefinite leave to remain may be applied for and granted after four years and provided the other conditions specified in the Rules are met.

Extradition Requests

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on what date he last received an extradition request for Nadhmi Auchi; and for what reasons this request was refused; [4316]

(2) on how many occasions, and on what dates, since 1 May 1997, the French authorities have contacted *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Metropolitan Police concerning Nadhmi Auchi, with particular reference to Elf Aquitaine. [4315]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: For good and obvious reasons, it is our policy and practice not to comment, ahead of arrest, on whether an extradition request for a particular individual has been made or is under consideration. Neither in these matters do we comment on whether and what contacts have taken place with the authorities of other jurisdictions.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many extradition requests have been received from the French authorities since 1 May 1997; how many have been acceded to; how many have been refused; and how many are outstanding. [4317]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: Reliable statistics are available only from 1 January 1998. Since that date, the United Kingdom has received 22 extradition requests from the Government of France. The table provides for the same period the outcomes of French extradition requests, irrespective of when those were first received.

French extradition requests to UK since 1 January 1998

	Number
Fugitives surrendered to France	7
Fugitives discharged by courts	4
Withdrawn by French authorities	9
Refused by Secretary of State	0
Requests outstanding	12

Forced Marriages

Margaret Moran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken since the publication of the report on forced marriages. [3825]

Angela Eagle: The Government will make a full announcement in September of action taken, including reporting progress on the Joint Action Plan published by the Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office last August.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who entered the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999 and *(c)* 2000. [3879]

Angela Eagle: The numbers of unaccompanied children who sought asylum in the United Kingdom are as follows:

	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
1998	3,037
1999	3,349
2000	2,733

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the countries from which the majority of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children come to the United Kingdom. [3878]

Angela Eagle: In 2000, the majority of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children came from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (666), Afghanistan (300), Somalia (177), Sri Lanka (170) and Turkey (153).

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 100W, on asylum seekers, what plans he has to monitor the reasons for non-compliance of asylum applications. [4416]

Angela Eagle: No specific arrangements are currently in place systematically to follow up asylum seekers who fail to comply with procedures without providing a reasonable explanation to ascertain reasons underlying their failure to comply. We are, however, always open to looking at our procedures to ensure that any genuine difficulties applicants have in complying with them are minimised.

The main reasons for non-compliance refusals are failure, without reasonable explanation, to attend on time an interview connected with the asylum claim or to complete and return a statement of evidence form (SEF) within 10 working days. The Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) does take account of events outside the asylum seeker's control, for example the serious disruption to rail travel experienced as a result of flooding earlier this year.

We have made some changes in recent months; for example, a PO box number was introduced to act as a single point for the return of all SEFs to IND, and the explanatory note accompanying the SEF has been translated into 33 of the main languages used by asylum seekers. We are monitoring the effect of these changes closely.

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people sought asylum in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years; and what proportion were refused. [3076]

Angela Eagle: Information on asylum applications and initial decisions in Northern Ireland is unavailable. Asylum applications data are not available at regional level except by port of application. The requested information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost by examination of individual case records.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3500]

Mr. Blunkett: I shall write to my right hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Police Recruitment (Lancashire)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many extra police officers have been recruited in *(a)* Chorley and *(b)* Lancashire since May 1997. [2021]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 3 July 2001]:* I am informed by the chief constable that between 1997–98 and 2000–01 453 officers were recruited for the force as a whole, including 33 for the Southern Division of which 11 were deployed to Chorley.

Lancashire Constabulary—number of recruits 1997–98 to 2000–01

Year	*Chorley*	*Lancashire Constabulary*
1997–98	2	135
1998–99	4	55
1999–2000	1	99
2000–01[1]	4	164

[1] Of the 164 officers recruited in 2000–01, 83 were Crime Fighting Fund recruits.

Wrongful Convictions

Mrs. Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the working party report on support for prisoners who have been wrongly convicted; to whom he intends to make the report available; and who will respond to the report's findings. [3623]

Beverley Hughes: The working party will report to me later this summer. I shall look at the options that it recommends and then decide how to proceed.

Homosexuality

Dr. Iddon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation to decriminalise sexual activity between consenting men. [3461]

Mr. Keith Bradley: Sexual activity between two consenting adult males in private is not unlawful.

However, under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, as amended, such activity is not treated as taking place "in private" if it takes place when more than two persons take part or are present; or if it takes place in a lavatory to which the public have or are permitted to have access.

In "Setting the Boundaries: Reforming the law on sex offences", published in July last year, the Sex Offences Review recommended to the Government that the offences dealing with such activity should be repealed. We are considering the responses to this recommendation along with the others in "Setting the Boundaries".

Drug-related Murders

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of drug-related murders in *(a)* London, *(b)* England and *(c)* the UK in each of the last 10 years; and if he will provide the figures for last year in London, broken down by Metropolitan police district. [2711]

Mr. Denham: The available information is for years 1995 to 1997 and financial years 1997–98 to 1999–2000 and covers England and Wales only. This information is shown in the table.

Drug-related murders

	Metropolitan police[1]	*England*	*England and Wales*
1995	2	13	13
1996	3	14	15
1997	4	13	13
1997–98	3	12	12
1998–99	1	8	8
1999–2000	0	1	1

[1] Excludes City of London where no drug-related murders were recorded.

The information is held on the Home Office's Homicide Index database. This records drug involvement when (i) either the suspect is reported to be under the influence of drugs at the time of the offence or (ii) the homicide is motivated by the need to obtain drugs, or money to buy drugs or is drug related in some other way, such as rivalry between dealers etc. Data have only been collected since 1995 for each police force area in England and Wales, and include information recorded as at 11 September 2000 when recording was closed for publication purposes. The data do not include homicide where there is no suspect and relate only to those homicides where a suspect is convicted of murder. Cases in the latest year may not have been dealt with by the courts and would not be included.

These data may contain some error due to the largely subjective interpretation of 'drugs related' and the amount of information available to the police on the motive for a particular homicide, varying from case to case. A current review of the Homicide Index is aiming to increase the accuracy of data on homicide.

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act

Ms Atherton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a decision is expected on changes to section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. [2983]

Angela Eagle: The Government have a clear commitment to freedom of information and are equally committed to the maintenance of the necessary protection for individual scientists and their research institutions from the actions of animal rights extremists. I am considering very carefully how these commitments can best be met. A decision on whether to repeal or amend Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 will not be made until later this year.

Sri Lankan Tamils

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankan Tamils seeking asylum in the UK have been deported from the UK in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [3216]

Angela Eagle: Information is only available on the total number of Sri Lankan nationals who have claimed asylum in the United Kingdom and subsequently been removed. These data are provided in the table. They will include any Sri Lankan Tamils who have been removed, but we are unable to identify this group separately. It will also include Sri Lankans who have been removed to a third country having claimed asylum here. Again, it is not possible to identify this group separately.

Year	*Removals*[1,2]
1996	80
1997	95
1998	135
1999	[3]75
2000	[3]90

[1] Asylum seekers removed under port and enforcement procedures.
[2] Includes 'voluntary' departures.
[3] Estimated due to data quality issues on the main Immigration Service enforcement database.
Note:
Data rounded to the nearest five.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sir Lankan Tamil asylum seekers are held in *(a)* prison and *(b)* detention centres. [3215]

Angela Eagle: Our records show that there were 11 Sri Lankan nationals detained in Immigration Service detention centres and 65 in Prison Service establishments at 31 May 2001, the latest date for which information is available. We are unable to say whether any of these persons are Tamils as information of this kind is not held centrally. It is currently not possible to say how many of those persons had claimed asylum.

British Nationality Applications

Mr. Bruce George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average length of time is for a citizen of Thailand married to a British citizen to apply successfully for British nationality. [3194]

Angela Eagle: It is not possible to provide the specific information requested.

The average waiting times for processing British nationality applications, for persons married to British citizens, is currently 11.5 months.

In addition there is also a requirement for the applicant to have been resident in the United Kingdom for three years prior to the date of application and not be subject to any time limit under the immigration laws.

Asylum Appeals

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average time taken from receipt of an asylum appeal is by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate to *(a)* the sending of the appeal to

the Immigration Appellate Authority, *(b)* determination of the appeal by an adjudicator and *(c)* final determination of the appeal by the Immigration Appeal Tribunal. [3304]

Angela Eagle: For the 12 months ending 31 March, data from the Immigration Appellate Authority (IAA) for those cases where data are available indicate that the average time taken from the receipt of an asylum appeal by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate to:

(a) the receipt of an appeal by the IAA is seven weeks;

(b) the determination by an adjudicator is 21 weeks;

(c) the final determination by the Immigration Appeal Tribunal is 43 weeks.

Corruption Legislation

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if new legislation concerning corruption and money laundering will make bribery of a foreign official a crime; and if bribery of a foreign person who is not a foreign Government official will remain legal. [4400]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: Our corruption legislation applies to both the public and the private sector and makes it an offence for a person in this country to bribe someone who is an agent for another person. The term "agent" is defined to include someone who is employed by, or acts for, another irrespective of their nationality. Thus it is unlawful in this country to bribe a foreign agent. The definition of the term "agent" also includes a person serving under the Crown or any local or public authority. The planned legislation on corruption will make it clear that the offence extends to a person acting on behalf of a foreign Government.

It is also proposed to take jurisdiction over United Kingdom nationals who commit corrupt acts abroad.

Animal Testing

Dr. Palmer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many animals were involved in quality control testing for vaccines produced in the UK in each of the last three years. [2926]

Angela Eagle: The number of animals involved in pharmaceutical quality control in the United Kingdom for each of the last three years for which figures are available, is given in Table 10A in each of the publications 'Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain' and 'Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Northern Ireland', copies of which are in the Library. It is not possible to identify vaccines separately from other pharmaceutical products. No such testing was performed in Northern Ireland in 1997 or 1999.

Feltham Young Offenders Prison

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken in each of the last five years to improve *(a)* education, *(b)* training, *(c)* employment and *(d)* recreation opportunities for inmates at Feltham Young Offenders Prison. [3130]

Beverley Hughes: As this information will take more time to collect than that allowed for an answer to a parliamentary question, I will write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Police Officers (Retirement)

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to amend the scheme for retirement of police officers on health grounds. [3007]

Mr. Denham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Mr. Gardiner) on 4 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 202W.

Fire Risk Categorisation

Mr. Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish Her Majesty's Fire Services Inspectorate's comments on the fire risk categorisation survey which have been made available to members of the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority; [4500]

(2) what the result was of the West Midlands Fire Service's recent fire risk category survey in Aldridge and Bloxwich; which buildings' risk categorisation is *(a)* B and *(b)* C; which buildings in each category have been (i) upgraded and (ii) downgraded by the survey; and what proportion these are of the total. [4499]

Dr. Whitehead: I have been asked to reply

Responsibility for providing fire services rests locally with the fire authority. The authority cannot provide a building by building analysis of fire risk categorisation because risk categories are expressed in terms of the "predominant risk" of an area. The methodology used has been validated by HM Inspector of Fire Services in order to ensure consistency across the area and with other fire authorities.

Women Prisoners

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to restructure the prison estate to accommodate the number of women being given custodial sentences and those people being detained for reasons of immigration; and if he will make a statement. [4974]

Beverley Hughes: The use of the prison estate is kept under constant review by the Prison Service Management Board and I have endorsed their decision to change the function of Downview male closed prison to become a female closed prison; to remove immigration detainees from Rochester, making the whole of that establishment a young offender institution; and for Dover young offender institution to become an establishment dedicated to immigration detainees.

Leave to Remain

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to replace the current application forms for foreign nationals wishing to apply for leave to remain in the United Kingdom. [4975]

Angela Eagle: The current application forms are valid for use only until 14 October 2001. Revised forms will be prescribed before then and should be available by the end of September. From the time they are issued until 14 October 2001, applications may be made on either the newly prescribed forms or the present versions. Only the new

forms may be used for applications made on or after 15 October 2001. Copies will be placed in the Library when they are available.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Home Education

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many infant children had approval for home education in *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 2000; and if she will make a statement. [2865]

Mr. Timms: We do not collect centrally the data requested.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that a child of compulsory school age receives education suitable to his or her age, ability, aptitude and any special educational need the child may have. Parents can fulfil this duty either by their child attending school regularly or otherwise. Some parents elect to educate their children at home. Local education authorities have a duty to monitor the suitability of the education being received by a home educated child by virtue of section 437 (1) of the 1996 Act and can issue a School Attendance Order if they are not satisfied that a child is receiving suitable education.

Free School Meals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the percentage of children entitled to free school meals is in *(a)* schools previously designated as specialist schools, *(b)* schools included in the latest annual list of specialist schools and *(c)* all other maintained secondary schools. [3163]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* The available information is shown in the table.

Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals January 2000

	Percentage
Schools designated as specialist as at 30 September 2000	14.6
Schools newly designated as specialist as at 30 September 2001	17.6
Maintained secondary schools not designated as specialist schools	16.9

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will extend free school meals to those on Working Families Tax Credit; and if she will make a statement. [3737]

Mr. Timms: My Department has no such plans.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by her Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by her Department. [3497]

John Healey: The information that can be provided without disproportionate cost is contained in the table:

Contract	*Contract*	*Estimated cost (£)*	*Estimated completion date*	*Actual cost (£)*	*Actual completion date*
Work permits system hardware	Data General	600,000	1992	600,000	1992
Census of employment processing system	Andersens	3,900,000	February 1994	3,920,000	March 1994
Personnel system	Data General UK	750,00	April 1997	760,000	April 1997
Replacement accounting system	WS Atkins Planning and Management Consultants	500,000	April 1999	500,000	April 1999
Supply and Installation of Network Cabling	Century Electrical Contractors	525,000	October 1999	525,000	October 1999
Provision of initial IT infrastructure for the Learning and Skills Council	ICL	890,000	February 2001	985,000	February 2001
The Government Catalogue, framework contract for ICT goods and related services	EDS	15,000,000	October 2001	—	—
On-line training system supply and maintenance	NETG	748,000	March 2002	—	—
Mainframe leasing, system supply & contract management services	ICL	24,000,000	March 2002	—	—
Software applications development and maintenance service	FI Group	33,000,000	March 2002	—	—
Framework contract for supply of software to DfEE	Trustmarque Solutions	2,500,000	July 2002	—	—
Framework contract for supply of personal computers etc.	Dell Computer Corporation	15,000,000	November 2002	—	—
Framework contract for Electronic publishing services	CTPi	778,000	February 2003	—	—

Universities (Public-Private Partnerships)

Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) if she will list those universities that have agreed public-private partnerships to provide students with residential accommodation; [3872]

(2) if those universities which have agreed public-private partnerships to provide students with residential accommodation have retained the ability to control rents for that accommodation. [3873]

Margaret Hodge: Universities are independent, self-governing bodies which make their own decisions about entering into public-private partnerships. They also make their own decisions on the conditions under which such partnerships exist. The Government do not hold records of these arrangements.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the forecast rise in teachers' pay will be for 2003–04 in *(a)* real and *(b)* cash terms. [3927]

Mr. Timms: No such forecast has been made. The level of teachers' pay in 2003–04 will be subject to recommendation by the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) and consultation before a decision is reached. It will need to take account of affordability, recruitment and retention, and other factors that will apply at the time.

Child Care (Coventry)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many new childminder places have been set up in Coventry through the early years development programme and the child care partnerships. [3930]

Mr. Timms: Since April 1999 Coventry early years development and child care partnership has reported the creation of 948 new childminder places in the Coventry area.

Funding (Suffolk)

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much has been spent per head on *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary education in (i) the county of Suffolk, excluding Ipswich and (ii) the town of Ipswich in the last 12 months. [4118]

Mr. Timms: The information requested is not collected centrally: our information relates to local education authority areas, such as Suffolk, rather than districts within them.

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what additional resources her Department will provide for *(a)* Suffolk county council and *(b)* Ipswich for education in the next financial year. [4121]

Mr. Timms: Most funding for education in the next financial year will not be known until the autumn when the Local Government Finance Settlement will be announced. Listed are the latest funding allocations for education in Suffolk local education authority for the current financial year. The figures are provisional estimates, as final decisions on some funding allocations have yet to be finalised. Allocations can only be given at local education authority level.

2001–02	*£ million*
SSA	227.3
Grants	27.0
Capital	20.8

The following revenue grants have been included: DfES contributions to the Standards Fund; Class Size Reduction Grant, School Standards Grant, Education Budget Support Grant and Nursery Education Grant for three-year-olds.

School Admissions

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to reform mainstream schools admissions policy in England. [4268]

Mr. Timms: We are considering changes to the school admissions framework and plan to consult on detailed proposals.

School Sixth Forms

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if the guarantee that school sixth form funding will be maintained in real terms, once learning and skills councils take responsibility for them, will still apply if pupil numbers fall. [4296]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Through our Real Terms Guarantee, we are ensuring that no sixth form can lose compared to its 2000–01 funding levels, provided numbers are maintained. For sixth forms that are reducing in size, the guarantee will be maintained but at a proportionately reduced level. The Learning and Skills Council will use a standard per capita figure for all pupil increases or decreases. The size of the initial per capita adjustment applying in 2002–03 will be published by the LSC in September.

Further Education Lecturers

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what action she plans to take in respect of further education colleges which do not award annual pay increases to silver book contract lecturers. [4415]

Margaret Hodge: Further Education colleges are self-governing institutions. The implementation of annual pay awards is a matter for employers and their staff, and is not a matter on which it is appropriate for the Government to intervene. Nevertheless, I can reiterate the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Lifelong Learning on 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 388W, that the additional moneys allocated to FE colleges under the Teaching Pay Initiative are intended to be fairly distributed among all eligible staff.

Standard Spending Assessment (Bedfordshire)

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the average annual standard spending assessment is per pupil for each *(a)* primary school and

(b) secondary school pupil in England; and what the comparable figures for pupils in Bedfordshire are for the most recent year for which figures are available. [4714]

Mr. Timms: The table shows for 2001–02 the Education SSA per primary and secondary pupil for England and Bedfordshire.

£

SSA	*England*	*Bedfordshire*
Primary per pupil	2,590	2,520
Secondary per pupil	3,310	3,240

Literacy and Numeracy Tests

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of 11-year-olds achieved level 4 or above in the key stage 2 tests for *(a)* literacy and *(b)* numeracy in (i) 2000 and (ii) 2001. [4802]

Mr. Timms: The proportion of 11-year-olds who achieved Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 tests in 2000 in *(a)* English was 75 per cent. and *(b)* mathematics was 72 per cent. Results for 2001 are not yet available. A Press Notice will be released in mid-September announcing national results for 2001.

DEFENCE

Army Training and Recruiting Agency

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the Key Targets for the chief executive of the Army Training and Recruiting Agency for the financial year 2001–02 are. [4976]

Mr. Ingram: The Chief Executive of the Army Training and Recruiting Agency has been set the following Key Targets for FY 2001–02.

Key Targets 1

To meet the Army's requirement from the ATRA for 575 trained mainstream officers available to take up their first appointment within a permissible variance of 2 per cent. The 2000–01 performance was an output of 550.

Key Targets 2

To meet the Army's requirement from the ATRA for 9,442 soldiers available to take up their first appointment within a permissible variance of 5 per cent. The 2000–01 performance was an output of 8,738.

Key Targets 3

To achieve a first time pass rate of 98 per cent. for all officers made available to undergo career or professional development training, while maintaining the required standard and within pre-set training times. The 2000–01 performance was a first time pass rate of 97 per cent.

Key Targets 4

To achieve a 96 per cent. first time pass rate for all soldiers made available to undergo career or professional development training, while maintaining the required standard and within pre-set training times. The 2000–01 performance was a first time pass rate of 95 per cent.

Key Targets 5

To achieve an overall 3 per cent. improvement in the efficiency of ATRA operations. The 2000–01 performance was an input efficiency achievement of 3.4 per cent.

Low-flying Aircraft

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the pattern of military low-flying activity in the United Kingdom during the training year 2000–01. [4977]

Dr. Moonie: The ability to fly fast and low continues to be an essential skill in our armoury of tactics. Training for aircrew to achieve and maintain these skills is vital.

The amount of low-flying training carried out in the UK Low Flying System during the training year April 2000 to March 2001 was the minimum necessary for aircrew to reach and maintain these skills. Hours booked for low-flying training during this period amounted to a small decrease (of 66 hours, or less than 1 per cent.) compared to the previous training year. Since detailed records of hours booked began in 1995, the total overall has reduced by over 36 per cent. (24,360 hours) with fixed wing activity showing the greatest reduction.

The distribution of low-flying training across the UK has not changed significantly. We continue to try and spread it as widely as practicable, but for a variety of operational, geographical and climatic constraints some parts of the country will see more than others.

I have today placed in the Library of the House a paper giving a detailed account of low-flying training in the UK Low-flying System for the period April 2000 to March 2001.
Further copies of the paper can be obtained from the following address:

Directorate of Air Staff
Ministry of Defence
Room 662
Metropole Building
Northumberland Avenue
London WC2N 5BL.

Duke of York's Royal Military School

Ms Munn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the Key Targets for the chief executive of the Duke of York's Royal Military School for the financial year 2001–02 are. [4978]

Dr. Moonie: The chief executive of the Duke of York's Military school has been set the following Key Targets for FY 2001–02.

Key Targets 1

To achieve 93.5 per cent. of 15 year old pupils gaining five or more passes graded A* to C at GCSE.

Key Targets 2

To achieve 22.5 per cent. of GCSE passes at grades A* or A.

Key Targets 3

To achieve an average GCSE points score per 15 year old pupil of 53.4.

Key Targets 4

To achieve an average of GCE points score per candidate of 20.6.

Key Targets 5

To achieve 37.4 per cent. of GCE passes at grades A or B.

Key Targets 6

To achieve a pupil per capita cost of no more than £12,798.

Key Targets 7

To generate income of at least £550,000.

Key Targets 8

To achieve at least 290 applications for September 2001 intake.

Bloody Sunday Inquiry

Dr. Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress with the police investigation into the destruction of rifles pertinent to the Bloody Sunday inquiry. [4979]

Mr. Hoon: The police investigation into the unauthorised destruction of possible Bloody Sunday rifles announced in my answer of 17 February 2000, *Official Report*, column 648W, was completed in April 2001. The Bloody Sunday inquiry has been fully informed of the progress of the investigation and asked, at the outset, that the scope of the investigation be widened to establish the histories and whereabouts of the 29 weapons originally examined by the Widgery inquiry in 1972.

The police investigation revealed, for the first time, that the partial serial numbers provided by the Bloody Sunday inquiry generate 60 possible permutations for the 29 weapons originally sought by the inquiry. The report therefore reveals that the information on which my answer of 17 February 2000 was based, although provided in good faith, was inaccurate and incomplete.

By establishing detailed audit trails for all 60 weapons, the police have been able to recover 14 weapons and confirmed that 29 have been destroyed. The police were unable to confirm the existence or whereabouts of the remaining 17 weapons, some of which have been sold, complete or in parts. Others may have either been destroyed prior to the creation of the computer record or manufactured and delivered to customers overseas.

The self-loading rifle (SLR) was declared obsolete in November 1997. A routine disposal programme involving the sale and destruction of the weapons was in progress from January 1998, although some surplus rifles were disposed of prior to this date. At the time of the inquiry's request the disposal programme was reducing stock by 4,000 weapons a month with the aim of completing disposal by April 2000. By the end of January 2000 approximately 116,000 SLRs had been disposed of out of a total of 144,000.

The dates on which weapons that "match" the partial serial numbers provided by the Bloody Sunday inquiry were destroyed are as follows:

1995 unknown date (three rifles)

17 September 1997

21 January 1998

3 February 1998

12 February 1998

7 April 1998

27 April 1998 (two rifles)

2 June 1998 (two rifles)

25 June 1998

6 August 1998

13 August 1998

23 September 1998

29 October 1998

13 January 1999 (two rifles)

17 February 1999

23 February 1999

24 March 1999

22 September 1999 (two rifles)

23 November 1999 (two rifles)

26 January 2000

27 January 2000 (two rifles).

By September 1999, when the inquiry made a formal request for weapons and provided partial serial numbers, the Ministry of Defence held six weapons but was able to identify only five as Bloody Sunday "possible". Two of these weapons identified as Bloody Sunday weapons, together with a third weapon that had not been identified, were destroyed in a routine disposal programme on 26 and 27 January 2000. The destruction only came to light after the event when the computer database was updated. My answer of 17 February 2000 incorrectly stated the dates at which the computer record was updated, rather than the actual dates of destruction.

The police report concluded that the weapons were destroyed as a result of a combination of factors including inaccurate computer records, duplicated serial numbers and mistakes resulting from human error rather than an overt criminal act. Based on the police report, I am satisfied that there was no conspiracy to destroy evidence sought by the inquiry. The matter has now been referred to the chain of command to implement management improvements designed to prevent a recurrence and to determine whether any internal disciplinary action needs to be taken.

The evidence contained in the report suggests that the destroyed rifles would have been of little value to the inquiry due to duplicated serial numbers and the lack of certainty that any individual weapon was fired on Bloody Sunday. However, the police report indicates a strong possibility that a L42A1 7.62mm sniper rifle conversion can be matched to a Bloody Sunday weapon. The whereabouts of this weapon were unknown when the report was produced, but it has now been recovered by the MDP. The police investigation also confirmed that it is not possible to determine whether any rifles have retained their original barrels as large numbers of rifles were re-barrelled during the 30 or so years that the weapons remained in operational service. Detailed records were not kept to record whether a rifle had been re-barelled, or how many times this may have occurred.

The Bloody Sunday inquiry will reach its own view as to the potential forensic value of the weapons.

Nuclear Weapons (Accidents)

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances of each of the accidents involving UK nuclear weapons referred to in the answer given by the then Minister for the Armed Forces, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Soames) on 16 July 1996, *Official Report*, columns 484–85W. [5030]

Mr. Hoon: We have a good record on the safety and security of our nuclear weapons and continue to place the highest importance on work in this area. I have today placed in the Library of both Houses a table which sets

out the circumstances of each of the seven accidents concerned. The information it contains is drawn from records spanning a period of 40 years and confirms that:

There has never been a weapons accident resulting in the release of radioactive material;

there has never been damage to a weapon which risked a radioactive leak or an explosion;

there has never been a nuclear weapon lost.

In addition to the three road traffic accidents referred to in the table, our research has identified one other, similar, event which took place in 1960 in Lincolnshire. There is no damage to the weapon involved. Since this event pre-dates current reporting system it is unclear whether, in today's terms, it would be categorised as an accident.

The Government remain committed to greater openness on nuclear issues wherever possible. A key responsibility, however, must be to protect the safety and operational security of our nuclear forces and the people who support them. The practice of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons at any particular place and at any particular time will therefore continue to be a cornerstone of the Government's policy on nuclear weapons issues.

Depleted Uranium

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his most recent estimate is of the levels of depleted uranium, monitored in Kosovo and Serbia, arising from the use of allied depleted uranium munitions. [3957]

Dr. Moonie: On 21 June, the Ministry of Defence published a detailed paper entitled: 'Report of a Reconnaissance Visit to Develop an Enhanced Environmental Monitoring Programme in the UK Sector in Kosovo', which discusses the findings of a MOD reconnaissance team visit to Kosovo from 19–23 January to plan work, conduct field measurements and take preliminary samples. The field measurements supported the view that the risks from DU to our troops, and the population, are low. Analysis of some soil samples was delayed, as a result of potential asbestos contamination, however the information will be available for publication in the next few weeks. A copy of the team's report is available on the MOD internet website: www.mod.uk/index.php3?page=2739 and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

The full, enhanced environment surveillance programme, announced on 9 January, is expected to take place in August. The programme will be conducted in accordance with a protocol which is currently under expert and public consultation. That consultation period ends on 20 July. Results from the programme will be published accordingly.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish details of the depleted uranium-based 'Charm 3' ammunition referred to the letter from the then Minister for the Armed the Forces, the hon. Member for Warley (Mr. Spellar), of 26 February. [3958]

Dr. Moonie: Yes. As explained in the letter from the then Minister for the Armed Forces dated 26 February, D/Min(AF)/JS PQ 0299/01/Y, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, we have begun to conduct an analysis of the composition of the Charm 3 120mm DU-based anti-tank ammunition round using independent laboratories to confirm the data provided by the manufacturer (and published by the Department on 7 February 2001, *Official Report*, column 521W) about DU contamination by other radioactive materials. The works is currently incomplete owing to technical difficulties.

Explosives (River Tamar)

Mr. Breed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research his Department has undertaken into the presence of explosives on the bed of the River Tamar, with particular reference to the risks to the local population; if he will publish the outcome of the research; and if he will make a statement. [4445]

Dr. Moonie: A rigorous and extensive research, survey and clearance operation was initially undertaken between 1993 and 1997 to confirm, as far as reasonably practicable, the removal of explosives from the Bull Point land area and adjacent River Tamar. Subsequently, further survey and clearance operations were conducted, using experts in the field and state of the art technology, in order to establish safe working conditions as a prerequisite to the dredging for the Remote Ammunitioning Facility Tamar (RAFT).

The explosive items have remained submerged and incident free for in excess of 50 years. All the clearance operations conducted to date have been completed without incident, including riverbed blasting in support of RAFT.

Presentations on the clearances and finds have been made to local interest groups, local government representatives and the local press and media over the last 12 months. The issue has also been the subject of public meetings. Information, including research documents, has been displayed at HM Naval Base open days. A copy of the research documents will be placed in the Library of the House.

Throckmorton Airfield

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his future plans for Throckmorton airfield. [4105]

Dr. Moonie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 23 April 2001, *Official Report*, column 89W. The main site, known as DERA Pershore, was transferred on 1 July 2001 to QinetiQ, a wholly Government owned plc formed from 75 per cent. of the former DERA Trading Fund. QinetiQ will be responsible for continuing the Ministry of Defence related uses of the site, as well as taking forward any regeneration of the area in concert with the local and regional authorities.

The part of the airfield used in helping to deal with the consequences of foot and mouth disease is in the process of being transferred to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Porton Down

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the advice of the Medical Research Council on the feasibility of an epidemiological study on

the effect of research on service volunteers at Porton Down; what his response was to the advice; and if he has plans to establish an independent inquiry. [4586]

Dr. Moonie: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell (Mr. Taylor) on 28 June and 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 133W and 622W respectively. Any resultant epidemiology study will be carried out independently of the Ministry of Defence. On 1 May I announced that the Department would conduct an historical survey of the Porton Volunteer Trials, and that this would be supervised by Professor Ian Kennedy of University College London. In addition, an investigation by the Wiltshire police of the Porton Down volunteer programme from 1939 to 1989 is under way. There are no plans for a further independent inquiry.

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what dates the Ethical subgroup of the Defence Scientific Advisory Committee Medical Committee scrutinised the experiment in 1989 in which service personnel were exposed to sarin nerve gas at the chemical defence establishment, Porton Down; and if he will place in the Library copies of the minutes of the committee which relate to the discussion of this experiment; [986]

(2) on what dates the Ethical subgroup of the Defence Scientific Advisory Committee Medical Committee scrutinised the experiment at the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, in November 1983, in which eight service personnel were exposed to sarin nerve gas; and if he will place in the Library copies of the minutes and other papers of the committee which relate to the discussion of this experiment. [3405]

Dr. Moonie: I shall write to the hon. Member and copies of my letters will be placed in the Library of the House.

Aberporth

Mr. Simon Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to ensure the continuation of the apprenticeship scheme at QinetiQ, Aberporth after 2004. [4535]

Dr. Moonie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 5W.

Mr. Simon Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons the training budget is being transferred from DRE Aberporth to his Department; and what the timetable for the transfer is. [4536]

Dr. Moonie: No transfer of funding for apprentice training from QinetiQ, Aberporth to the Ministry of Defence is taking place.

Kenya

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the British Army stopped using live ammunition at the Dol Dol range. [3206]

Mr. Ingram: We do not currently believe that the British Army has ever fired live ammunition at the Dol Dol training area but are examining the records to make sure that this is the case. The British Army uses Dol Dol for low level "dry" (ie without live ammunition) training only.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last travelled on the London Underground in the course of his official duties. [3682]

Dr. Moonie: In order to ensure effective use of his time, by allowing him to work on official papers, my right hon. Friend uses the Government Car Service when travelling in London.

Defence Equipment Demonstrations

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what costs were incurred by his Department in providing armed service personnel support to defence equipment demonstrations in the last 12 months. [3844]

Dr. Moonie: Within the Ministry of Defence, the Defence Export Services Organisation is responsible for co-ordinating Government support to industry in promoting legitimate defence exports with other parts of MOD assisting as required.

No central record is kept of costs incurred for the provision of service personnel support to defence equipment demonstrations. The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The cost of MOD support for defence exports is however far outweighed by the financial benefits to the Department.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the net operating costs of DESO and related support functions were for the financial years *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01. [3815]

Dr. Moonie: The net operating costs of the Defence Export Services Organisation for each of the financial years requested were as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1997–98	14.380
1998–99	16.010
1999–2000	13.735
2000–01	12.360

These net operating costs are more than offset by benefits to the Defence budget, estimated at around £400 million a year, arising from DESO's activities. These benefits include a reduction in overhead costs for UK Procurement as a result of export orders, and receipts from Commercial Exploitation Levy and disposal of surplus Ministry of Defence equipment.

Portsmouth Harbour

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place regarding the dredging of Portsmouth Harbour in relation to the Future Aircraft Carrier procurement project; and if he will make a statement. [3294]

Dr. Moonie *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* As part of the Future Aircraft Carrier Assessment phase, contractors have visited several naval bases and port facilities to analyse their suitability for berthing and basing of the vessels. One of the issues addressed has been access and the requirement, if any, for dredging. Discussions to date have only been of an informal nature and no decisions have yet been made on berthing or basing options for the carriers and any potential dredging requirements. Further studies, involving environmental impact assessments, will take place during the next stage of assessment. The relevant authorities will be consulted on the results, as required.

Nuclear Tests

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what tests have been conducted on *(a)* military service personnel from the United Kingdom and Commonwealth forces in Australia, in respect of exposure to radiation from the detonation of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, since 1971, and *(b)* children in (i) Hong Kong and (ii) the United Kingdom, in respect of the take up of radiation into body parts; and if he will make a statement on recent representations made to the Government on radiological tests. [3961]

Dr. Moonie: No tests have been conducted on military service personnel from the United Kingdom and Commonwealth forces in Australia since 1971 in respect of exposure to radiation from the detonation of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere.

Tests conducted on children in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, in respect of the take up of radiation into body parts and recent representations made to the Government on radiological tests, are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Pay (Locally Engaged Overseas Staff)

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which British overseas defence establishments locally engaged staff are paid below local poverty datum lines; and if he will make a statement. [4538]

Dr. Moonie: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The Ministry of Defence employs over 13,000 locally engaged civilian staff around the world. Their conditions of service, including pay levels, are set in accordance with the terms of the discretionary authority conferred by the Treasury on Departments. This ensures that pay levels are established by reference to local best practice. Periodic pay reviews must be informed by local surveys of comparable employers thus ensuring that MOD remuneration remains competitive. Locally engaged staff play a vital role in support of the British armed forces overseas and it is in the MOD's interests to ensure that it is able to recruit and retain adequate numbers of the right calibre.

Defence Spending

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the level of defence spending is forecast to be as a proportion of gross domestic product in 2003–04. [3938]

Mr. Ingram: The settlement for defence announced in the Spending Review last year planned for the first sustained growth in defence expenditure for more than a decade. In 2003–04 defence expenditure is expected to represent 2.3 per cent. of GDP.

Pardons

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the granting of pardons to those who were executed for cowardice during the First World War. [3937]

Dr. Moonie: The question of granting pardons to those executed during the First World War, mostly for desertion, was the subject of a detailed review by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, then Minister of State for the Armed Forces. The legal difficulties in considering pardons, particularly the lack of evidence available today, were explained in his statement to this House on 24 July 1998 , *Official Report,* columns 1372–86.

Those executed have been publicly recognised as victims of a terrible war and their commemoration by the new memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum is particularly fitting.

Air Group Personnel

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the estimated air group personnel is of each CVF. [3513]

Mr. Hoon: At this stage in the procurement of CVF, the Future Joint Combat Aircraft and Future Organic Airborne Early Warning capability, the estimated size of the air group personnel to be embarked on the CVF has yet to be determined. The actual composition of the air group will depend on the number and the type of aircraft embarked and is the subject of on-going work.

Spearfish

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Spearfish torpedo will be in service with fleet submarines. [3515]

Dr. Moonie: The Spearfish torpedo entered Royal Navy service during 1994.

Apache Helicopters

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Apache helicopters will be in service by the end of *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2002 and *(c)* 2003. [3516]

Dr. Moonie: The Apache attack helicopter entered service with the Army on 16 January 2001. The number of helicopters delivered by the end of this and the following two years will be:

2001: 18

2002: 41

2003: 64.

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army pilots are qualified to fly the Apache helicopter. [3521]

Mr. Ingram: The Army currently has 17 pilots trained to fly various versions of the Apache helicopter. Of these 17 pilots, two are currently on exchange tours with the US Army, two are on test flying duties and 13 are undergoing further training on the UK Apache at the School of Army Aviation at Middle Wallop.

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Army's Apache helicopters will become operationally available. [3523]

Dr. Moonie: The Army expects to have an initial operating capability, consisting of the first operational Apache squadron, in August 2004. A full task force capability based on an attack helicopter regiment is planned for early 2005.

Meteor

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Meteor programme and its development contract. [3517]

Dr. Moonie: The UK, France and Sweden signed the Meteor Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the Paris Air Show. We very much hope that the remaining three partner nations will sign the MOU by the end of September 2001. On that basis, we plan to place a demonstration and manufacture contract for Meteor by the end of 2001, subject to agreeing satisfactory terms with Matra BAe Dynamics, the Prime Contractor.

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects all partner nations to sign the memoranda of understanding on the A400M and the Meteor programme. [3524]

Dr. Moonie: We very much hope that all partner nations will have signed the memorandum of understanding by the end of September 2001.

C130

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to begin retiring the RAF's C130Ks from service. [3518]

Mr. Ingram: Under existing plans, the RAF Hercules C130K long-term fleet will be retired from service towards the end of this decade.

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the RAF's inventory is of C130 aircraft; and how many of them are operationally available. [3519]

Mr. Ingram: The RAF has a fleet of 57 Hercules C130 aircraft. Of these, 49 are allocated to the operating fleet and are available to operational commanders within specified time scales.

HMS Ocean

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost was of HMS Ocean. [3527]

Mr. Ingram: The cost of the contract to design and build HMS Ocean was £150.6 million.

Tomahawk

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which fleet submarines have been given Tomahawk capability; which submarines are scheduled to receive this capability; and when the conversion work will take place. [3529]

Mr. Ingram: It is planned the two Swiftsure class, seven Trafalgar class and all of the Astute class submarines will receive the Tomahawk capability.

HMS Splendid and HMS Triumph are now Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) capable, and HMS Trafalgar will be declared TLAM capable following trials later this summer. Work to equip HMS Spartan, HMS Trenchant and HMS Turbulent with TLAM capability is currently under way as part of their major upkeep periods. It is currently planned that the remaining three submarines—HMS Talent, HMS Tireless and HMS Torbay—will become TLAM capable by about 2006.

The Astute class submarines will be built Tomahawk capable. HMS Astute, the first submarine of this new class, is due to enter service from 2005.

ASRAAM

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects ASRAAM to enter into service with the RAF; and if he will make a statement. [3520]

Dr. Moonie: Matra BAe Dynamics Ltd., the prime contractor for ASRAAM, encountered a number of technical problems which meant that the in service date of April 2001 was not met. We are working with the company to agree a programme which will bring the missile up to an acceptable standard. When we agree a revised programme we will set a new date for ASRAAM's entry into service. Until that time, Tornado F3, Harrier GR7 and Sea Harrier FA2 aircraft will continue to have an effective short-range air to air capability using Sidewinder missiles.

Harrier GR7

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF pilots have been trained to fly Harrier GR7 for carrier operations. [3530]

Mr. Ingram: As of today, there are 28 front-line RAF Harrier GR7 pilots trained and qualified for carrier operations. Available records suggest that since the Harrier GR7 began carrier operations in 1997, approximately 76 GR7 pilots have been trained in the role.

MR(TRIGAT)

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what savings will accrue to the defence budget following the cancellation of the MR(TRIGAT) programme. [3522]

Dr. Moonie: There are no savings accrued from our decision not to proceed with the industrialisation and production phase of the MR(TRIGAT) programme. The funding allocated to MR(TRIGAT) has been transferred to the Infantry Anti-Tank Guided Weapons programme, which will ensure that future capabilities in this area are fully met.

Astute Class Submarines

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the entry into service date is of each of the Astute class submarines. [3526]

Dr. Moonie: The first Astute class submarine is due to enter into service in June 2005. The remaining two submarines of the class currently on order will follow at approximately two-year intervals.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3496]

Dr. Moonie: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Oil Fabrication

5. **Mr. David Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the future for oil fabrication in Scotland. [2642]

Mrs. Liddell: The Government and the oil and gas industry continue to work together through PILOT to ensure that Scotland and the UK remains a centre of profitable activity for oil and gas for many years to come.

Rosyth

7. **Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the First Minister and the Transport Minister to discuss progress on the Rosyth ferry port development. [2644]

Mr. Foulkes: My right hon. Friend has regular discussions with the First Minister and the Transport Minister to discuss a wide range of issues.

This initiative is a welcome development for business and industry.

Brownfield Sites (Lanarkshire)

8. **Mr. Roy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to discuss the regeneration of Lanarkshire's brown field sites with the First Minister. [2646]

Mr. Foulkes: My right hon. Friend has regular discussions with the First Minister on a wide range of issues including the commitment of this Government to maintaining a stable and successful economy in Scotland, as in the whole of the UK, which provides a sound base for economic development and regeneration projects and allows everyone to share in the nation's rising prosperity.

Scottish Ambassador

9. **Mr. Gray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions she has had with the First Minister on the Scottish Executive's proposals to appoint a Scottish Ambassador. [2648]

Mrs. Liddell: I speak to the First Minister regularly on a wide range of subjects. There are no proposals for the Scottish Executive to appoint a Scottish Ambassador.

Winter Fuel Payments

10. **Mr. Lyons:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pensioners in Scotland she estimates will receive payments under the Winter Fuel Payments scheme next winter. [2649]

Mr. Foulkes: We estimate that around one million people aged 60 or over will benefit from the scheme in Scotland. This includes around 15,750 people in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency.

Air Links

11. **Rosemary McKenna:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps she is taking to seek to improve the regulation of air links to and from Scotland. [2650]

Mrs. Liddell: The European Commission recently published proposals to revise the current regulation on common rules for the allocation of slots at Community airports. This proposal emphasises the need for member states to analyse the capacity situation at congested airports for which they are responsible and to consider ways and means of resolving the problems on a regular basis.

The Government will produce a White Paper next year which will bring together UK airports policy, looking 30 years ahead, and new policies on civil aviation. We published a UK-wide consultation document in November 2000 and a Scottish regional consultation will follow towards the end of this year. I am actively involved in this process to ensure that Scottish interests are fully represented.

Anti-drugs Strategy

12. **Mr. Russell Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will make a statement about new proposals to seize the assets of convicted drug dealers. [2651]

15. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions she has had with the Home Department on measures to confiscate the assets of convicted drug dealers. [2655]

Mr. Foulkes: The Scotland Office, the Home Office and the Scottish Executive are working closely together on the Proceeds of Crime Bill, which will strengthen the law and procedures for seizing the assets of drug dealers and other criminals.

13. **John Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will make a statement on the effectiveness of the anti-drugs strategy in Scotland. [2652]

Mr. Foulkes: The Government and the Scottish Executive are working in partnership to ensure that misuse of drugs is tackled effectively in Scotland and that efforts are co-ordinated.

Progress made in Scotland towards reaching the targets set out in the UK anti-drugs strategy will be included in the UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator's Report for 2000–01 which is expected to be published shortly.

NHS Funding

14. **Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations she has received from the Scottish Executive for her to make representations to the Treasury for additional money for the NHS in Scotland. [2653]

Mr. Foulkes: The Scottish Executive is able to determine its own spending priorities within its overall spending allocation.

The 2000 spending review provided the Scottish Executive with significant additions to its overall budget and provided for overall spending some £3.4 billion higher by 2003–04 compared to 2000–01, giving substantial scope for investment in modern public services, including health services. This year's Budget provided an additional £200 million over three years.

Tourism

16. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions she has had with the British Tourist Authority on the effects of foot and mouth disease on the Scottish tourist industry. [2656]

Mr. Foulkes: I met senior representatives of the British Tourist Authority some weeks ago to discuss a range of issues on how best to promote tourism to Scotland. I am satisfied that Scotland will benefit both from the support from the Scottish Executive and the extra £14.2 million funding announced by the DCMS to help overseas recovery action.

18. **John Thurso:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the British Tourist Authority in encouraging overseas tourists to visit Scotland. [2658]

Mr. Foulkes: The STB and the BTA have been working together successfully for many years to promote Scotland and the whole of the UK as an attractive tourist destination. They are continuing to work towards achieving the maximum benefit for Scotland from the work which they are doing around the world.

I am convinced that there is an advantage for Scotland to be sold along with the rest of the UK. This is particularly true from long haul markets where a visit to Scotland will almost certainly be part of a tour of Britain, where Scotland could easily be left out if it is not clearly visible among the other choices.

19. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when she next plans to meet the British Tourist Authority to discuss the attractions which Scotland offers in culture, historical sites and industrial archaeology. [2659]

Mr. Foulkes: I am in regular contact with both the BTA and visitscotland to discuss a range of issues in promoting Scottish tourism. I am confident that work is being undertaken to ensure that Scotland achieves the maximum benefit from the work which both organisations are doing around the world.

Energy Policy

17. **Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will set out the Government's targets for the proportion of electricity to be produced by nuclear, fossil and renewable energies in the next 20 years; and what discussions she has had with the Scottish Executive and Cabinet colleagues on this matter. [2657]

Mr. Foulkes: I have regular discussions with Scottish Executive Ministers and Government colleagues on a wide range of issues. The Government have set a target for the UK of 10 per cent. for the proportion of electricity to be generated from renewable sources by 2010. Electricity generation in Scotland already exceeds this level and the Scottish Renewable Obligations will bring the figure to 13 per cent. by 2003. The target will then be to increase use of renewable energy in Scotland by a further 5 per cent. to 18 per cent. by 2010.

Foot and Mouth

20. **Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions she has had with the First Minister on the foot and mouth epidemic; and if he will make a statement. [2660]

Mrs. Liddell: The First Minister and I meet regularly to discuss a whole range of issues including the handling of the foot and mouth outbreak in Scotland.

Assisted Area Status (Arbroath)

21. **Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations she has made to the EU and the Department of Trade and Industry concerning assisted area status for Arbroath. [2661]

Mr. Foulkes: The European Commission, which has sole competence in this area, approved the UK's Assisted Areas map on 26 July 2000. The approved map will apply until December 2006. The Scotland Office and the Scottish Executive worked closely with the Department of Trade and Industry in discussion with the Commission to secure the best possible deal for Scotland and the UK as a whole. There are no plans to review the Assisted Areas map.

European Convention on Human Rights

22. **Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans she has to undertake a review of the incorporation of the European convention on human rights into Scottish law. [2662]

Mr. Foulkes: None. The Government monitor the effect of the incorporation of the ECHR into domestic law, but there are no plans at present for a review.

Single Currency

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the convergence of the Scottish economy with the euro zone. [2638]

Mrs. Liddell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Cameron).

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will list the Information Technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by her Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by her Department. [3506]

Mrs. Liddell: In respect of the Scottish Office prior to 1 July 1999, the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The Scotland Office was established in its present form on 1 July 1999. No IT contracts have been set by the Department since that date.

Barnett Formula

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions she has held with the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on the operation of the Barnett Formula. [2645]

Mrs. Liddell: I have regular discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on a wide range of issues.

Free Television Licences

Mr. Joyce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pensioners in Scotland are benefiting from the provision of free television licences to those aged over 75 years. [2647]

Mr. Foulkes: We estimate that over 300,000 pensioners in Scotland benefit from the provision of a free TV licence. There are approximately 4,540 people aged 75 or over in the Falkirk, West constituency.

ADVOCATE-GENERAL

Proceeds of Crime Bill

26. **Mr. Carmichael:** To ask the Advocate-General what measures she is recommending to the Government to ensure that the Proceeds of Crime Bill will comply with the Human Rights Act 1998. [2604]

The Advocate-General for Scotland: The proposed Proceeds of Crime Bill is the responsibility of the Home Secretary who will also be responsible, in terms of section 19 of the Human Rights Act, for making a statement as to the Bill's compatibility with Convention rights. He is, of course, entitled to seek legal advice, both from within his Department and outside it, including Law Officers' advice, on any matter for which he considers this to be appropriate.

Road Traffic Cases

27. **Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Advocate-General on how many occasions she has given advice on the implications of the European human rights convention on road traffic cases. [2606]

The Advocate-General for Scotland: As the hon. Lady will be aware, I appeared before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Margaret Anderson Brown case which concerned the human rights compatibility of a provision in the Road Traffic Acts. The hon. Lady will be pleased to know that the Judicial Committee upheld my arguments, and those made on behalf of the Scottish Executive, and decided that the current legislation was compatible with the Convention. When requested I give advice on a variety of matters including the implications of the European Convention on Human Rights.

European Convention on Human Rights

28. **Mr. Russell Brown:** To ask the Advocate-General if she has intervened in the recent ECHR challenge to the prison regime in Barlinnie. [2607]

The Advocate-General for Scotland: At present, I have not intervened in the case of Robert Napier *v.* the Scottish Ministers, which concerns the conditions in which the petitioner was detained at Barlinnie Prison.

Scottish Planning Law

Mr. Joyce: To ask the Advocate-General what effect the recent ECHR challenges have had on Scottish planning law. [2605]

The Advocate-General for Scotland: Scottish planning law is a matter for the Scottish Ministers. However, a number of cases have arisen in Scotland in which there have been challenges on Convention rights grounds and these have been intimated to me as raising devolution issues under the Scottish Act. I have intervened in four such cases to date. The appeal in the first of these cases to be heard, County Properties v the Scottish Ministers and the Advocate-General, has now been completed and a judgment is expected shortly.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Early-day Motions

47. **Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals in respect of early-day motions. [2628]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: I understand there are no plans to do so at present, but any Member can put proposals to the Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons and they will be considered carefully.

Private Bill Procedure

48. **Mr. Dismore:** To ask the President of the Council what plans he has to bring forward proposals to reform the Private Bill procedure. [2629]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: None at present. Private Bill Procedure was reviewed by the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure in 1987–88, and many of the matters previously covered by Private Bill Procedure are now covered by the Transport and Works Act 1992. Before the election the House agreed to Standing Order changes which allow the House to consider the ECHR compatibility of Private Bills.

Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

49. **David Winnick:** To ask the President of the Council to ask the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans the Commission has in respect of the renewal of the contract of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. [2630]

Mr. Kirkwood: The present Commissioner's term of office runs until February 2002. The Commission will consider the matter in good time before then.

Scrutiny

50. **Mr. Borrow:** To ask the President of the Council what proposals he plans to bring forward to improve scrutiny of the executive by the House of Commons. [2631]

55. **Mr. Crausby:** To ask the President of the Council what plans he has to improve the scrutiny functions of the House. [2636]

Mr. Robin Cook: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Helen Jackson).

52. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the President of the Council what plans he has to increase the amount of pre-legislative scrutiny. [2633]

56. **Joan Ryan:** To ask the President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals to increase opportunities for pre-legislative scrutiny. [2637]

Mr. Robin Cook: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier to hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland).

Terms of Service

51. **Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the President of the Council what plans he has to bring forward proposals to reform the rules relating to hon. Members' terms of service. [2632]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: Any hon. Member's term of office is, and should remain, in the hands of the electorate, unless some legal disqualification intervenes.

Waste Paper

54. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the President of the Council to ask the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, how much waste paper was produced by the House in each of the last two years; how it was disposed of; and if he will make a statement. [2635]

Mr. Kirkwood: This is primarily a matter for the Serjeant at Arms; but I can tell the hon. Member that over the last two years, approximately 50 tonnes of paper from the Vote Office was sent for recycling each year. All additional waste paper was compacted with general waste amounting to some 3,000 tonnes per year and was incinerated for the production of electricity in line with Government guidelines.

Parliamentary Committees

Pete Wishart: To ask the President of the Council if he will commission an inquiry into the roles of *(a)* the Scottish Parliament's committees and *(b)* House of Commons Standing Committees in respect of legislation. [3940]

Mr. Robin Cook: I very much hope the Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons will look at the Scottish Parliament to see what we can learn from their experience; I certainly intend to visit that Parliament over the summer adjournment.

PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Council if he will list the Information Technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3505]

Mr. Robin Cook: None.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Self-Regulation

32. **Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the Lord Chancellor last met the Law Society to discuss self-regulation for the legal profession; and if he will make a statement. [2611]

Mr. Wills: The Lord Chancellor meets from time to time with the president and other representatives of the Law Society to discuss aspects of the current self-regulatory arrangements. While he has not entered into discussions for ending self-regulation, he has made it clear publicly that self-regulation is a privilege and not a right that the society should take for granted.

Auld Report

33. **Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects the Auld report to be published. [2613]

Mr. Wills: Lord Justice Auld will complete his review of the criminal courts shortly. The Government will make arrangements for publication once his report is received.

Court Dress

34. **Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to review court dress. [2614]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Previous soundings from within the judiciary, the professions and court users have revealed a wide range of views on whether, and to what extent, court dress should be reformed. Given continued concern in some quarters, the Lord Chief Justice is consulting with the professional bodies. Once the results

are available, the Lord Chancellor will consult with the heads of division and decide what action, if any, it would be appropriate to take.

Victims and Witnesses

35. **Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress has been made in providing assistance to victims and witnesses at all court centres. [2616]

Mr. Wills: There are witness support services, run by Victim Support, in all Crown court centres. Witness services are being introduced into all magistrates' courts with a target date for completion of 31 March 2002. Interim targets of 20 per cent., and 40 per cent., were set for 31 March 2000 and 2001 respectively. These targets have been met. The latest figures show that witness services have been introduced in 46 per cent. of magistrates' courts.

We are improving facilities in the Crown court to ensure that prosecution witnesses are not forced to sit alongside potentially intimidating defendants and their families. Currently 87 per cent. of Crown court centres have a special witness waiting room available.

Handcuffs

36. **Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what guidance the Lord Chancellor has given on the visibility of handcuffs worn by defendants in court. [2617]

Mr. Wills: The Lord Chancellor has not issued any guidance as the decision on whether defendants should wear handcuffs in court is a matter for the judiciary. The Court of Appeal has ruled that no prisoner shall be handcuffed in court unless there are reasonable grounds for believing he will be violent or try to escape. It is open to the prosecution to make an application for handcuffs if they believe a defendant will be violent or try to escape, but the final decision lies with the judge or magistrates.

Young Offenders (Merseyside)

37. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what his estimate is of the Merseyside courts' progress towards meeting Government targets on the time between arrest and court appearance for young offenders; and if he will make a statement. [2618]

Mr. Wills: Information is not available in the exact form requested. The Government's target for persistent young offenders is to halve the average time from arrest to sentence from 142 to 71 days by May 2002. The latest available figures are for April 2001. These show that the average time for persistent young offenders charged by the Merseyside police was 91 days. That is a significant improvement over the 1997 figure of 153 days. It reflects the work done by all the criminal justice agencies in Merseyside: the courts, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the youth offending teams.

Judicial Appointments

39. **Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what ethnic monitoring is undertaken of judicial appointments. [2620]

Mr. Wills: Applicants for judicial office are invited to complete a questionnaire about their ethnic origin, although they are not obliged to provide the information requested. Based on the information provided, the Lord Chancellor produces monthly figures showing the number of people from ethnic minorities in the judiciary, and includes in his annual report on judicial appointments statistical information about competitions including the number of applications, candidates interviewed and appointments made, analysed by reference to ethnic origin. This information is available on the Lord Chancellor's website, www.lcd.gov.uk.

Complaints

40. **Sir Sydney Chapman:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what his policy is on dealing with complaints against magistrates. [2621]

Mr. Wills: The Lord Chancellor expects all magistrates to behave in a way that allows the community to have confidence in their ability to carry out their judicial duties. His policy and procedure for dealing with complaints against them is set out in chapter 19 of his directions for advisory committees on justices of the peace, copies of which are available in the Libraries. The overriding principle in the procedure for dealing with complaints is the observance of the rules of natural justice.

Contingency Fees

Ian Lucas: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment she has made of the benefits of introducing contingency fees as a method of payment for lawyers in personal injury cases. [2619]

Ms Rosie Winterton: None. Contingency fees are used legitimately in many tribunals and for non-contentious business and have their supporters and detractors. The Law Society and the Bar Council are working together to consider how, if properly regulated, contingency fees might be used more widely to benefit clients and extend access to justice. The Government have no plans to extend the use of contingency fees.

Child Contact Orders

Margaret Moran: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many child contact orders resulted in further court action involving *(a)* violence and *(b)* death in each of the last five years. [3831]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Lord Chancellor's Department is not able to collect statistics on events which happen after the court's involvement is concluded. However, officials from this Department are exploring with the Home Office how we can address this information gap.

Margaret Moran: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what analysis her Department carried out on the number of murders of *(a)* partners and *(b)* children resulting from child contact orders, as part of her consultation on child contact. [3833]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The consultation exercise on child contact, "Making Contact Work", is being undertaken by the Children Act 1989 sub-committee of the Lord Chancellor's advisory board on family law and is on-going. Information about the number of murders of

partners or children where a child contact order is in force is not available. However, officials from this Department are exploring with the Home Office how we can address this information gap.

Margaret Moran: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many child contact orders have resulted in further court action; and what the *(a)* average and *(b)* largest number of further court actions was. [3832]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Lord Chancellor's Department does not routinely collect statistics on all subsequent court actions. However, the Department is conducting a sampling exercise on this area, the results of which will be published in due course.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the Lord Chancellor last travelled on the London underground in the course of his official duties. [3669]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Lord Chancellor has not yet needed to travel on the London underground in the course of his official duties.

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the appointment of justices of the peace. [2612]

Mr. Wills: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is keen that the social composition of the magistracy reflects the community it serves, subject to all magistrates fulfilling the merit criteria for appointment. Advisory committees are required to ensure that benches reflect the community in terms of gender, ethnic origin, geographical spread, occupation and political affiliation. My noble Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster requires his advisory committees to do the same. Work is under way to develop a national strategy for the recruitment of lay magistrates and to find a viable alternative to the use of political affiliation as a measure of social balance.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the Information Technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3503]

Mr. Wills: The following table lists the IT contracts that have been let by the Lord Chancellor's Department with a value of more than £500,000, since April 1991. Probity and value for money in contracting for IT projects is ensured through compliance with EC public procurement rules, UK Government domestic procurement policy and best practice guidance, Government accounting rules and National Audit Office requirements.

Original estimated cost	*Original completion date*	*Actual cost (£)*	*Actual completion date*	*Contractors involved*	*Consultants retained*	*Comments*
Nexus Office Automation System						
£600,000	April 1996	660,666	April 1996	Seimens-Nixdorf Computacenter, Foxlan		
BACCHUS Case Management System						
£721,476	July 1994	808,931	July 1994			
MIDAS Management Information and Accounting System						
£627,850	January 1995	641,301	January 1995	Oracle		
SOAP Office Automation System						
£754,700	April 1996	775,065	April 1996	Seimens-Nixdorf, Bull		
MIS (Management Information System)						
£14,356,000	December 2001	14,825,000	Spring 2003	Within the scope of the Department's existing PFI contract with CSL Group Ltd.		This project is still ongoing and therefore, the costs and dates shown are the latest estimates. The costs shown relate to the provision of the service over the life of the system and include physical rollout, training, and on-going service charges
MANIFEST (Integrated Estate Management and Finance System)						
£4,868,000	December 2000	5,240,000	February 2001	Within the scope of the Department's existing PFI contract with CSL Group Ltd.		The costs shown relate to the provision of the service over the life of the system and includes physical rollout, training, and on-going service charges
LOCCS (Various court-based IT systems)						
£25,000,000	October 1996	107,000,000	September 2003	EDS	Masons, Kermon, Charterhouse bank, Myriad	Baseline costs are unchanged, the estimated costs to the end of the contract (£107 million) includes very significant additional services
MASS Development						
£1,100,000	March 1995	2,700,000	June 1997	Admiral Computing Ltd.		

Original estimated cost	Original completion date	Actual cost (£)	Actual completion date	Contractors involved	Consultants retained	Comments
MASS Testing/Support						
£4,900,000	March 1998	3,400,000	April 1997	F1 Group Plc		
MASS Training Materials						
£1,000,000	March 1996	400,000	December 1996	Admiral Computing Ltd.		
LIBRA						
£319,000,000	July 2013	n/a	n/a	ICI plc		The Libra contract was originally let in December 1998, to run to 2009 with a value of £183 million. An option to extend was taken up and this extension is reported here
SLD (Statute Law Database)						
£700,000	August 1993	700,000	Summer 1995	Syntegra Ltd. (previously Secure Information Systems Ltd.)		The system was delivered in November 1993. However, it was not formally accepted until summer 1995
CLAT (Criminal Legal Aid Expenditure Monitoring)						
£582,250	March 2001	604,591	March 2001	Within the scope of the Department's existing PFI contract with CSL Group Ltd.		
ARAMIS (Resource Accounting and Management Information System)—individual services are shown as follows:						
£91,400,000	n/a	118,050,000	n/a	CSL Group Ltd.		A PFI contract for the provision of accounting, financial, HR/payroll and management information services. It was awarded in December 1997 and runs until January 2007. The services have IT elements and are delivered using a corporate IT infrastructure provided through the contract. However, the IT elements of the contract are not separated out from the main business functions
New Accounting Service						
n/a	July 1998	n/a	July 1998			
New HR Service						
n/a	March 1999	n/a	March 1999			
New Purchasing Service						
n/a	April 1999	n/a	October 1999			

Libra Project

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will place a list of the reasons for the increase in the value of the Libra project in the Library; if liquidated damages clauses are included in the contract for the Libra project; and if he will place a copy of the contract in the Library. [3818]

Mr. Wills: The increase in the cost of the Libra project is based on delivery of an additional four years of the full Libra service to all magistrates' courts and an earlier delivery of the first part of the Libra service—office automation. A liquidated damages clause is included in the contract. As the contract contains commercially confidential information, it would not be appropriate to make it available in the Library.

Public Trust Office Annual Report

Flona Mactaggart: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when she will publish the Public Trust Office's annual report and accounts for 2000–01. [5331]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Public Trust Office's annual report and accounts for 2000–01 have been published today and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Police Fund

Mr. Donaldson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide details of the new Police Fund in Northern Ireland and indicate when he expects to appoint trustees to the Fund. [3415]

Jane Kennedy: The new Northern Ireland Police Fund, based on the recommendations in the Patten report, and the subsequent report carried out by Mr. John Steele, will provide assistance to police officers (who have been murdered or injured as a direct result of terrorism in Northern Ireland), their families and dependants. Indeed, lump sum payments of over £4 million have already been paid to a group of RUC widows widowed before 25 November 1982. Detailed work on the legal status of the fund, as well as on its funding, is continuing and the Government hope to announce the names of trustees shortly.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the Information Technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or

its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3504]

Jane Kennedy: The information is set out in the table.

Estimated cost	*Estimated completion*	*Actual cost (£)*	*Actual completion*	*Contractor*	*Consultant*
Oasis £5,000,000	December 1996	5,732,000	November 1997	Bull	
DPPNet £750,000	February 1999	748,000	March 1999	Bull	
Bloody Sunday Inquiry—Contract A £1,800,000	June 1998	2,500,000 (includes changes and additional input)	June 1998	Bull	
Bloody Sunday Inquiry—Contract B Hearings Installation £2,000,000	March 2000	2,000,000 (fixed price setup contract)	March 2000	ICL	Deloitte and Touche
Bloody Sunday Inquiry—Contract C Hearings Running Costs £5,000,000	Not known	Ongoing based on fixed cost of 225k per month	Not known	ICL	Deloitte and Touche
Oasis Refresh £1,900,000	October 1999	2,255,000	December 1999	Compaq	
Compass £1,200,000	November 2002	On budget	On target	Picaso	

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time Reserve RUC officers there were at (i) 1 June 2001 and (ii) 22 May 1998. [3080]

Jane Kennedy: The table shows the number of full-time and part-time members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve at the specified dates:

Date	*Full-Time Reserve*	*Part-Time Reserve*
1 June 2001	2,417	1,063
22 May 1998	2,996	1,280

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many regular RUC officers there were at *(a)* 7 June 2001 and *(b)* 22 May 1998. [3078]

Jane Kennedy: The table shows the number of regular members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary at the specified dates:

Date	*Number*
7 June 2001	7,341
22 May 1998	8,471

Disturbances, (Ardoyne)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the cause of disturbances in Ardoyne, Belfast from 20 June; how many civilians and police were injured on each night of the disturbances; how many plastic bullets were fired; what tactics were employed by the police to defuse tensions; what public statements were made by the RUC concerning the protection of children; how many arrests have been made and what the perceived community origin and ages were of those arrested; and how many *(a)* alleged rioters and *(b)* police officers were involved in the disturbances. [1171]

Jane Kennedy: The serious public disorder in the Ardoyne area of north Belfast arose from a series of sectarian incidents that were themselves the result of the continuing sectarian tensions in this part of the city.

During the period 20–25 June 2001, 62 police officers and 11 civilians were injured. Eight plastic baton rounds were fired.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary Chief Constable, the Assistant Chief Constable for Belfast, the local police commander and other officers made almost daily statements through the media with the emphasis being on the safety of the whole community including children. These sought to make absolutely clear the damage being done to the entire community, by a minority on each side, and to urge local leaders and people of influence to try to calm the disorder. Police spoke with political representatives and community activists on both sides of the community in an effort to defuse the situation and to encourage them to use whatever influence they had to resolve the differences. The Army was deployed at interface areas and the level of police patrolling was increased to (a) provide reassurance to both sections of the community and (b) to prevent clashes between both sections of the community.

Seven persons, aged between 15 and 43 years, were arrested. Although the Royal Ulster Constabulary does not collate information on the religious or political beliefs of

arrested persons, it is thought that five may be from the Protestant community and two from the Roman Catholic community.

At the height of the rioting more than 250 police officers, along with substantial military support, were involved. It is estimated that 800 persons from both communities were involved in the rioting.

John Stokes

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the findings of the coroner's inquest into the death of John Stokes while in police custody were; how many days elapsed between death and inquest; and what actions he has taken subsequently in respect of the incident. [1090]

Jane Kennedy: Mr. Stokes died on 3 November 1997. The Coroner's inquest has not yet been completed. The latest attempt on 7 June 2001 to complete the inquest was halted due to questions being raised concerning human rights considerations. When available, due consideration will be given to the findings of the Coroner's inquest.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she chaired the first meeting of Green Ministers during the current Session of Parliament; when subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if she will make a statement. [4001]

Mr. Meacher: In this Parliament the Green Ministers Committee has been reconstituted as the Cabinet Sub-Committee of Green Ministers, ENV(G), under my chairmanship. Dates for meetings have not, as yet, been set.

Foot and Mouth

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the average time is for compensation payments for those holdings that *(a)* lost stock, *(b)* lost fodder and *(c)* bore the costs of disinfecting their premises due to foot and mouth. [1672]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 3 July 2001]:* I recognise that there have been delays in the payment of compensation to farmers whose animals have been compulsorily slaughtered because of foot and mouth disease, and that when the disease was at its peak during April and May these delays could be extensive. However, the time taken to pay compensation claims has been reduced and we are now in a position to pay claims within three weeks of receiving complete documentation.

Information on average payment times for compensation for anything, including fodder, seized by the Department for the purpose of preventing the spread of foot and mouth disease, and payment times for the costs of cleansing and disinfecting affected farm premises where farmers have chosen to do this work themselves under the Department's supervision could be obtained only at disproportionate cost because of the number of payments involved and the fact that the records are not held centrally.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many samples of deer have been taken for foot and mouth disease analysis; and how many have tested *(a)* positive and *(b)* negative. [3244]

Mr. Morley: As of 2 July more than 60 samples have been submitted to the Institute of Animal Health for testing from various parts of England and Scotland. All have tested negative for evidence of the foot and mouth virus, antigens or antibodies.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what percentage of the national *(a)* flock of sheep and *(b)* herd of cattle has been culled as a result of the slaughter eradication policy. [2554]

Mr. Morley: The numbers of sheep and cattle that have been compulsorily slaughtered as a result of the cull on premises affected by foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Great Britain are as follows:

	Sheep	*Cattle*
Number of animals slaughtered as a result of FMD as at 4 July 2001	2,794,000	547,000
Number of animals in Great Britain as per June 2000 Agricultural Census	39,520,000	9,456,000
Percentage of national flock/herd slaughtered	7	6

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many foot and mouth disease carcases are being stored pending rendering. [2756]

Mr. Morley: No carcases are stored pending rendering. Most carcases are rendered on the day that they are delivered to the plant. Sometimes for operational reasons carcases may be held overnight at plants before being rendered on the following day or held overnight at carcase collection centres before being delivered to rendering plants. However, most carcases will be rendered within 24 hours of delivery to the plant.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her estimate is of *(a)* the tonnage of ash to be taken away from and *(b)* the number of locations of pyre sites in Cumbria. [2753]

Mr. Morley: Ash will only be removed from pyre sites in cases where it is not possible to bury it on site. We estimate that there are at least 45 pyre sites in Cumbria that fall into this category. Our initial estimate of the total amount of ash that will have to be removed from these sites is in the region of 10,000 tonnes.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on what dates over the last 10 years, MAFF/DEFRA contingency plans for foot and mouth disease were submitted to the EU or DoE/DETR. [2761]

Mr. Morley: The Great Britain contingency plan for foot and mouth disease, as required by Article 5 of Council Directive 90/423, in line with the criteria set out in the Commission Decision 91/42/EEC, was submitted to the EU in 1991 and approved by Commission Decision 93/455/EEC.

The first revision of the plan was in July 2000 and a copy was sent to the EU.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what consideration the Government have given to varying compensatory valuations at different stages of the foot and mouth outbreak. [2546]

Mr. Morley: For compensation purposes, the Animal Health Act 1981 stipulates the value of an animal as being its value immediately before it became affected with foot and mouth disease or, if not so affected, its value immediately before it was slaughtered. Standard valuations were set out in regulations in order to speed up the slaughter process, but farmers retained the right to request an individual valuation of their stock.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her assessment is of when foot and mouth disease will be eradicated in the United Kingdom. [2551]

Mr. Morley: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him on 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 492W.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on what dates over the last 20 years divisions or regions of MAFF/DEFRA were tested or updated on the contingency plans for foot and mouth disease. [2800]

Mr. Morley: The 23 Animal Health Divisional Offices have been required to hold one contingency planning exercise each year and to update their plans accordingly.

The 1999–2000, 25 such exercises were held and in 1998–99 there were 18 held. Prior to these dates, figures are not readily available.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will publish the protocols and guidance notes for the disinfection of all buildings, including sheds with cobbled floor and slurry pits, following an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. [2766]

Mr. Morley: Guidance for farmers and contractors on health and safety issues related to cleansing and disinfection are available on the DEFRA website at the following address: http://defraweb/footandmouth/farmers/during/safety.asp.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many animals were killed as part of the 3 km cull in Cumbria. [2548]

Mr. Morley: In Cumbria 504,160 animals were slaughtered in the 3 km cull.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many cases of foot and mouth have been detected because of surveillance visits by vets from her Department. [3420]

Mr. Morley: As at 11 July, 239 infected premises in Great Britain were confirmed as a result of such surveillance visits.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many *(a)* cattle and *(b)* sheep, on how many farms in (i) England and (ii) Cumbria, have been have been slaughtered because they were contiguous to infected premises; and how many of those tested negative for foot and mouth disease. [3445]

Mr. Morley: As of 11 July, the numbers of cattle and sheep slaughtered on Contiguous Premises (CPs) and numbers of CPs are shown in the table.

	England	*Cumbria*
Number of CPs	2,597	470
Cattle slaughtered	137,800	22,225
Sheep slaughtered	689,342	124,568

The following table shows, of those figures above, the numbers of CPs which returned a negative laboratory test result, and the numbers of cattle and sheep slaughtered on those premises.

	England	*Cumbria*
Number of negative CPs	175	45
Cattle slaughtered	11,189	2,798
Sheep slaughtered	75,644	21,495

A negative test result does not necessarily mean that the premises was free from disease. For instance, positive results may not be produced from tests on blood or tissue taken when the disease is in later stages or from newly infected animals where antibodies have not yet developed.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many complaints she has received from *(a)* organisations and *(b)* members of the public about the conduct of the military in assisting with the foot and mouth cull. [1487]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 2 July 2001]:* Complaints about the conduct of the military are likely to have been addressed to a number of different points within DEFRA and also the Ministry of Defence. Although the exact number of complaints is not known, in either Department, it is not thought to be high. Indeed, the armed forces were the subject of much praise from farmers and members of the public for their extremely valuable contribution towards the fight against foot and mouth disease.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she takes to ensure consistency in the advice her Department is offering to farmers on biosecurity relating to foot and mouth disease with the advice it is offering to county councils about the re-opening of footpaths; and if she will make a statement. [1988]

Mr. Morley: The Government's top priority has always been to eradicate the disease. Veterinary advice is that the main way the disease is being spread is by those working with or close to animals not taking appropriate biosecurity measures. At every opportunity we have emphasised the need for everyone consistently to take stringent precautions to avoid further spread.

However for those who have had no contact with animals or affected premises for at least seven days, the risk is considerably lower. The advice to walkers is consistent with the biosecurity message and includes: observe closed signs; use disinfectant troughs where provided; keep your dog on a lead where there are

livestock; and do not leave waste food around. Footpaths within a 3 km protection zone around infected premises should normally remain closed.

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what has been the cost to date of the operation to eradicate foot and mouth in the Ribble Valley. [1077]

Mr. Morley: The information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. For information relating to the cost of the outbreak as a whole to the Department, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him on 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 562W.

Hedgerows

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the proposed timetable is for consultation on the revised draft Hedgerows Regulations; and if she will make a statement. [1116]

Alun Michael: We expect to consult on proposals to amend the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 later this year.

Animal Welfare

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement about the progress of her review of the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals; and for how long representations may be made to her. [3711]

Mr. Morley: Responsibility for the European Convention was passed from the Home Office to this Department on 8 June. I will be happy to receive representatives from the hon. Gentleman and others about this new element in our responsibilities for animal welfare.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the measures she is taking to improve animal welfare. [3867]

Mr. Morley: This Government are committed to high animal welfare standards, not only in the UK but also on an EU wide basis. High welfare standards are best achieved through effective Community-wide legislation and enforcement. We will continue to work towards the delivery of positive change through a range of UK, European Union and Council of Europe measures designed to improve welfare conditions for all animals, following the transfer of certain animal welfare responsibilities from the Home Office.

Commission on the Future of Food and Farming

Mr. Breed: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) who will lead the commission to consider the future of food and farming; [3855]

(2) what the intended timetable is for the commission to consider the future of food and farming. [3856]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* An announcement will be made soon on the membership and terms of reference of the commission.

Wildlife Crime (Birds of Prey)

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what measures are in place to *(a)* stop wild birds of prey being illegally sold in the United Kingdom and *(b)* detect and prosecute those responsible for the illegal sale of wild birds of prey; and what further action is planned. [4167]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Legislation is already in place prohibiting the sale of most birds of prey species, unless a licence has been issued by my Department or one of the devolved Administrations. People found guilty of sales offences could face an unlimited fine and/or a prison sentence of up to two years.

Responsibility for enforcing the controls rests primarily with the police service. Most forces now have at least one part-time Wildlife Liaison Officer who would normally investigate these offences. The Department actively supports investigating officers, by providing information about the licences and permits it has issued, and from its bird registration system. It also manages a panel of Wildlife Inspectors, who check compliance with certain wildlife controls.

The Department also co-chairs the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime, comprising all the main Government and voluntary organisations committed to combating crimes against wildlife. The Partnership is taking forward a range of initiatives to raise awareness of wildlife crime and to support the work of police officers. One of its main priorities is to take forward work to establish a dedicated unit to tackle wildlife crime at national level.

Flood Defence Schemes (Robertsbridge)

Mr. Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will instruct the Environment Agency to commence work immediately on the flood defence schemes for Northbridge street and Rutley close, Robertsbridge. [3858]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Department has policy responsibility for flood and coastal defence and provides grant aid for capital works that meet certain criteria. However operational responsibility, including decisions on which projects to promote and their timing, rests with local operating authorities, such as the Environment Agency. I understand that the Agency is building on the findings of the pre-feasibility study of flooding problems in Robertsbridge, by commissioning a feasibility study to develop the outline design for suitable flood defences. The study will include consideration of flood defences for Northbridge street and Rutley close. Depending on the results of the study, I understand that the Environment Agency plans to commence works at Robertsbridge in summer 2002.

Flood Protection

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to amend the funding arrangements for flood protection measures; and if she will make a statement. [4136]

Mr. Morley: The funding arrangements for flood and coastal defence are currently being reviewed with a report due in September. I shall, of course, inform the House of the conclusions that are reached.

Departmental Co-operation

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) when she met the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions to discuss inter-departmental sharing of papers and joint decision-making; what is the intended timetable for future meetings to take place; and if she will make a statement; [4005]

(2) when she met the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to discuss inter-departmental sharing of papers and joint decision-making; what is the intended timetable for future meetings to take place; and if she will make a statement. [4006]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* It is vital that the Department works effectively with other Departments to deliver the Government's policy objectives. I regularly meet Ministerial colleagues from relevant parts of Government to discuss matters of shared interest. My officials also have frequent contacts with their counterparts in these areas.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans her Department has for future joint decision making in conjunction with the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions; and if she will make a statement. [4004]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* It is vital that the Department works effectively with other Departments to deliver the Government's policy objectives. We work closely with all relevant parts of Government, including the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, on matters of shared interest.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans her Department has for future joint decision making in conjunction with the Department of Trade and Industry; and if she will make a statement. [4007]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* It is vital that my Department works effectively with other Departments to deliver the Government's policy objectives. We work closely with all relevant parts of Government, including the Department of Trade and Industry, on matters of shared interest.

Common Agricultural Policy

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her timetable is for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy to reflect environmental concerns more closely; and if she will make a statement. [3987]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* We expect the European Commission to table proposals to the Agriculture Council for discussion next summer. The timing of those negotiations will be the responsibility of the member states holding the presidency at the time, which will be Spain for the period up to June 2002 and then Denmark.

We are committed to CAP reform and want to reduce the overall burden of the CAP, to secure a closer alignment between EU and world prices and to re-focus support on measures benefiting the rural economy and the environment.

Biotechnology

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the consultation exercises that have been undertaken over the last five years on farm animal biotechnology and cloning; what decisions have been made following these exercises; and which issues are still under consideration. [2562]

Mr. Morley: The Government received advice on the implications of cloning for farm animals in a report by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (published December 1998). Since then, the Government have established the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission (AEBC). Its remit includes providing strategic advice on the ethical and social aspects of developments in biotechnology, and on their public acceptability. An AEBC sub-group is currently exploring the subject of animals and biotechnology with the aim of providing a report to Government early next year. This may include consideration of the issue of the welfare of cloned animals. More generally, the Office of Science and Technology commissioned a consultation exercise on public attitudes to biotechnology in 1998–99, which included questions on the public perception of animal cloning.

State Veterinary Service

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many vets were employed by the Government Veterinary Service on 1 May *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 1997, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 2001. [3467]

Mr. Morley: The number of veterinary surgeons (full-time equivalents) employed by the State Veterinary Service (SVS) since January 1995 are shown in the table (figures for May are not readily accessible, other than those for 2001 which are given). The Veterinary Investigation Service became part of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) on 1 October 1995 and is not included in these figures from that date. In 2000, there were 99 veterinarians employed by the VLA. Much of the information presented here previously appeared on 27 February 1997, *Official Report*, columns 323–24W.

Of the 286 full-time equivalent veterinarians employed by the State Veterinary Service in 2001 as a whole, 220 veterinarians are employed as field veterinary officers. The work of these officers is supplemented by about 100 Temporary Veterinary Inspectors (TVIs) from the private sector in normal times.

Year as at 1 January	*Number of vets*
1995	394.5
1997	289.5
1999	283.0
2001	286.0

As at 1 May 2001 the total number of vets working in the State Veterinary Service was 1,718. The permanent veterinary staff were supplemented by TVIs, foreign Government vets on loan to the SVS, vets from the MAFF agencies and those on loan from other Government Departments.

Census

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the June farming census will be held; and what plans she has to alter the usual questions. [3437]

Mr. Morley: Following consultation with the industry my Department carried out the June Census on 1 June 2001 as originally planned. The decision to proceed was carefully considered. There is a need to be sensitive to the pressures the farming community is facing as a result of the Foot and Mouth outbreak, yet gather good information to help underpin policies for recovery.

Regarding alteration of the questions, the need for continuity of the statistical series and our legal obligations to collect certain details meant there were no changes to the census form. Consideration is currently being given to the collection of supplementary information relating to the wider impact of the outbreak upon farmers and the short, medium and longer term effects.

Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what targets she has set for the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science for 2001–02. [5028]

Mr. Meacher: I have set the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science the following performance targets for 2001–02.

Financial Control

To recover from Government Departments and Agencies and external customers the full economic costs of the Agency's services.

Efficiency

To achieve savings and efficiency gains in a range of key functions.

Quality and Service Delivery

To give satisfaction to customers in the way that outputs are provided, as measured by the CEFAS Customer Satisfaction Survey.

To make satisfactory progress with the Action Plan resulting from the 1999–2000 Science Audit.

To manage the Agency in an effective manner including pursuit of commercial exploitation of research outputs.

Forestry Commission (Expenditure)

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proposals she has to amend the Forestry Commission Departmental Expenditure Limits for *(a)* 2001–02, *(b)* 2002–03 and *(c)* 2003–04. [5029]

Mr. Morley: The National Assembly for Wales has now taken over responsibility for funding the Forestry Commission's activities in Wales, in accordance with the devolution arrangements, and so £5,256,000 will be transferred to the National Assembly from the Forestry Commission's Departmental Expenditure Limit in 2001–02 and in each of the following two years.

In addition, in order to allow the Forestry Commission to smooth out the effects on net expenditure of the current difficulties in achieving planned levels of income, the Departmental Expenditure Limit for 2001–02 will be increased by bringing £1,000,000 forward from the Departmental Expenditure Limits for both 2002–03 and 2003–04 (giving a total increase in 2001–02 of £2,000,000).

Subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the Departmental Expenditure Limit will also be increased in 2001–02 by £1,000. This token Supplementary Estimate is required to bring the ambit of the Summary Request for Supply presented to Parliament into line with the Departmental Supply Estimate.

The net effect of these changes is that the Forestry Commission's total budget over the last three years is increased by £1,000. However, following the transfer of responsibility for funding the Commission's activities in Wales, the Commission's Departmental Expenditure Limit for expenditure funded directly by Parliament will be reduced in 2001–02 by £3,255,000, from £70,592,000 to £67,337,000, and in each of the following two years by £6,256,000 from £75,052,000 to £68,796,000.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Replies

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 573W, on ministerial replies, if he will list by Department, the number of letters from members of the public not replied to since May 1997. [4734]

Mr. Leslie: The information is not held centrally in the form requested. I will later this week be placing in the Libraries of the House information on the percentage of letters answered by the main Departments and agencies within their correspondence target.

WORK AND PENSIONS

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the reservation taken by the UK to article 22 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. [3877]

Angela Eagle: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. The reservation in respect of article 22 in no way inhibits the discharge of our obligations under the Convention. It is there to safeguard the right of the United Kingdom to determine its own immigration and nationality laws.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what studies he has conducted into the timescale and evidence for material changes in capacity for working. [3088]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* Improvements in a person's work capability will vary from case to case according to their condition. This is not predictable and will also depend on the opportunities and support available. Research shows that around a third of disabled people not in work want to work. That is why we are committed to providing the right support for those who may be able to return to employment.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will publish the details of his planned changes to Incapacity Benefit before laying the regulations before the House. [4321]

Malcolm Wicks: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions gave the hon. Members for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) and for Northavon (Mr. Webb), and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Lynne Jones) on 11 July 2001, *Official Report,* columns 565–67W.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what is the average amount of time people currently claiming Incapacity Benefit have been in receipt of that benefit; [3226]

(2) what proportion of people receiving Incapacity Benefit for an indefinite period have had changed circumstances since the benefit was originally granted. [3225]

Malcolm Wicks: The average duration of claims to Incapacity Benefit current on 31 March 2000, the latest date for which the information is available, was 2,278 days. This figure is based on a 1 per cent. sample of claims and excludes cases where the person claiming was receiving National Insurance credits only.

Information on the proportion of people receiving Incapacity Benefit who have had a change of circumstances is not available.

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in receipt of Incapacity Benefit have been subjected to a new capability for work test as a result of *(a)* section 61 of the Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999 and *(b)* the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 1999. [3183]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* Between the introduction of the Personal Capability Assessment in April 2000 and the end of May 2001 (the latest date for which figures are available), 825,017 assessments were carried out.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will provide a breakdown of recipients of Incapacity Benefit by type of incapacity; and if he will make a statement. [3658]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The information is in the table.

Number of Incapacity Benefit recipients as at 28 February 2001

Thousand

Diagnoses group	*Number*
All diagnoses	1,515.2
Claimants without any diagnosis code on the system	4.2
Certain infectious and parasitic diseases (A00-B99)	11.2
Neoplasms (Coo-D48)	23.7
Diseases of the blood and blood forming organs and certain diseases involving the immune mechanism (D50-D89)	2.3
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases (E00-E90)	25.0
Mental and behavioural disorders (F00-F99)	392.0
Diseases of the nervous system (G00-G99)	83.7
Diseases of the eye and adnexa (H00-H59)	10.3
Diseases of the ear and mastoid process (H60-H95)	6.8
Diseases of the circulatory system (I00-I99)	155.4
Diseases of the respiratory system (J00-J99)	49.8
Diseases of the digestive system (K00-K93)	26.1
Diseases of the skin and subcutaneous system (L00-L99)	10.6
Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue (M00-M99)	400.8
Diseases of the genitourinary system (Noo-N99)	12.2
Pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium (O00-O99)	1.3
Certain conditions originating in the Perinatal period (P00-P96)	—
Congenital malformations, deformations and chromasomal abnormalities (Q00-Q99)	1.4
Symptoms, signs and abnormal clinical and laboratory findings, not elsewhere classified (R00-R99)	184.5
Injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes (S00-U22)	97.1
Factors influencing health status and contact with health services (Z00-Z99)	16.8

Note:

1. All diagnoses are coded using the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD10), published by the World Health Organisation. The codes in brackets following each heading show the ICD10 codes in each group.
2. The figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample of the benefit computer system and will exclude a small number of clerically held cases. They are expressed in thousands, rounded to the nearest hundred. Those marked with "—" denote nil or negligible.
3. If a person has more than one medical condition only the primary diagnosis is recorded.
4. Figures exclude cases where a claimant receives National Insurance credits only.

David Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many applications for Incapacity Benefit were refused in *(a)* 2000 and *(b)* this year to date. [4367]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The information is in the table.

Total Incapacity Benefit claims disallowed on application

	Number
1 January to 31 December 2000	379,806
1 January to 30 June 2001	183,233

Note:
1. Figures are taken from a 100 per cent. count of the computer system and exclude a small number of cases held clerically

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what has been the cost of Incapacity Benefit in each year since 1995 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* at current prices. [3065]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is available in statistical tables showing breakdowns of historical and forecast benefit expenditure which are in the Library. It is also available on the Department's internet site.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what evidence he has collated on the numbers of claimants of Incapacity Benefit who are capable of *(a)* full-time work on a sustained basis and *(b)* other kinds of work; [3177]

(2) what studies he has carried out into the skills, qualifications and work experience of present claimants of Incapacity Benefit; and what the result was. [3097]

Malcolm Wicks: Incapacity Benefit is a benefit for people who are not working because of sickness and disability, but this does not mean that they will never be capable of work. We know about one third of Incapacity Benefit recipients want to work. We believe it right to help them to achieve these ambitions.

A national survey has been carried out which gathered information on the skills and qualifications of people who were in receipt of incapacity-related benefits for 28 weeks or more, including Incapacity Benefit. We plan to publish detailed findings from the survey later this year. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people suffering from diabetes are in receipt of Incapacity Benefit. [3824]

Malcolm Wicks: The information requested is in the table.

Recipients of Incapacity Benefit (IB) whose diagnosis is diabetes as at 28 February 2001

Thousand

Diagnosis	*IB recipients*
Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus	[1]0.4
Non Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus	[1]0.3
Unspecified Diabetes Mellitus	20.3
Total	20.9

[1] Figures based on a very few sample cases and are therefore subject to a high degree of sampling error and should be used as a guide to the current situation only

Notes:
1. Figures given do not include Credits Only cases
2. Owing to the rounding method used the individual figures do not sum to the total
3. The table shows the numbers of Incapacity Benefit recipients whose first or only diagnosis is shown to be diabetes. They exclude numbers claiming Incapacity Benefit where another diagnosis is the primary cause of incapacity
4. The figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample of the benefit computer system and will exclude a small number of clerically held cases
5. They are expressed in thousands, rounded to the nearest hundred

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will set out the most recent figures for the review periods set for Incapacity Benefit, indicating how many recipients fall into each category *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* three to nine months, *(c)* nine to 18 months, *(d)* 18 months to 36 months, *(e)* three to five years, *(f)* more than five years and *(g)* indefinite. [4322]

Malcolm Wicks: The information requested is not available.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to review the regulations which exclude term time only workers from claiming Jobseeker's Allowance during the school holidays. [4449]

Malcolm Wicks: We are considering the terms of the House of Lords judgment of 28 June.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people *(a)* under and *(b)* over the age of 16 years and suffering from diabetes are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, listed by the (i) lower, (ii) middle and (iii) higher rate. [3834]

Maria Eagle: Disability Living Allowance comprises a care component with three rates and a mobility component with two. Relevant information is in the table.

People in receipt of Disability Living Allowance whose main disabling condition is diabetes mellitus[1]

	Age under 16	*Age 16 and over*
All recipients[2]	13,200	28,300
Recipients of each rate		
Highest rate care	2,800	5,900
Middle rate care	9,400	9,900
Lowest rate care	1,000	6,400
Higher rate mobility	[3]100	19,500
Lower rate mobility	1,500	4,400

[1] Figures relate to 30 November 2000.
[2] Some recipients receive both care and mobility components.
[3] Figure is too small to be statistically reliable.
Source:
The Department for Work and Pensions: 5 per cent. data.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what reviews are under way within his Department to examine the eligibility criteria for Disability Living Allowance for those diagnosed as having an irreversible condition. [3823]

Maria Eagle: Entitlement to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is based on care and mobility needs arising from a disability, not on particular medical conditions, and there are no specific reviews relating to irreversible conditions.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3511]

Mr. McCartney: The Employment Service and the Department of Social Security, had both made their own contractual arrangements for information technology (IT) prior to merging to form the Department for Work and Pensions.

Employment Service contracts

The Employment Service awarded a contract to Siemens Business Service (SBS) to provide an electronic communications system. The service is called Escom and the contract start date was 1 March 1998 with an estimated value of £6 million over the life of the contract. This is a five-year contract due to end 28 February 2003.

Up until August 1998 all other IT work was performed "in-house" by Employment Services' IT division. From 1 August 1998 ES outsourced its IT work in a partnership agreement with Electronic Data Systems (EDS). The original agreement ran until July 2008 with a value of £370 million. In October 2000 the agreement was revised to reflect major new investment in IT and telephony to improve services for jobless people and employers in the Modernising Employment Service (MES) project. The partnership agreement is on-going and retains the original end date of July 2008 with a revised value of £806.5 million.

Department of Social Security contracts

From 1 September 2000 the Department of Social Security outsourced all its IT provision via the award of the ACCORD Strategic Outsourcing Business Allocation. ACCORD is an overarching contract under which future IT services to the Department will be provided by three groups of IT suppliers. The lead supplier group is led by Electronic Data Systems (EDS). The other two supplier groups are headed by British Telecom (BT) and International Computer Ltd. (ICL).

To date, four specific businesses allocations have been awarded under the ACCORD contract:

The Strategic Outsourcing Business Allocation (SOBA) conferred lead supplier status on EDS and gave them responsibility for maintenance, development and operation of the Department's existing IT systems, together with a range of related IT services. The contract period is 1 September 2000 to 31 August 2010.

The Child Support Reforms business allocation was awarded to EDS, to provide new IT systems in support of the Child Support Agency. The contract period is 1 September 2000 to 31 August 2010.

The Networks and Office Services Provision (NOSP) business allocation was awarded to BT for the provision of networks and related communications services. The contract period is 30 April 2001 to 31 March 2006.

A business allocation covering Focus 95 Lots B, C and D was awarded to BT for maintenance and support of office IT equipment. This novated contracts previously awarded to other suppliers in 1995. All three lots have a contract end date of 30 November 2001.

The information requested regarding costs of business allocated under the ACCORD contract is not available as it is commercially confidential.

Prior to September 2000 the Department was responsible for its own IT provision but also used a large number of private sector contracts. In 1995 the Department undertook a major rationalisation of its IT contracting approach resulting in the Focus 95 contracts under which responsibility for IT support and operations was outsourced.

A list of IT contracts current at the time of that outsourcing (October 1995) has been placed in the Library. This list gives contractor names and contract periods but it is not possible to give contract values nor is it possible to provide details prior to 1995. This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Basic Pension

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many single retirement pensioners receive *(a)* 100 per cent. of basic rate retirement pension, *(b)* 90 to 99 per cent. of basic rate retirement pension, *(c)* 80 to 89 per cent. basic rate retirement pension and *(d)* less than 80 per cent. of basic rate retirement pension. [4053]

Mr. McCartney: The information is not available in the format requested. Such information as is available is in the table.

Retirement pensioners by proportion of basic state pension received: 30 September 2000

Thousand

	All retirement pensioners
All percentage rates	10,933.9
100 per cent.	6,745.5
90–99 per cent.	286.4
80–89 per cent.	245.6
Less than 80 per cent.	3,655.5

Notes:

1. The figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. Totals may not sum owing to rounding.
3. Includes retirement pensioners resident in Great Britain and overseas.
4. Excludes pensioners without entitlement to a basic state pension.

Source:

Figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample taken from the Pension Strategy Computer System at 30 September 2000.

State Second Pension

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will list the accrual rate implied by the state second pension in each £1,000 band of income up to £20,000 a year in the SSP in its *(a)* earnings related and *(b)* flat rate forms. [3699]

Mr. McCartney: The information is in the table:

State second pension accrual rates[1]

Annual earnings (£)	*Phase (A) (percentage)*	*Phase 2(B) (percentage)*
4,000	1,040	1,040
5,000	212	212
6,000	118	118
7,000	82	82
8,000	63	63
9,000	51	51
10,000	43	43
11,000	38	37
12,000	34	32
13,000	32	29
14,000	29	26
15,000	28	24
16,000	26	22
17,000	25	20
18,000	24	19
19,000	23	17
20,000	22	16

[1] The accrual rates shown are based on a 49-year working life, expressed in current terms. Unlike SERPS, which has an accrual rate of 20 per cent, the accrual rate for state second pension varies depending on income. State second pension concentrates the most help on the lowest paid. For example, a person earning £6,000 a year through their working life would get £59 a week from state second pension, £46 more than they would have received from SERPS.

TREASURY

Devolved Government Referendums

Mr. Brady: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the total cost to public funds was of the referendums on devolved government in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* London. [2600]

Mr. Andrew Smith: The total cost of the referendum on devolved government in Scotland is estimated at £4.35 million. The total cost of the referendum in Wales was £2.3 million, and in London £1.5 million.

Housing Wardens

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his plans to extend VAT to services provided by housing managers or wardens; and what estimate he has made of the revenue that will be used. [4092]

Mr. Boateng: There are no plans to change the VAT treatment of services provided by housing managers or wardens.

Asbestos Compensation

Tony Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that the financial services industry is adequately prepared for meeting future claims for compensation relating to the asbestos industry. [3514]

Ruth Kelly: As part of its normal supervisory role, the FSA considers all material risks which can have a serious adverse impact upon individual insurance companies. Due to the uncertainty of future asbestos-related claims costs, it monitors developments relating to the insurance of asbestos, paying attention to companies with significant liabilities in this area.

Biodiesel

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his most recent estimate is of the cost per tonne of carbon saved in biodiesel production. [4016]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The cost of saving a tonne of carbon from the promotion of biodiesel varies considerably depending on the type of feedstock used for biodiesel production and its additional production cost relative to mineral diesel.

DTLR estimates that the cost of saving a tonne of carbon from biodiesel could potentially range from about £900 to over £2,300.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in his Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement; [3967]

(2) what the terms of reference are for the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement. [3980]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to him by the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report,* column 690W.

Drug Seizures

Paul Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the value was of illegal drug seizures at points of entry to the UK in each of the past five years; and what the observed effect was on the street prices of illegal drugs. [2370]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* It is not possible to provide data on the total street value of all drug types seized by HM Customs and Excise at points of entry to the UK over the last five years which could be directly compared with the data available on street prices. The most comprehensive available data are for heroin and cocaine. Information relating to seizures for 2000–01 is not yet available.

The total value of heroin and cocaine seized by HM Customs and Excise in the four financial years from 1 April 1996 to 31 March 2000 is as follows:

£ million

	1996–97	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*
Heroin	£66.9	£156.8	£66.7	£96.7
Cocaine	£294.1	£242.1	£279.7	£150.7
Total	£361.0	£398.9	£346.4	£247.4

Between 1996 and 2000 the UK average street price for cocaine varied between £65 and £77 per gram, while the average price for heroin varied between £65 and £74. There is no direct correlation between variations in street price and the value of seizures.

Street prices can vary for a number of reasons. While law enforcement activity can have an impact, factors such as variances in the yield of drug crops, consumption trends, drug purity levels and stockpiling by distributors can also affect the price of drugs on the street.

Manufacturing Growth

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his predictions are for manufacturing growth over the 2001–02 financial year. [4657]

Ruth Kelly: The Government publish a forecast for manufacturing output twice a year, at Budget time and in the pre-Budget report. The most recent forecast was published in March 2001 in the Financial Statement and Budget Report (HC 279), and this forecast will next be updated in the pre-Budget report in the autumn.

Community Investment Tax Credits

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce *(a)* pilot schemes for community investment tax credits, *(b)* independent monitoring of the effectiveness of community investment tax credits and *(c)* internal monitoring of the effectiveness of community investment tax credits; and if he will make a statement. [4137]

Mr. Boateng: The Government intend to bring forward legislation on community investment tax credits in the Finance Bill 2002. We published a consultation document on the tax credits ("Enterprising Communities: a tax incentive for community investment") in March. The consultation period closed on July 2 and generated a largely positive response. The Government will announce decisions on the outcome of the consultation in due course. There will be robust processes for monitoring the effectiveness of any scheme.

Revenue Losses

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to obtain a more accurate account of the revenue losses outlined in the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General published on 9 February. [2995]

Dawn Primarolo: HM Customs and Excise Trust Statement for 1999–2000, which has been certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General, provided details of the estimated revenue losses due to excise diversion fraud of £668 million with further losses of £216 million involving goods diverted onto overseas markets where duty would have been due. Notes 9 and 10 to the Trust Statement, which is published with Customs Annual Report 1999–2000 (CM 5064), give further details.

In his report, the Comptroller and Auditor General also undertook to produce a further report to Parliament on diversion frauds and on the action planned by Customs. He will be reporting to the Public Accounts Committee. The report of the independent investigation conducted by John Roques, commissioned by the Paymaster General and the Chairman of Customs, will be published at the same time as the Comptroller and Auditor General's report is made available to the House.

Roques Report

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Roques report, referred to in section 5.3 of Comptroller and Auditor General's report published on 9 February, will be published. [3064]

Dawn Primarolo: The Roques report will be published at the same time as the Comptroller and Auditor General's further report on excise diversion is made available to the House (referred to in section 5.4 of his report published on 9 February).

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 18 July 2001

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

European Capital of Culture

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to review the guidelines associated with the European Capital of Culture for 2008. [3251]

Dr. Howells: Guidelines for those preparing bids for the European Capital of Culture 2008 were published in September last year, and I have no plans to review them.

School Sports and Arts

Mr. Fabian Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what will happen to moneys not used in the latest round of applications for sports and arts facilities in schools; [2870]

(2) what the reasons are for the length of time taken for a decision to be reached on the schools that are to be awarded money for sports and arts projects. [2869]

Dr. Howells: As announced in March 2001, around 300 schools have been invited to develop detailed applications under the Space for Sport and Arts programme, which are due by the end of October. All 65 of the local education authorities (LEAs) participating in the programme have been given an indicative funding allocation for planning purposes with a ceiling on each project of £0.5 million. LEAs are currently in the process of designing the spaces and applying for planning permission. Only once this has been done will it be possible to confirm the final allocations for each individual project. It is expected that the full £130 million allocated to this programme will be spent on those projects identified by the LEAs involved.

Lottery Funding

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to review how the Arts Council ensures that Lottery funding is distributed to the regions of England on an equal basis. [3203]

Dr. Howells: The Government are keen to see a fair distribution of funding throughout the country and have directed distributors to ensure that all parts of the UK have access to Lottery funds. The Arts Council of England undertook substantial consultation last year when devising the Arts Capital Programme, the first tranche of prioritised projects being announced in June 2001. Geographical inequity was one of a number of considerations in the programme, together with investment in Black, Asian and Chinese Arts associations.

Arts Council

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to her answer of 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 68–71W, on the Arts Council, if she will provide a breakdown of the figures per head of population in each local authority. [3131]

Dr. Howells: We have contacted West Midlands Arts Board to request the information required, and my noble Friend the Minister for the Arts will write to my hon. Friend as soon as it is available, placing copies of her letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much support the Arts Council provided for projects within each London authority in each of the last three years, broken down per head of population. [3204]

Dr. Howells: We have contacted both the Arts Council of England and London Arts to request the information required, and my noble Friend the Minister for the Arts will write to my hon. Friend as soon as it is available, placing copies of her letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Osborne House

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to comply with the provisions of the Osborne Estate Act 1902 pending the reintroduction of legislation to amend that Act; what proposals she has for the future use of rooms at Osborne House formerly occupied by the King Edward VII Convalescent Home for Officers; and what representations she has received on the future use of those premises. [3261]

Dr. Howells *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* The parts of Osborne House used formerly as the King Edward VII Convalescent Home for Officers which closed on 31 October 2000 will not be available for alternative use until repair and refurbishment of the exterior of the accommodation is completed. This is currently estimated to be in January 2002. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be considering how to meet from that date the obligations under the Osborne Estate Act 1902 to devote part of Osborne House for the benefit of members of the armed forces and the civil service until such time as the statutory requirement is repealed. English Heritage, which is responsible for the maintenance and management of the Osborne Estate, have sent my right hon. Friend proposals for opening to the public a large part of the former convalescent home accommodation and the gardens previously restricted to convalescent home use. My right hon. Friend has not received any other representations concerning the future use of the accommodation.

New Opportunities Fund

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will publish details of the most recent awards made under the New Opportunities Fund. [3956]

Mr. Caborn: A large number of awards have been announced recently by the New Opportunities Fund, including £1.6 million to facilitate access to 50,000 items of specific importance to the history and culture of Wales via the internet.

I have contacted the New Opportunities Fund to request the detailed information required, and I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as it is available, placing copies of my letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in her Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if she will make a statement; [3973]

(2) what the terms of reference are for the Green Minister in her Department; and if she will make a statement. [3982]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 689–90W.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on what dates her Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if she will make a statement. [4819]

Tessa Jowell: This Parliament the Green Ministers Committee has been reconstituted as the Cabinet Sub-Committee of Green Ministers, ENV(G), under the chairmanship of the Minister for the Environment. It is established practice under exemption two of Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information not to disclose information relating to the proceedings of Cabinet Committees.

Television Licences

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to *(a)* extend free television licences and *(b)* introduce reduced-cost television licences for pensioners under the age of 75 years. [4388]

Dr. Howells: The Government have no plans to extend free television licences to pensioners below the age of 75 or to introduce reduced fee licences for such individuals.

Party Political Broadcasts

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the arrangements under which the BBC and the ITV companies are given access to, and the right to edit, party political broadcasts. [4125]

Dr. Howells: The broadcasting of party political broadcasts is ultimately the responsibility of the broadcasters and the broadcasting regulatory authorities. It is the broadcasters' responsibility to ensure that all the material they broadcast complies with their obligations to maintain programme standards, such as those relating to taste and decency. They may reject any material submitted, including party political broadcasts, unless or until it so complies.

Regional Arts Board (West Midlands)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what funds have been made available for the west midlands to support *(a)* dancing, *(b)* singing and *(c)* acting through the regional arts board; and what plans she has to increase funding for these purposes. [3932]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The table shows expenditure through grant-in-aid and the Regional Arts Lottery Programme (RALP) for all artforms by West Midlands Arts which is the main funding body for the arts in the region for the last financial year, 2000–01. The Arts Council of England separately funds Birmingham Royal Ballet (£5,650,087) and the Royal Shakespeare Company (£9,160,300).

Alterations to the amounts already given to dancing, singing and acting is a matter for West Midlands Arts.

Artform	*Treasury*	*RALP*	*Total*
Crafts	134,120	25,699	159,819
Dance	672,775	261,087	933,862
Drama/Theatre/Mime	2,586,765	255,660	2,842,425
Film, Video and Broadcast	244,306	64,398	308,704
Literature	166,079	89,032	255,111
Mixed Media	138,475	—	138,475
Combined Arts	1,572,552	273,584	1,846,136
Music	1,958,030	110,231	2,068,261
Non-artform	800,849	—	800,849
Photography	113,534	—	113,534
Visual Arts	1,441,982	540,413	1,982,395
Grand Total	9,829,467	1,620,104	11,449,571

(a) Dancing may be included within Dance, Drama/Theatre or Combined Arts.

(b) Singing may be included within Music or Combined Arts. Not all music is singing.

(c) Acting may be included within Drama/Theatre/Mime, Combined Arts or Film, Video and Broadcast.

BBC

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will ask the Office of Fair Trading to investigate the market power of the BBC. [4506]

Dr. Howells *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* No. It is open to anyone with the appropriate evidence of alleged infringement of the Competition Act 1998 to raise this with the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Mark Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport from what source the BBC plans to fund the establishment and running of Network Z. [4654]

Dr. Howells *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The BBC has applied for approval to introduce Network Z as a licence-fee funded public broadcasting service.

Welsh Language Programmes

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many people viewed Welsh language programmes broadcast on S4C each week in the last six months. [4448]

Dr. Howells *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* This information is not currently available in the form requested. However, I understand that S4C has recently commissioned a more detailed analysis of its viewing figures, from which it should be possible to extract the information requested. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as this is available.

Foot and Mouth (Tourism)

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to make interest free loans available to tourism businesses affected by the economic impact of foot and mouth disease. [119]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* I have no plans to make such loans available, although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is closely monitoring the effectiveness of the financial assistance measures made available by Government to rural businesses, including tourism businesses, which are worth over £250 million. This package includes £50 million allocated to the Rural Business Recovery Fund, an estimated £22 million available in hardship rate relief and £120 million available in loans under the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme. Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue will also agree to the deferral of tax or National Insurance Contributions where a business is in serious financial difficulty.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by her Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by her Department. [3501]

Clare Short: DFID undertakes most of its IT development work in-house, with modest specialist consultancy support.

The Department has had three IT contracts above £500,000 since April 1991.

	ASSIST 96[1]	*CODA Accounts system*	*ASSIST 2000*[1]
Estimated cost (£ million)	2.25	2.8	3.2
Actual cost (£ million)	2.246	3	3.2
Estimated completion date	September 1996	July 1997	September 2001
Actual completion date	September 1996	February 1998	On schedule
Contractor	ELONEX	CODA	COMPAQ

[1] New desk-top

London Underground

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development when she last travelled on the London Underground in the course of her official duties. [3684]

Clare Short: I rarely travel on official duties to destinations served by the London Underground. I cannot recall when I last travelled on the underground in the course of official duties. I occasionally use the underground in a personal capacity.

TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

Walton Group

Mrs. Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress he is making in recovering the grant from the Walton Group plc in respect of Exchange Flags Liverpool; and if he will make a statement. [3689]

Ms Keeble: The civil claim for recovery of grant paid and interest thereon is proceeding and is expected to go to trial in June 2002.

Mrs. Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to his answer of 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 10W, what the breakdown of activities is for which the qualifying expenditure made available to the Walton Group plc for claimed work on Exchange Flags was made. [3668]

Ms Keeble: The grant was made available against the following work:

(i) the refurbishment of the semi-derelict building to provide a net area of not less than 400,000 square feet of floor space suitable for office use and not less than 350 parking spaces at basement level;

(ii) the re-paving and landscaping of an overall area of 2,025 square metres of the adjacent courtyard known as "Exchange Flags";

(iii) the refurbishment and fitting out of the former war room on the lower ground floor of the building as a museum.

Train Safety

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the timetable for implementation of train safety systems. [3555]

Mr. Jamieson: Under the Railway Safety Regulations, made by the Government in 1999, the Train Protection and Warning System (TPWS) must be installed and operational on the rail network by the end of 2003.

In addition, the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) will be advising the Government, next year, on regulations to take forward the new European Train Control System (ETCS) on high-speed and other main lines as recommended by the Joint Inquiry Report by Lord Cullen and Professor Uff into train protection systems published on 29 March 2001. A progress report will be published by HSC in September.

Nuclear Freight

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on how many occasions since July 1998 external radioactivity has been discovered on *(a)* transport flasks and *(b)* railroad flathaul carriages used for the transport of spent nuclear fuel to Sellafield from nuclear power plants. [3962]

Mr. Jamieson: Information on incidences of contamination of transport flasks and railway wagons is published annually in the report on events involving the transport of radioactive material in the UK. The reports covering events in 1998 and 1999 have been placed in the House Library. The report for events during 2000 will be published in October this year.

Housing Developments

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many new housing developments in Chorley have been built on brownfield sites since 1997; and how many are planned in each of the next five years. [4392]

Ms Keeble: Detailed figures are not available centrally. Under Best Value, Chorley Borough Council is required to report on the percentage of new homes built on previously developed land. The Audit Commission is currently collecting data from all authorities and the Government expect to be able to publish estimated outturn for 2000–2001 shortly.

Chorley Railway Station

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what steps he has taken to ensure disabled people can access Chorley railway station. [4393]

Ms Keeble: Access to railway stations for disabled people is covered by Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Since October 1999, service providers have been required to take reasonable steps to change practices, policies or procedures which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service. From 2004, service providers will have to take reasonable steps to remove, alter or provide reasonable means of avoiding physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service.

In addition, the Strategic Rail Authority is currently revising its Code of Practice, "Meeting the needs of Disabled Passengers", which is aimed at helping protect the interests of disabled users of railway passenger services and station services.

Railtrack are also committed to ensuring that disabled people have access to the railway network. I understand they are currently exploring a framework for achieving accessibility so that a detailed programme can be developed in consultation with train operators and other interested parties.

I am not aware of any specific plans to upgrade Chorley Station which I understand has wheelchair access to each platform but not between platforms.

Road Building

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will announce changes to the road building programme. [4115]

Mr. Jamieson: My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister announced a package of transport measures on 28 March 2001, *Official Report*, column 639W, which included the addition of eight schemes to the targeted programme of trunk road improvements.

Housing (Lancashire)

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what central Government support has been made available to *(a)* Hyndburn borough council and *(b)* Rossendale borough council, to tackle private sector housing disrepair in each of the last four years. [4267]

Ms Keeble: There is no longer a separate ring-fenced element for private sector renewal within the support provided for local authorities' housing capital programmes; this was merged into the general support for housing investment from 2001–02 to provide authorities with greater flexibility and reduce administrative burdens. The overall resources allocated to Hyndburn and Rossendale for housing investment in the last four years were as follows:

	1998–99	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*
Hyndburn borough council[1]				
Total	2,223	2,331	2,704	[2]3,607
of which:				
Ring-fenced for private sector renewal	769	759	[3]—	[3]—
Rossendale borough council				
Total	1,838	1,780	2,117	[2]3,337
of which:				
Ring-fenced for private sector renewal	483	483	[3]—	[3]—

[1] In addition, Hyndburn borough council is receiving £646,000 this year through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

[2] The 2001–02 allocations include amounts (£2,030 for Hyndburn and £2,410 for Rossendale) ring-fenced for expenditure on council housing through the new Major Repairs Allowance

[3] Not applicable

Landlords

Ms Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to his answer of 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 439W, on landlords, in how many cases the original decision was upheld. [4138]

Ms Keeble: I assume that my hon. Friend wishes to know how often, under paragraph 8 of the Schedule to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Leasehold Valuation

Tribunals (LVTs) have decided that the insurance available from an insurer was unsatisfactory or that the premiums payable were excessive.

The majority of applications made under these provisions were later withdrawn, were deemed to be outside the jurisdiction of the LVTs, or still await a decision. At the end of May 2001, only 10 cases had been determined. Of these, the insurance arrangements were deemed to be satisfactory in six cases. In the other four cases, the premiums were deemed to be excessive, or the arrangements unsatisfactory in other ways, or both.

Millennium Dome

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what discussions she has had since 15 February with Mr. Robert Bourne or associated parties regarding the future of the Dome. [4152]

Ms Keeble *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* None, but my noble and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning met Robert Bourne and his colleagues on 28 February 2001, at Mr. Bourne's request, following the Government's decision to end Legacy plc's preferred bidder status and the existing competition as announced on 15 February 2001.

Shared Ownership (Housing)

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he next intends to review the arrangements for supporting shared ownership housing options. [4622]

Ms Keeble: My Department, in conjunction with the National Assembly for Wales, has commissioned a research project to evaluate the current low cost home ownership programmes in England and Wales, and to identify and assess possible measures to improve their effectiveness. The scope of the research includes shared ownership schemes offered by registered social landlords. The study is expected to report in April 2002.

Housing Register

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what percentage of households in each local authority in London was on the housing register in April 2000. [4624]

Ms Keeble: The latest available information is presented in the table:

Estimated percentage of households on the housing register as at 1 April 2000: London

	Percentage
Barking and Dagenham	3.1
Barnet	4.0
Bexley	4.0
Brent	12.2
Bromley	2.5
Camden	6.5
City of London	26.2
Croydon	4.4
Ealing	6.0
Enfield	5.5
Greenwich	6.1
Hackney	8.1
Hammersmith and Fulham	6.0
Haringey	9.6
Harrow	3.1
Havering	1.8
Hillingdon	3.5
Hounslow	5.8
Islington	14.3
Kensington and Chelsea	9.1
Kingston upon Thames	4.9
Lambeth	12.7
Lewisham	9.0
Merton	4.9
Newham	12.5
Redbridge	3.9
Richmond upon Thames	5.8
Southwark	5.2
Sutton	2.8
Tower Hamlets	8.8
Waltham Forest	8.0
Wandsworth	2.0
Westminster	7.2

Note:
Local authorities have different practices for compiling and managing housing register/waiting lists which mean that simple comparisons between authorities can be misleading.
Source:
DETR Housing Investment Programme returns (Housing Register data)
DETR 1999 mid-year household estimates

Bedroom Standard

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will estimate, for each region in England the percentage of households *(a)* with at least 1.5 rooms per person, *(b)* occupying properties consistent with the bedroom standard and *(c)* occupying properties at least one room below the bedroom standard (i) as owner occupiers, (ii) as council tenants and (iii) as RSL tenants. [4625]

Ms Keeble: The information requested is shown in the following table.

England 1997–98 to 1999–2000

Percentage

Tenure and Government office region	(a) At least 1.5 rooms per person	(b) At bedroom standard	(b) Above bedroom standard	(b) All at or above bedroom standard	(c) Below bedroom standard
(i) Owner occupiers					
North East	88	17	82	99	1
North West	88	17	82	98	2
Yorkshire and the Humber	88	16	83	99	1
East Midlands	90	14	85	99	1
West Midlands	88	16	83	98	2
East	89	16	82	99	1
London	86	24	74	97	3

England 1997–98 to 1999–2000

Percentage

Tenure and Government office region	*(a)* *At least 1.5 rooms per person*	*At bedroom standard*	*(b)* *Above bedroom standard*	*All at or above bedroom standard*	*(c)* *Below bedroom standard*
South East	89	16	83	99	1
South West	90	15	84	99	1
England	88	17	82	99	1
(ii) Council tenants					
North East	82	44	53	97	3
North West	81	48	48	96	4
Yorkshire and the Humber	79	45	51	96	4
East Midlands	83	47	51	97	3
West Midlands	80	47	49	95	5
East	80	51	46	97	3
London	70	57	32	88	12
South East	75	56	39	96	4
South West	75	52	43	95	5
England	78	50	45	95	5
(iii) RSL tenants					
North East	86	53	46	99	1
North West	80	61	36	97	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	82	65	33	98	2
East Midlands	79	61	35	96	4
West Midlands	82	59	38	96	4
East	78	60	37	97	3
London	71	71	22	93	7
South East	69	66	30	96	4
South West	72	66	32	98	2
England	76	64	32	96	4

Source:
DTLR Survey of English Housing. Average for financial years 1997–98 to 1999–2000

London Underground

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment of the relative priority in respect of the London underground he has made of *(a)* refurbishing stations to incorporate shopping malls and *(b)* maintenance of rolling stock, track and signals; to what extent Transport for London's chosen priority in this regard will apply and how the infrastructure companies will influence such decisions; and if he will make a statement. [4722]

Mr. Jamieson: The plans for the modernisation of the underground will deliver around £13 billion to improve the underground's infrastructure over the next 15 years. The relative priorities for rolling stock, track, signals and stations have been set by the public sector, not the infrastructure companies. The requirements have been designed to improve the capacity, reliability and quality of the underground as quickly and efficiently as possible, while maintaining high safety standards.

Within this balanced programme, expenditure on stations will account for less than a quarter of the total investment over the next 15 years. The priority at stations will not be to incorporate shopping malls, but to address those other issues passengers consider important: making sure the lifts and escalators work; installing CCTV to improve passenger security; tackling congestion at the busiest stations; providing step-free access; and improving the quality and cleanliness of stations.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list penalty clauses and similar liability arrangements in the London Underground contract with the infrastructure companies; by whom they were drawn up; if they and performance relating to them will be published; and if he will make a statement. [4723]

Mr. Jamieson: Contracts for the modernisation of the tube have been developed by London Underground Limited. I understand that London Underground has set the priorities to ensure the private companies provide improved infrastructure so that London Underground can operate a safe and reliable service for passengers. Infrastructure companies will be rewarded for improving the capacity, reliability and quality of the underground infrastructure, and penalised for poor performance. Penalties in the contract will reflect the full impact of any delay or disruption to passengers and not be limited by a cap. I understand that London Underground intends to publish the contracts once negotiations have been completed and will make available information on performance.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how he expects new investment in the London Underground to be spent. [4721]

Mr. Jamieson: The plans for the modernisation of the tube provide a comprehensive package to renew the whole of the underground's infrastructure and are designed to ensure that the money is spent efficiently, with improvements specified by the public sector delivered on time and on budget. Around £13 billion of investment will be made over the next 15 years, with some £8.7 billion spent on enhancements and £4.3 billion on maintenance—a higher level of sustained investment than ever before.

As a result of this investment, services will be faster and more frequent with, for example, a 20 per cent. increase in capacity on the Victoria line. Fewer breakdowns and delays will result in a more reliable service. Every train on the underground will be replaced or refurbished over the lifetime of the contracts, and every station will be upgraded in the first seven and a half years.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the annual number of breakdowns on each line of London Underground involving signal, points and track failures has been since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [4611]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational issue for London Underground which has provided the following information:

Service disruptions due to failures in signals/points

	1994–95	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Non LT	21	26	20	41	26	26	16
Bakerloo	343	263	264	292	249	355	248
Central	518	542	644	880	308	335	490
District	334	385	303	269	278	394	525
Jubilee and East LL	140	79	79	110	197	338	444
Metropolitan and Circle (c and h)	180	212	129	131	125	238	407
Metropolitan and Circle (main)	247	256	209	266	194	290	522
Northern	245	324	298	323	216	317	358
Picadilly	222	287	261	241	213	202	326
Victoria	99	120	115	166	149	131	186
Total	2,349	2,494	2,322	2,719	1,955	2,626	3,522

Service disruptions due to failures in other track

	1994–95	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Non LT	6	38	26	10	14	12	5
Bakerloo	53	99	193	201	176	168	171
Central	100	147	203	92	65	50	62
District	74	101	74	51	69	83	179
Jubilee and East LL	54	74	45	38	77	146	136
Metropolitan and Circle (c and h)	61	78	75	61	57	62	98
Metropolitan and Circle (main)	88	118	105	73	83	82	136
Northern	95	123	141	165	109	105	208
Picadilly	86	125	92	110	109	135	165
Victoria	42	56	54	80	66	66	58
Total	659	959	1,008	881	825	909	1,218

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will publish the financial assessment of the methods of funding future capital investment in the London Underground over a similar period favoured by *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* Transport for London. [4726]

Mr. Jamieson: We have made clear that our plans for the London Underground will go ahead only if they represent value for money. We will make this judgment guided by the results of the robust public sector comparator that London Underground has constructed. This explicitly allows for the possibility of public sector bond financing, in line with the scheme suggested by Transport for London.

A note outlining the methodology used to develop the comparator was placed in the Libraries of the House in March 2000. The results of the comparator will also be published once negotiations with bidders have been completed. To release the comparator any earlier would risk undermining London Underground's negotiating position and jeopardise its ability to achieve value for money for the taxpayer.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what are the principal reasons for the cost overrun for the extension of the Jubilee Line from Green Park to Stratford; what his estimate of the total of that cost overrun is; what percentage of the original estimate that represents; what is the estimated cost; which parties overran in each case; what circumstances were responsible for the cost overrun; how much was paid to consultants in relation to the line extension; what assessment has been made of how inaccurate cost assessments contributed to cost overruns; what contractual mistakes were made and extra cost incurred from them; and if he will make a statement. [4728]

Mr. Jamieson: The Jubilee Line Extension (JLE) was a vast and complex undertaking, managed by London Transport/London Underground Limited. It was one of the largest engineering projects in this country for many years. This Government inherited a project already under way, and poorly planned. Various studies of the JLE have been carried out and others are still under way. The current forecast total cost is £3.5 billion, including commissioning costs. Actual final cost will not be known until all contracts and claims are settled. When it was given the go-ahead, the JLE was expected to cost £2.1 billion (at 1993 cash prices, excluding commissioning costs).

The causes of JLE cost overruns included the omission from the original figure of estimates for commissioning the line and turning it into a working railway; amendments to the programme and opening strategy

which had associated acceleration and prolongation costs; changes to specifications such as the addition of CCTV, not originally specified but later required in line with improvements elsewhere on the Tube; 'descoping' of systems such as signalling and communications; and other factors entirely outside the control of the project or its contractors, such as the new Austrian tunnelling method collapse on the Heathrow Express Project which caused all NATM JLE tunnelling to be suspended causing delays of around six months. Industrial action and vandalism contributed to increased costs.

I will write to my hon. Friend about expenditure on consultants.

Various studies of the JLE have been undertaken. Some have already produced outcomes; others are still under way. The end of commission report by the Secretary of State's Agent, Ove Arup, made recommendations, and following the review of this report by Peter Gershon of the Office of Government Commerce, specific OGC recommendations on the whole process of major project approval and management are being implemented.

It is clear that project management and contractual arrangements contributed significantly to JLE overruns: this indicates the need for better measures for the future. Improved arrangements have been included in the contracts offered to bidders who will be London Underground's partners in the programme for the modernisation of the Tube. In particular, the private contractors will bear responsibility for projects that come in over time and beyond budget.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many alternatives for the future funding of the London Underground were put to *(a)* him and *(b)* Transport for London; and if he will make a statement. [4727]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government ruled out privatisation of the Underground, but carefully considered all other options for modernising the Underground, including the use of bond financing, a public trust, joint ventures, vertically integrated business and the status quo. We firmly believe that our plans are the best way to achieve a 21st Century Tube, and to ensure safety and value for money. The Underground will remain publicly owned and run, and the massive programme of investment will be carried out in partnership with the private sector as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Transport for London submitted to the Mayor its outline of a programme for the rehabilitation and management of the Underground in December 2000 and a Proposed Management Plan for the London Underground in April 2001. It is a matter for Transport for London whether they considered any alternatives to the ideas put forward in those reports.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how much *(a)* public capital investment and *(b)* private sector investment is proposed to be made in each of the next 15 years into the London Underground; what will be the return on capital for the private sector investors; who will pay it; and if he will make a statement. [4725]

Mr. Jamieson: The plans for the modernisation of the Underground will deliver around £13 billion of investment to improve the underground's infrastructure over the next 15 years. It is estimated that some 20 per cent. of finance for these plans will be provided by the private sector, with the remainder coming from London Underground fares and Government grant.

The rate of the return for the private sector will be determined by the outcome of London Underground's negotiations with bidders. The agreed rate of return will be achieved only if the private companies meet their obligations to provide track, trains, signals and stations with increased capacity, better reliability and higher quality.

Greenwich Peninsula Land Sale

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to his answer of 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 527W, under what circumstances British Gas (Lattice Properties plc) would receive 7.5 per cent of the open market value of the land on the Greenwich peninsula. [4410]

Ms Keeble *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* This is a matter to be agreed by British Gas (Lattice Properties plc) and English Partnerships, taking account of the Sale and Purchase Agreement between both these parties, dated 7 February 1997.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to his answer of 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 527W, what previous estimates have been made of the open market value of the British Gas (Lattice Properties plc) interest in land on the Greenwich peninsula; and what its estimated current value is. [4411]

Ms Keeble *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* Various (public and private) estimates have been made of the value of the land on the Greenwich peninsula which English Partnerships acquired from British Gas (Lattice Properties plc) in 1997, and consequently of the British Gas interest in such land. However, any valuations are confidential and it would be against the public interest to reveal these figures.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to his answer of 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 527W, who will be responsible for establishing the open market value of the British Gas (Lattice Properties plc) interest on the Greenwich peninsula. [4412]

Ms Keeble *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* This is a matter to be agreed by English Partnerships and British Gas (Lattice Properties plc), in accordance with the Sale and Purchase agreement between both these parties, dated 7 February 1997.

Speed Restrictions (Trains)

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many speed restrictions were in place on the rail network at the

end of each month since October 2000 in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* the area covered by each franchise; and how many are anticipated to be in place at the end of (i) July, (ii) August, (iii) September and (iv) October. [4652]

Mr. Spellar *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* Railtrack reports that the number of temporary speed restrictions in place across its network in Great Britain at the end of each month was:

	Number
October 2000	504
November	626
December	1,100
January 2001	1,045
February	964
March	1,188
April	908
May	779
June	773

These national figures cannot meaningfully be broken down into the areas covered by each franchise because the services of many franchisees overlap. Individual speed restrictions will often affect the trains of several operators all using that line. Railtrack does however ensure close dialogue on outstanding speed restrictions with each operator in order to maintain safety and service reliability.

Railtrack is working with train operators and contractors to return to a sustainable level of speed restrictions across the network as soon as possible, but the precise number of restrictions which will be in place over the coming months cannot be accurately predicted.

At any one time there is always a large number, typically 300 to 500, of speed restrictions in force on the network; these are needed to maintain safe operation in adverse operating conditions and to enable normal maintenance activities to be completed. Allowances are made for such speed restrictions within timetables.

Air Traffic Control

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many programme trouble reports there are in the air system controls at the new En Route Centre at Swanwick; and in each case, what the details and severity of the programme trouble reports are. [4616]

Mr. Spellar: There are currently 136 Programme Trouble Reports (PTRs) or "bugs" on the Swanwick systems that are required to be fixed before the unit enters operational service on 27 January 2002. Of these PTRs, fixes for 51 are scheduled for deployment on to the Swanwick software this week. Fixes for the remainder will be delivered in the software build which will be deployed to the operational system in November 2001. Listing the details and severity of each PTR would be extremely time-consuming and could be provided only at disproportionate expense.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions in what circumstances a programme trouble report can cause an aircraft not to be shown on a controller's screen. [4618]

Mr. Spellar: NATS have informed us that no programme trouble reports logged in the development of the Swanwick systems have caused aircraft not to be shown on a controller's screen.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how much extra traffic will be accommodated by the new air traffic control systems at the new En Route Centre at Swanwick in the first year of operation. [4617]

Mr. Spellar: When the Swanwick Centre enters operational service in January next year, the capacity of the unit will be constrained while ATC staff gain confidence and familiarity with the new equipment and procedures. As this confidence and competence improves, capacity will be slowly increased to match the capacity of the equivalent LATCC sectors. NATS anticipate that, by the end of summer 2002, capacity will increase by around 5 per cent.; and by a further 5 per cent. the following year.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many workarounds relating to air system control there are at the new En Route Centre at Swanwick. [4619]

Mr. Spellar: NATS have informed us that the Swanwick systems contain no "workarounds", i.e. sub-optimal solutions to achieve system modifications.

Compulsory Purchase

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what action he has taken to improve the system of compulsory purchase and compensation; and if he will introduce reforming legislation at an early date; [4595]

(2) when he will publish the Government's response to the consultation on the 'Fundamental Review of the Laws and Procedures Relating to Compulsory Purchase and Compensation' conducted by the former DETR last year. [4594]

Ms Keeble: In response to the consultation on the Fundamental Review, to which my hon. Friend refers, we are currently preparing a Policy Statement setting out the Government's proposals for making the system of compulsory purchase and compensation more efficient, more effective and fairer to all parties. This will be published as soon as possible, and will include an assessment of the need for reforming legislation. The Fundamental Review also pointed out that the operation of the compulsory purchase system is suffering from a loss of expertise and experience in acquiring authorities. We have therefore commissioned a Guidance Manual to help authorities make more effective use of the current system. This is due to be published in the autumn.

Empty Homes

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many empty homes there were in England broken down by region for the most recent year for which statistics are available. [4631]

Ms Keeble: The available information on empty residential property in England at the beginning of 2000–01 is given in the table:

	Total vacant dwellings
North East	49,000
Yorkshire and the Humber	99,700
East Midlands	68,000
Eastern	70,200
London	[1]105,200
South East	87,500
South West	64,100
West Midlands	79,800
North West	[1]138,300
England	763,900

[1] Denotes that local authority (LA) vacants exclude any such dwellings situated in another authority district. England totals reflect all LA-owned vacants.

Sources:

DTLR Annual Housing Investment Programme and Housing Corporation annual RS returns

The majority of these vacants are transitional ones between owners or tenants and are vacant only for a short period.

Deep Vein Thrombosis

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he expects the study funded by the Civil Aviation Authority into research into deep vein thrombosis and air travel to be completed; and if he will make a statement. [4587]

Mr. Jamieson: The study, which is being funded by the Civil Aviation Authority to look into the link between aircraft seat dimension and passenger size, is being carried out on behalf of the Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA). Publication of the study, which will include a review of recent work on deep vein thrombosis, will follow its approval by the JAA member states. In addition, my Department and the Department of Health, together with the Civil Aviation Authority and the Health and Safety Executive, are supporting a study to look into the research that has been done to date on all aviation health matters. This study will cover a number of health issues associated with air travel—including deep vein thrombosis—and will make suggestions for further research. This report will be published during July.

PFI Road Schemes

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many penalty points have been accumulated for each PFI road scheme in his Department; for which reason each of these points was awarded; what penalties were invoked; and if he will make a statement. [4459]

Mr. Jamieson: The overall performance of our PFI contracts is good. There have however been instances when it has been necessary to award penalty points for failure to achieve the required level of performance. The use of the penalty point system has been successful in improving poor performance as contractors have been anxious to avoid contractual warning letters and to face the risk of termination. The contracts are subject to confidentiality agreements and so the information cannot be given for individual contracts. Most points have been awarded during the construction phase of the contracts. During operations it has been necessary to award fewer points.

PPG8

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when the draft revision of Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 will be implemented. [4645]

Ms Keeble: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Oaten) on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 17W.

Planning Inquiry Commission

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what research his Department has undertaken into the potential for using powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to establish a Planning Inquiry Commission; and if he will publish the results. [4635]

Ms Keeble: The Department has considered the potential for establishing a Planning Inquiry Commission in the context of handling decisions on major infrastructure projects, but has undertaken no research.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) if he will set out the terms of reference for the role of the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement; [4829]

(2) on what dates a Green Minister was *(a)* first appointed and *(b)* subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement. [4830]

Dr. Whitehead: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 689–90W.

St. Leonard's Hospital, Dorset

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on what date the public inquiry into the appeal by the Secretary of State for Health in respect of the site at St. Leonard's hospital, Dorset is to be heard. [4757]

Ms Keeble: Although this appeal was received in the Planning Inspectorate on 1 June 2000, work on it has been suspended following a direction to the appellant by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions to submit an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This has now been received and the Inspectorate will shortly make arrangements for the inquiry, once the appellant has carried out the necessary publicity for the EIA.

Bus Travel

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to reduce the cost of bus travel. [4907]

Ms Keeble: Outside London, the setting of bus fares is a matter for individual bus operators and they have a commercial incentive to keep fares at an affordable level, in order to attract passengers. In general, bus fares have tended to rise in line with the growth in average earnings. Local authorities have powers to arrange travel concessions for specified groups. But as part of our commitment to ensuring that elderly and disabled people have access to affordable transport, we have guaranteed them half fares on local bus services under the Transport Act 2000. The Travel Concessions (Eligibility) Bill, which is currently being debated in the other place, will go further and equalise at 60 the age at which both men and women become entitled to concessionary travel.

Buses have a vital role to play in our transport system. We have brought forward a range of policies to make bus travel more reliable and attractive for the passenger, and are supporting this with substantially increased capital funding. We are confident that this will lead to increased patronage, which in turn should help to keep fares down.

Departmental Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4894]

Mr. Byers: As is the case throughout the year there will be a Minister on duty at all times over the summer.

Leases (Insurance)

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will examine the practice of purchasing leases in order to demand from householders that they insure the houses as directed by the new leaseholders or buy the right to choose their own insurer. [4576]

Ms Keeble: We are aware of and deplore this practice. Leaseholders do already have rights which allow them to address such abuses. They are able to purchase their landlord's interests under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, thereby removing his control over the insurance of the property. They can also apply to a leasehold valuation tribunal to challenge the landlord's choice of nominated insurer under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. Measures to improve the operation of these rights form part of our work on leasehold reform and improving the tribunals. We are also looking separately at further ways in which this practice might be addressed.

American Vehicle Imports

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what discussions he has had with the European Commission about an exemption from the Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001 to allow the import of American vehicles with small number plates; and if he will make a statement. [4756]

Mr. Jamieson: Officials have recently met with representatives of the European Commission and American car importers. The Government are carefully considering the representations made and will make an announcement shortly.

Unexploded Bomb (Epping Forest)

Mr. Rammell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will provide financial assistance to Epping Forest district council under the Bellwin scheme in respect of costs incurred for the unexploded bomb incident on 7 and 8 November 2000. [5487]

Mr. Raynsford: I am satisfied that financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme is justified in the case of Epping Forest district council given the exceptional nature of the incident. A scheme will therefore be established under section 155 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Grant will be paid to cover 85 per cent. of the eligible costs above a threshold, which the authority has incurred in dealing with the unexploded bomb.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Visits

Q12. **Sir Patrick Cormack:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will visit South Staffordshire during the forthcoming recess. [2913]

The Prime Minister: I have no plans at present to do so.

Government Annual Report

Mr. Laws: To ask the Prime Minister on what dates the Government have published their annual report; what the total cost of producing and publishing each report has been; when the next report will be published; and if he will make a statement. [3661]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 12 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 638W.

The publication dates, and total costs of the Government annual reports are as follows:

	Publication date	*Total costs (£)*
Government annual report		
1997–98	30 July 1998	250,000
1998–99	26 July 1999	180,000
1999–2000	13 July 2000	125,000

Public Correspondence

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters he received on average per week from members of the public over the last six months. [4798]

The Prime Minister: During the first six months of 2001 I received 253,230 letters and cards from members of the public. The number of letters and cards I receive varies significantly from week to week.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Solicitor-General on what dates her Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if she will make a statement. [4824]

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165.

DEFENCE

Service Children's Education

Dr. Palmer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the key targets are for the Chief Executive of Service Children's Education for 2001–02. [5486]

Dr. Moonie: The Chief Executive has been set the following key targets for 2001–02.

1. To meet the following percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 at the end of Key Stage 1 in:

   Reading—89 per cent.

   Writing—91 per cent.

   Spelling—80 per cent.

   Mathematics—93 per cent.

2. To meet the following percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above at the end of Key Stage 2 in:

   English—77 per cent.

   Mathematics—74 per cent.

   Science—88 per cent.

3. To meet the following percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above at the end of Key Stage 3 in:

   English—76 per cent.

   Mathematics—75 per cent.

   Science—71 per cent.

4. To meet a three year rolling average percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving five or more higher (A*-C) grades in GCSE of 50 per cent.

5. To meet a three year rolling average subject entries achieving passes at grades A-C at A Level of 56 per cent.

6. To meet the following percentages against the four attributes of Standards, Quality, School Climate and Management and Efficiency measured during Ofsted inspections.

   100 per cent. of SCE schools are to achieve grade 3 or above.

   85 per cent. of SCE schools are to achieve grade 2 or above except that in the "Schools Climate" attribute 100 per cent. of SCE schools are to achieve grade 2 or above.

7. To respond in full to customers seeking education advice from SCE (UK) within the following timescales:

   93 per cent. within 10 working days of receipt

   remainder within 20 working days of receipt.

Gulf Veterans

Dr. Palmer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the latest figures are for deaths of Gulf veterans, and among the control group. [5608]

Dr. Moonie: Peer reviewed scientific data comparing the mortality of UK Gulf veterans with an era group of service personnel who did not deploy to the Gulf were published for the first time in *The Lancet* on 1 July 2000. Updates to these figures were provided by the Ministry of Defence to the House on 20 July 2000, *Official Report*, columns 247–49W, and 22 January 2001, *Official Report*, columns 414–16W. The MOD has undertaken to continue to monitor the mortality of both Gulf veterans and the era group and will publish updated figures on a regular basis. The figures as at 30 June 2001 are shown in the table.

Overall, in the period 1 April 1991 to 30 June 2001 the mortality of UK Gulf veterans was no different from that of the control group. The number of Gulf veterans dying from disease related causes is rather less than the control group, whereas the number of Gulf veterans dying of external causes is rather higher than for the control group. The MOD will conduct a more detailed analysis of accidental deaths, to establish where there are any underlying trends that might help explain this.

Deaths to UK Gulf veterans[1] 1 April 1991–30 June 2001
Causes (coded to ICD-9)[2]

ICD chapter	*Cause of death*	*Gulf*	*Era*	*Mortality rate ratio*
	All deaths	496	494	1.00
	All cause coded deaths	485	473	1.02
I-XVI	Disease-related causes	179	216	0.83
I	Infectious and parasitic diseases	3	2	1.49
II	Cancers	71	77	0.92
III	Endocrine and immune disorders	1	4	0.25
V	Mental disorders	9	11	0.81
VI	Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs	7	6	1.16
VII	Diseases of the circulatory system	66	86	0.76
VIII	Diseases of the respiratory system	10	5	1.99
IX	Diseases of the digestive system	9	14	0.64
IV, X-XVI	All other disease-related causes	3	11	0.27
EXVII	External causes of injury and poisoning	306	257	1.18
	Railway accidents	4	1	3.98
	Motor vehicle accidents	110	88	1.24
	Water transport accidents	4	1	3.98
	Air and space accidents	25	17	1.46
	Other vehicle accidents	0	1	0.00
	Accidental poisoning	10	13	0.77
	Accidental falls	8	6	1.33
	Accidents due to fire/flames	0	1	0.00
	Accidents due to natural environmental factors	2	2	1.00

Deaths to UK Gulf veterans[1] 1 April 1991–30 June 2001
Causes (coded to ICD-9)[2]

ICD chapter	Cause of death	Gulf	Era	Mortality rate ratio
	Accidents due to submersion/suffocation/foreign bodies	16	6	2.65
	Other accidents	31	27	1.14
	Late effects of accident/injury	0	2	0.00
	Suicide and injury undetermined whether accidental	88	84	1.04
	Homicide	5	4	1.24
	Injury resulting from the operations of war	3	4	0.75
	Other deaths for which coded cause data are not yet available	9	18	—
	Overseas deaths for which cause data are not available	2	3	—

[1] Service and ex-service personnel only
[2] World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases 9th revision 1977

Defence Research (Animals)

Dr. Palmer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the use of animals in defence research. [5609]

Dr. Moonie: The independent Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC), chaired by Dr. Robert C. Hubrecht, has recently published its fifth annual report. The committee was set up in 1996 in response to public and parliamentary concern over the use of animals in defence research. Its purpose is to consult, inspect and make all necessary inquiries into all aspects of animal care and their use in establishments of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), part of the former Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA).

The committee's report gives assurances that animals used in defence research programmes in the UK are regulated under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and that no special exemptions apply to MOD. The committee's report emphasises the work that DERA have done to ensure the welfare of all animals used for defence research purposes. The committee was satisfied that all possible efforts were being made to ensure animal welfare and care.

Animal research is essential in order to protect our troops from hazards encountered during their duties. However, the Ministry of Defence continues to place emphasis on seeking alternatives to animal use. Although the numbers of animals used have reduced from past years, the technologies which will allow further reduction are still immature. The MOD welcomes the scrutiny by the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee in this area and will continue to support AWAC's review into the care and welfare arrangements for animals used in defence research.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in his Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement; [3895]

(2) what the terms of reference are for the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement. [3976]

Dr. Moonie *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment gave on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 690W.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if he will make a statement. [4813]

Dr. Moonie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

Military and Defence Exports

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish his forthcoming study into the Government's subsidisation of the military export and defence sector; when this study is expected to be completed; and when Parliament will be able to review the findings of the study. [4739]

Dr. Moonie: We expect the study into the costs and economic benefits of defence exports being undertaken by the Ministry of Defence's Senior Economic Adviser, with contributions from leading, independent, academic defence economists, to be completed shortly. It will be published and made available as soon as possible for review by the House of Commons Defence Committee, which originally proposed the study.

I do not expect the analysis to show that there is Government subsidisation of defence exports, but rather to reflect the fact that there is a significant net benefit to the Defence budget—and thus the taxpayer—from defence exports. These benefits include a reduction in costs for UK procurement as a result of export orders, receipts from Commercial Exploitation Levy and disposal of surplus MOD equipment. In addition to economic benefits, responsible and legitimate defence exports, together with our own defence efforts, contribute to international stability by strengthening collective defence relationships.

Aberporth

Mr. Simon Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of apprentices trained at DERA, Aberporth were employed by his Department *(a)* on completion of their apprenticeship, *(b)* after two years and *(c)* after five years, for each of the last 10 years. [4537]

Dr. Moonie: The number of apprentices trained at Defence Evaluation and Research Agency, Aberporth and employed by Ministry of Defence *(a)* on completion of their apprenticeship, *(b)* after two years and *(c)* after five years is shown in the table.

Intake year	*Year of completion*	*Numbers completing*	*Employed by DERA (MOD)*	*Employed by wider MOD*	*Other*	*After two years (employed by DERA)*[1]	*After five years (employed by DERA)*[1]
1988	1992	14	7	1	6	6	3
1989	1993	12	9	1	2	8	4
1990	1994	23	8	0	15	8	4
1991	1995	15	8	0	7	8	5
1992	1996	8	3	1	4	2	1
1993	1997	8	5	0	3	4	1
1994	1998	10	6	1	3	4	[3]
1995[2]	1998	10	6	0	4	4	[3]
1996	1999	8	4	1	3	4	[3]
1997	2000	10	6	0	4	[3]	[3]

[1] Only the numbers of apprentices retained by DERA are available and are based on information supplied by ex-apprentices. Information is not held as to whether any ex-apprentices, upon leaving DERA, went on to be employed in the wide MOD.
[2] New training introduced which reduced training period from four to three years.
[3] Not yet served for two years or five years.

Kenya

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many weeks a year the British Army has had use of the range at Archer's Post and the range at Dol Dol in each of the last three years. [3218]

Mr. Ingram: The British Army used each area for about six weeks in each year.

Liquidated Damages

Dr. Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions agreed liquidated damages provision has not been collected by his Department; for what reason; and what legal action has been *(a)* contemplated and *(b)* taken to enforce them. [3717]

Dr. Moonie: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NATO Enlargement

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he is taking to facilitate the enlargement of NATO at the Alliance's 2002 Prague summit. [4429]

Mr. Hoon: As the Prime Minister has made clear, we support the further enlargement of NATO when the political and military conditions agreed at the 1997 Madrid and 1999 Washington Summits are met. The Ministry of Defence, together with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, continues to consult closely with Allies on the implications of possible further enlargement for Euro-Atlantic security. We are assisting aspirants with their preparations through the Membership Action Plan, launched at the 1999 Washington Summit. We will continue to work with the Secretary General and Allies to ensure that the Alliance has the capabilities, force and command structures, planning and decision-making processes it needs to maintain its efficiency and effectiveness.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4892]

Dr. Moonie: It is not normal practice to publish Ministerial Duty Rosters. Throughout the summer break a Minister will be on duty in line with paragraph 68 of the current Ministerial Code.

TREASURY

Indirectly Held Securities

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on initiatives to clarify the law concerning conflict of laws in relation to indirectly held securities. [5388]

Ruth Kelly: We are today publishing a consultation document inviting views on two proposals. The first is a draft multilateral Convention, drawn up under the auspices of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, to determine the law applying to the proprietary aspects of dealing in securities held through intermediaries. The second is a proposal to amend the Financial Market and Insolvency (Settlement Finality) Regulations 1999. The purpose of the amendment is to apply a common choice of law rule in respect of securities provided as collateral. We consider these measures will produce benefits in terms of simplicity, risk reduction and enhanced efficiency in financial markets. A copy of the consultation document has been placed in the Library.

UK Debt Management Office

Barbara Follett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the UK Debt Management Office's annual report and accounts. [5389]

Ruth Kelly: The DMO's annual report and administrative accounts for 2000–01 are being laid before Parliament and published today. Copies are available in the Libraries of both Houses, together with an updated version of the DMO's Framework Document.

Statistics Commission

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Statistics Commission's annual report and accounts for 2000–01 will be published. [5390]

Ruth Kelly: The Statistics Commission's first annual report and accounts, covering the period from its inception on 7 June 2000 to the end of the 2000–01 financial year, are being published today. The report and accounts have been laid before Parliament and copies are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Stroke Deaths

Linda Perham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many deaths there were from *(a)* stroke and *(b)* stroke-related diseases in each of the past five years. [4096]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Karen Dunnell to Linda Perham, dated 18 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question on how many deaths there were from (a) stroke and (b) stroke-related diseases for each of the past five years. I am replying in his absence. (4097)

The data requested are published in the annual reference volumes, "Mortality Statistics: Cause DH2", Table 2, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Figures are currently available up to 1999. The underlying cause of death, classified according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Disease, Ninth Edition (ICD9) indicates the disease or injury that initiated the train of events leading directly to death. Deaths with an underlying cause of stroke are classified using ICD9 codes 430 to 438.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what dates his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if he will make a statement. [4818]

Mr. Boateng: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by the Minister for the Environment, 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

VAT (Home Care Services)

Mr. Patrick Hall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when he expects the proposed extra statutory concession to reduce VAT on home care services supplied by private businesses to be implemented; [4183]

(2) if he will remove VAT on home care services supplied by private businesses. [4184]

Mr. Boateng: HM Customs and Excise have consulted widely on a VAT concession for home care which will be introduced at the same time as proposed changes being introduced by the Department of Trade and Industry to regulate the private recruitment industry. The concession will ensure that these changes do not lead to any VAT increase in charges for those who receive care in the home.

Working Families Tax Credit

Mr. Chope: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reasons Mrs. Pinfield (Ref. NH653670B) of Christchurch was not paid Working Families Tax Credit on time during the period 15 May to 25 June; and what compensation is payable, and by whom, for consequential losses which have arisen. [4771]

Dawn Primarolo: I understand that the Inland Revenue Tax Credit Office wrote to the hon. Member on 16 July 2001 regarding this matter.

Andy Burnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families in the Leigh constituency are eligible for Working Families Tax Credit; and how many have claimed it to date. [4187]

Dawn Primarolo: Estimates of the numbers of families in each parliamentary constituency receiving the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) appear, from May 2000, in the WFTC Quarterly Enquiry. Copies are available in the Library, or on the Inland Revenue website, www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk.

The estimates for constituencies in Great Britain are based on a 5 per cent. sample of awards and are therefore subject to sampling error. Particular care is needed when making comparisons over time.

Tax Relief (Film Expenditure)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax relief has been granted to UK films under the provisions of section 48 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 1997; how many films have been accepted by the Inland Revenue as qualifying films; and if he will make a statement. [3574]

Ruth Kelly: Between 1 July 1997 and 30 June 2001 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport certified 1,119 "British qualifying" films under the Film Act 1985. The estimated tax cost of relief provided to British qualifying films under section 48 Finance (No. 2) Act 1997 is £200 million in the period 1997–98 to 2000–01, over double the amount that would have been available under the previous arrangements.

Biofuels

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring into force fiscal measures to encourage the use of biofuels equivalent to those available for gas fuels. [3757]

Mr. Boateng: Under the Government's Green Fuel Challenge launched in November last year, we will, subject to EU agreement, introduce a new duty rate for biodiesel in Budget 2002, at 20p per litre below the then rate for ultra-low sulphur diesel. Furthermore, we have already legislated to provide for duty reductions or exemptions for pilot projects covering the more environmentally friendly fuels, including biofuels such as bioethanol and biogas. We expect to invite applications for these pilots during the summer and evaluate applications during the autumn.

Sports Clubs (Taxation)

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received on the taxation of voluntary sports clubs; and if he will make a statement. [4043]

Mr. Boateng: The Chancellor has received a number of representations concerning the current tax treatment of voluntary sports clubs, as he does with all aspects of the tax system. Following the announcement in Budget 2001 of the Government's intention to consult on possible support through the tax system for community amateur sport's clubs, the Treasury is working closely with colleagues in other Government Departments and sports organisations, including Sport England, the Central Council for Physical Recreation and the National Playing Fields Association on the shape of possible relief. A consultation paper will be published later this year, which will invite comments on the proposed relief.

In drawing up the proposals, the Government will take into full consideration which specific measures will benefit these sports clubs.

VAT Relief (Places of Worship)

Ms Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his proposed timetable is for the introduction of VAT relief on listed places of worship; and if he will make a statement. [4397]

Mr. Boateng: The European Commission has indicated that a reduced VAT rate for repairs to listed places of worship will be considered in the Commission's general review of reduced rates that will take place in 2003. In the meantime, the Government are working on the introduction of a UK-wide grant scheme to help congregations with the cost of repairs and maintenance of listed buildings that are used as places of worship. The effect will be equivalent to a reduction in VAT to 5 per cent. on repairs commenced on or after 1 April 2001.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

London Underground

Bob Russell: To ask the President of the Council when he last travelled on the London underground in the course of his official duties. [3674]

Mr. Robin Cook: As Leader of the House of Commons, the majority of my duties are in the Palace of Westminster and as such do not require a tube journey between my residence/offices at Carlton Gardens and the House of Commons.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary has travelled on the tube on at least five occasions since his appointment.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Democratic Institutions

5. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of democratic institutions in the Province. [2876]

Dr. John Reid: The stability of the institutions was one of the key areas addressed at the Weston Park talks. The Government are working closely with the Irish Government to secure the full and stable operation of the institutions, alongside the full implementation of all aspects of the Agreement.

Police Recruitment

6. **Margaret Moran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current police recruitment campaign in Northern Ireland. [2877]

Jane Kennedy: The response to the recruitment campaign to the police service was very positive—with almost 8,000 applicants.

Peace Process

7. **Mr. Ben Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the role of community groups in the peace process. [2878]

Dr. John Reid: The peace process was born out of the desire of ordinary decent people in Northern Ireland for a normal, law-abiding and peaceful society, free from the sectarianism and bitterness of the past. While the negotiations have largely been taken forward by Northern Ireland's political representatives, the significant progress we have made thus far in agreeing and implementing the Belfast Agreement has been underpinned and strengthened by the support and commitment to peace demonstrated by the numerous and wide variety of individuals and groups active in all sections of the community across Northern Ireland, particularly in their efforts to combat division and sectarianism. Their work will be a significant factor in encouraging further progress.

15. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the peace process since 7 June. [2886]

29. **Mr. Swayne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on developments in the peace process. [2900]

Dr. John Reid: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mrs. Curtis-Thomas), on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 277.

16. **Jean Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about developments in the peace process. [2887]

23. **Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the peace process. [2894]

Dr. John Reid: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mrs. Curtis-Thomas), on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 277.

First Minister

8. **Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on steps being taken to fill the position of First Minister in Northern Ireland. [2879]

Dr. John Reid: The filling of these positions is a matter for the devolved administration, not the British Government. The Northern Ireland Assembly and its members must elect a First Minister and Deputy First Minister jointly in accordance with the procedures set out in the constitutional arrangements of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement and section 16 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. These require the positions to be filled within 6 weeks of a vacancy occurring and the Assembly to devise the procedures under which such elections takes place.

Road Improvements

9. **Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Secretary of State for Scotland to discuss co-operation on applications for EC support for inter-regional road improvements. [2880]

Dr. John Reid: I have had no discussions with the Secretary of State for Scotland on co-operation on applications for EC support for inter-regional road improvements since this is a devolved matter.

Decommissioning

10. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress towards paramilitary weapons decommissioning. [2881]

Dr. John Reid: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis), on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 271-72.

12. **Mr. Jim Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about decommissioning of arms in Northern Ireland. [2883]

13. **Mr. Salter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the efforts that have been made to secure the decommissioning of illegally held weapons in Northern Ireland. [2884]

20. **David Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made with decommissioning. [2891]

28. **Mike Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures have been taken to encourage paramilitary decommissioning in Northern Ireland. [2899]

Dr. John Reid: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis), on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 271-272.

14. **Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on decommissioning of terrorist weapons. [2885]

Dr. John Reid: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis), on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 271-72.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

11. **Fiona Mactaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the work of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission; and if he will make a statement. [2882]

Mr. Browne: The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is an independent body, and as such it is for the Commission itself to determine its work programme. It is not appropriate for me to comment on this. I do, however, welcome the start that the Commission has made in establishing itself, and hope that it will continue to build on this in the future.

Terrorist Organisations (Political Representation)

17. **Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his policy is on the inclusion of political representatives of armed terrorist organisations in the Government of Northern Ireland. [2888]

19. **Mr. Cameron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his policy is on the inclusion of political representatives of armed terrorist organisations in the Government of Northern Ireland. [2890]

Dr. John Reid: The policy of this Government is to facilitate the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including its provisions on the constitutional settlement. For as long as each member of the Executive is appointed to their post under the terms and conditions set out in the Agreement and the Northern Ireland Act 1998—including their commitment under the Pledge of Office to exclusively peaceful and democratic means—they have a legitimate right to hold that position. Safeguards in the Agreement and the legislation also ensure that if a Minister loses the confidence of the Assembly, Members may vote in favour of an exclusion motion and remove them from office. The Government support these provisions.

Terrorist Violence

21. **Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the level of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland. [2892]

Jane Kennedy: The Government believe on balance that the main cease fires are holding. However, there remains a serious threat to the peace process from dissident republicans who have been responsible in recent months for a number of attacks including the use of Mark 15 "Barrack Buster" mortars, bomb attacks containing up to 1000lbs of explosives and various booby trap devices. Loyalists are believed responsible for the recent murder of Ciaran Cummings and pipe bomb attacks in nationalist areas.

Both loyalists and republicans seek to exercise control over their own communities by carrying out attacks and acts of intimidation. So far this year there have been 184 such attacks: 118 by loyalists and 66 by republicans.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

18. **David Burnside:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the RUC full-time reserve. [2889]

22. **Mr. Peter Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future of the RUC reserves. [2893]

Jane Kennedy: Discussions with the Police Federation of Northern Ireland on the application of the severance arrangements, retraining etc. are on-going. The next implementation step in the process of phasing out the Full Time Reserve will be notification of the non-renewal of contracts. Subsequent to the first recruits to the Police Service of Northern Ireland completing their training early in 2002, the prevailing security situation and policing requirements will be reviewed. Subject to that review, the notification of the non-renewal of contracts will begin.

Terrorism

24. **Miss Kirkbride:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made on the dismantling of the structures of terrorism in Northern Ireland since April 1998. [2895]

Dr. John Reid: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis), on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 271-72.

Political Parties (Talks)

25. **Mr. John Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the outcome of his most recent talks with the political parties in Northern Ireland. [2896]

Dr. John Reid: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend for Crosby (Mrs. Curtis-Thomas), on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 277.

RUC Chief Constable

26. **Mr. Savidge:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Chief Constable of the RUC; and what was discussed. [2897]

Dr. John Reid: I regularly discuss a range of issues with the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. It would not be appropriate to give details of these discussions.

Human Rights

27. **Mr. Mahmood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action the Government have taken to improve human rights in Northern Ireland. [2898]

Mr. Browne: The Human Rights Act 1998 put in place significant safeguards to ensure the protection of rights throughout the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland. In addition, specific measures were put in place to protect human rights in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as part of the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. These include ensuring that the devolved Assembly has no power to make legislation that is incompatible with the European Convention of Human Rights; and the creation of a new Human Rights Commission for Northern Ireland.

Political Situation

30. **Mr. Grieve:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the political situation in Northern Ireland. [2901]

Dr. John Reid: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mrs. Curtis-Thomas), on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 277.

HEALTH

Children's Hospices

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy that children's hospices receive the same level of public funding as adult hospices. [2247]

Yvette Cooper: Children's hospices have an important role in supporting children with life threatening illness and their families. Provision has been made for them to receive funding from the National Health Service. The level of funding for individual hospices, which provide for the needs of either children or adults, is a matter for local discussion and agreement, based on local health needs assessment.

Foot and Mouth

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the potential impact on vCJD in the human population as a result of exposure to the BSE agent following the burial of infected carcases during the foot and mouth epidemic. [3074]

Yvette Cooper: The Environment Agency issued guidelines on 26 March advising that no cattle over five years of age, which are at greater risk of BSE, should be buried. But before these guidelines took effect, it is estimated that up to 10,000 cattle aged over five years may have been buried. The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC), the Government's advisory body on BSE and CJD, has considered disposal issues arising from foot and mouth on a number of occasions, including at a special meeting on 24 May 2001. A news release summarising the outcome of that meeting states:

> "The sites where over five year cattle may have been buried would need to be examined on a case by case basis, and appropriate risk assessments carried out. It was likely that most body fluids would already have leaked out of the carcases which would no longer be intact. Digging up the remains would itself create significant risks—for example of bringing deep soil to the surface—that would need to be taken into account in any assessment. Overall, the number of BSE infected carcases across all sites—let alone any particular site—would be small. The risk from any individual site would, normally, be small and should be kept in perspective."

A report on the possible risks to public health from current foot and mouth disposal options was published last month and is available on the Department's website at www.doh.gov.uk/fmdguidance/disposalriskassessment.pdf.

Advocacy in Mental Health

Dr. Naysmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to receive the results of the research by Durham University into the role of advocacy in mental health; if the results will be published; and if the Government will consult on the findings. [2959]

Jacqui Smith: The Department has received a draft copy of the report from Durham University. We expect to receive the final version later this summer. We are

planning to publish the findings. The report, which will contain the findings of the research commissioned by the Department, will be used to inform discussions with interested parties in the development of the independent specialist advocacy services and the standards that will be drawn up for them.

Hospital (Liskeard)

Mr. Breed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to provide a new hospital in Liskeard, Cornwall; and if he will make a statement. [3411]

Ms Blears: Cornwall Healthcare National Health Service Trust is progressing with a £7.5 million scheme under the private finance initiative to develop a new 52 bed community hospital for the people of Liskeard and the surrounding area. The trust recently agreed preferred bidder status with a private contractor and is developing a final business case for regional office approval later this year. If approved, the hospital is due to be completed in late spring 2003.

Mental Health Services

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which of the projected targets outlined in the Health Select Committee's 'Provision of NHS Mental Health Services' report (HC 373, Session 1999–2000) have been met. [3808]

Jacqui Smith: In response to the Health Select Committee's report, we described a wide range of measures that were being taken to tackle the years of neglect in the provision of mental health services. These measures, which are at various stages of development, continue to be taken forward as part of a comprehensive and co-ordinated programme of action to implement the National Service Framework for Mental Health and the NHS Plan.

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the new NHS funding that has been received by mental health services. [4575]

Jacqui Smith: An annual mapping exercise has been set up to identify the full range of services for people with mental health problems in each National Service Framework Local Implementation area in England. The second such survey, expected to be completed by November this year, will be accompanied by a survey of spending by the National Health Service and local authorities on the services which it funds.

Diabetes

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he proposes to take to achieve his Departmental target for reducing death from diabetes. [3822]

Jacqui Smith: The Diabetes National Service Framework, which we intend to publish later this year, will set national standards and define service models to improve the quality of care for people with diabetes. We expect the NSF to improve health outcomes for people with diabetes and, over time, to reduce the number of deaths related to diabetes.

Heart and Lung Disease

Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to provide free prescription drugs for the treatment of people with congenital heart and lung disease. [3874]

Ms Blears: Our policy is to give priority to helping those who may have difficulty in paying charges, rather than extending the exemption arrangements to people with other medical conditions including congenital heart and lung disease.

Toxic Dental Materials

Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ban the use of *(a)* mercury amalgam and *(b)* other toxic dental materials by the NHS. [3871]

Ms Blears: There are no plans to ban the use of dental amalgam or other dental materials currently used in the National Health Service. All dental materials must be safe and fit for their purpose and must meet the requirements of the Medical Devices Regulations.

Audible Blood Glucose Testing Equipment

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to supply audible blood glucose testing equipment through the National Health Service. [3738]

Jacqui Smith: Blood glucose testing meters of any kind are not currently available on general practitioner prescription though blood glucose testing strips are. We have had no application from any company to have audible blood glucose testing equipment made available.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Dr. Ladyman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what responses he has received from the pharmaceutical industry relating to the publication of the Pharmaceutical Industry Competitiveness Task Force report. [2015]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* The response from the pharmaceutical industry to the publication of the Pharmaceutical Industry Competitiveness Task Force report has been very favourable. The Chairman of Eli Lilly and Company wrote to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the excellence of the report, informal feedback to Ministers from senior executives of many companies based both here and in the United States of America has been very positive and Japanese companies expressed great interest in the report to the Science Minister, Lord Sainsbury, during his recent visit to Japan. At European Union level, Government and industry are now working together in a similar way on the high level group on Innovation and Provision of Medicines—known as the G10 Group. My noble Friend Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, who co-chaired the United Kingdom task force, is a member of the G10 Group.

Overhead Powerlines

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on the health implications of overhead powerlines; and if he will make a statement. [3846]

Yvette Cooper: The Department obtains advice on the possible health implications of exposure to electromagnetic fields, including those associated with power lines, from the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB). In a report published on 6 March, the NRPB's Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation reviewed the potential risks of cancer from extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields (documents of the NRPB Volume 12, Number 1, 2001), copies of which are available in the Library. Information can be found on www.nrpb.org.uk.

The report states that

"there is some epidemiological evidence that prolonged exposure to higher levels of power frequency magnetic fields is associated with a small risk of leukaemia in children. In practice, such levels are seldom encountered by the general public in this country."

The NRPB have calculated that this relates to about 0.5 per cent. of the total population. The report also states that

"In the absence of clear evidence of a carcinogenic effect in adults, or of a plausible explanation from experiments on animals or isolated cells, the epidemiological evidence is currently not strong enough to justify a firm conclusion that such fields cause leukaemia in children."

An NRPB response statement noted that the higher levels of magnetic fields are not attributable solely to proximity to power lines. The Government and NRPB are currently planning a study into the factors that lead to certain households having higher levels of electromagnetic fields.

Prescription Drugs

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on EU proposals to relax the rules on advertising prescription drugs and the possible impact on the NHS. [3722]

Yvette Cooper: The European Union proposals on advertising of prescription-only medicines are part of a much wider European Commission review of the European legislation governing medicines. They have yet to be formally adopted by the Commission. As currently drafted, the proposals do not lift the existing prohibition on advertising prescription-only medicines directly to the public, but are concerned with the provision of information in certain therapeutic areas on request by patients, patient groups or health professionals.

We will examine the Commission's proposals in detail once they have been adopted. The United Kingdom will discuss these proposals with the Commission and other member states in a working group of the Council of Ministers, taking into account what impact, positive or negative, they have on the national health service and more widely. Our priority will be to ensure that any amendments agreed to the existing legislation are fully justified in the interests of public health, and are compatible with meeting patients' needs for full and comprehensible information about their medicines.

Asian Nurses

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS nurses are of Asian heritage; what steps he is taking to increase their number; and if he will make a statement. [3842]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is in the table.

National health service hospital and community health services (HCHS): nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff by ethnic group in England as at 30 September 2000

	Percentage
White	85.0
Black	4.6
Asian	1.7
Other	2.5
Unknown	6.2

Notes:
1. Figures should be treated with caution as they are based upon the 76 per cent. of HCHS organisations that reported 90 per cent. or more valid ethnic codes for non-medical staff; comparisons over a number of years are likely to produce more reliable comparisons.
2. Percentages were calculated from numbers of staff expressed as whole-time equivalents.

Source:
Department of Health 2000 non-medical work force census.

The Department has a well developed strategy to recruit more Asian nurses. The Improving Working Lives Standard commits all NHS employers to build a diverse work force that reflects the local community and will measure their progress. The Positively Diverse Programme has generated a substantial series of national, regional and local recruitment initiatives including issuing guidance to NHS employers around setting up diversity programmes in their organisation, widening access to nurse training, building networks between NHS work force confederation and higher education institutes, and addressing selection to and attrition from training. Early results from the national recruitment campaign suggest that around 3.5 per cent. of the people who responded to the campaign identified themselves as Asian.

Food Supplements

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking to ensure food supplements used by sports people do not contain banned substances. [3730]

Yvette Cooper: All food supplements, including those for sports people, must comply with food law, which is enforced by local authorities via their trading standards or environmental health departments.

Supplements which fit the legal definition of a medicine are controlled by the Medicines Control Agency (MCA). The MCA is responsible for enforcing medicines legislation, and is currently reviewing the status of a number of sports supplements.

Food Labelling

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the law covering food labelling. [3941]

Yvette Cooper: Food labelling laws are harmonised at European level and are implemented here by the Food Labelling Regulations 1996. We are committed to giving consumers more choice by promoting honest and informative labelling. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has adopted a wide-ranging action plan to tackle the issues consumers have identified as priorities for improving food labelling. The FSA is pressing for changes to European law and international standards and has established a number of working groups to explore the potential for voluntary improvements.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what the terms of reference are for the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement; [3981]

(2) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in his Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement. [3968]

Ms Blears: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report,* columns 689–90W.

Breast Cancer Unit (Nottingham)

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the progress being made by Trent Regional Health Authority regarding the establishment of a new breast cancer unit at Nottingham City Hospital; and if he will make a statement. [4272]

Yvette Cooper: The development of the new breast care centre at Nottingham City Hospital National Health Service Trust remains a high priority. The Trent regional office of the NHS Executive continues to work closely with the trust to take forward its proposals and it is expected that the full business case will be submitted in September 2001.

Prostate/Testicular Cancer

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to promote a greater awareness among men of prostate and testicular cancer; and if he will make a statement. [4275]

Yvette Cooper: The Department recognises that men need to have information to identify health problems, and easy access to health care services and support when health problems arise. Two initiatives have recently been launched for men concerned about or suffering from prostate cancer.

The informed choice project for prostate specific antigen testing (PSA) is an education programme setting out the benefits and drawbacks of undergoing a PSA test. Men who are concerned about prostate cancer and who approach their general practitioner for a test will be given this information to help them reach a decision. Initially this is a consultation period and feedback on the usefulness of the materials, from GPs and the public, is welcomed. The leaflets are on the National Electronic Library for Health website www.nelh.nhs.uk/psatesting/.

The database of individual patient's experience of illness (DIPEx) is intended for use by patients, their families and carers as well as those working in the health services. DIPEx prostate cancer includes high quality information, prepared in collaboration with CancerBACUP, about the condition and its treatment, as well as answers to commonly asked questions. It is unique in recording patients in video talking about their own experiences and the choices they made.

We are looking at other innovative methods of conveying messages to men and of improving their access to services that are more tailored to their needs. The Health Development Agency is currently examining what measures are most effective for improving men's health in different areas, and preventing men from becoming ill in the first place. The findings of this work will inform the decisions that we make on how best to achieve better health for men in the future.

Milk Tokens

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the cost of extending milk tokens for pregnant mothers to pregnant mothers who are asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement. [4129]

Yvette Cooper: There are no figures available on the numbers of pregnant women who are asylum seekers and not receiving milk tokens. A major part of the cost of extending milk tokens to this group would be the administrative cost of devising and managing a system to do so, since none exists currently. We are currently reviewing separately the operation of both the asylum voucher scheme and the milk token scheme and will announce our conclusions in due course.

Nurses

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of those who have enrolled on nurse induction and training courses in each of the last five years have not *(a)* completed their course, *(b)* completed their qualifications and *(c)* passed their qualifications at the required grade, expressed (i) numerically and (ii) as a percentage of those originally enrolled. [4343]

Mr. Hutton: Information is not collected on nurse induction courses. Information on the number and percentage of student nurses who have not completed their course is shown in the table. The human resource performance framework, published last year, sets a target of 13 per cent. attrition (leavers) for those students entering training in 2000–01.

	1995–96	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*
Started	13,263	15,684	17,898	17,708	19,348
Leavers[1]	2,572	3,139	3,381	2,556	1,362
Interrupted[2]	386	681	932	883	492
Active[3]	353	393	5,374	13,966	17,474
Percentage left	19.39	20.01	18.89	14.43	7.0
Percentage interrupted	2.91	4.34	5.21	4.99	2.5
Percentage active	2.66	2.51	30.03	78.87	90.3

[1] Students who have withdrawn completely from the course
[2] Students who have temporarily withdrawn but who intend to return
[3] Students who have still to complete their studies

Note:
These data are based on a snapshot in time of a particular cohort(s) and therefore each year there will still be students who have yet to complete their course

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what measures he plans to provide incentives to qualified nurses who are not working within the NHS and who have taken a career break; and if he will make a statement; [4340]

(2) what action the Government are taking to recruit more *(a)* nurses, *(b)* physiotherapists, *(c)* occupational therapists, *(d)* radiographers, *(e)* pathologists, *(f)* theatre technicians and *(g)* other hospital support staff for NHS acute hospitals; and if he will make a statement. [4341]

Mr. Hutton: To ensure there are sufficient staff to provide the treatment and care that patients need in a modern and improved national health service, funds have been made available to employ up to 20,000 more nurses, midwives and health visitors, 6,500 more therapists and other health professionals, 7,500 more consultants and 2,000 more general practitioners between now and 2004. To do this we are increasing the number of training places; improving retention of staff throughout the NHS; attracting former staff back to the NHS and international recruitment.

A national recruitment campaign was launched in February this year covering all staff groups in the NHS. Local initiatives continue to build successfully on the momentum of the national campaign and are again supported by NHS Careers.

In order to attract former staff back to the national health service, a package has been developed to encourage them to return. From 1 April 2001, healthcare professionals returning to the NHS will receive at least £1,000 income to support them while they are retraining (£1,500 for midwives). In addition we have also standardised the amount of child care assistance that can be offered to returners while they retrain. This means that a returner will now receive free refresher training; a minimum of £1,000 financial support while retraining; assistance with child care support of up to £135 per week for one child and £200 for two or more children; and assistance with travel and books.

Obstetric/Gynaecological Care

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make arrangements to give women the choice not to be treated by obstetricians and gynaecologists who perform abortions. [4114]

Yvette Cooper: If a woman wishes to be treated by an obstetrician or a gynaecologist who does not perform abortions then she should ask her general practitioner or consultant beforehand who will advise her. She is entitled to refuse treatment if she wishes.

Under-age Children (Medical Care)

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what powers he has to regulate the medical profession's prescription and treatment of under-age children without parental consent. [4113]

Ms Blears: Health professionals work to the legal principle, drawn from case law, that a young person under 16 may give consent for him/herself if the health professional treating them considers them to have sufficient understanding and intelligence to understand fully what is proposed. This is described as competence and is judged by the health professional on a case-by-case basis.

If a young person under 16 is considered competent to consent to the proposed treatment, parental consent is not legally necessary. However the involvement of a parent or other appropriate adult should be encouraged.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence underlay his Department's statement that the prohibition of tobacco advertising would reduce consumption by 2.5 per cent. [4245]

Yvette Cooper: Evidence as to the effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption was reviewed by the Department's Chief Economic Adviser in the Smee Report, published in 1992. The evidence has since been reviewed from time to time. The advice is that the likely eventual net effect of an advertising ban would be to decrease tobacco consumption, and the size of the decrease could lie in a range up to about 5 per cent. It is reasonable to use the mid-point of this range to indicate the likely effects of a ban.

Other recent work supports the view that comprehensive advertising bans are likely to reduce tobacco consumption. A report from the World Bank[1] suggests that implementation of Directive 98/43/EC could have reduced cigarette consumption within the European Union by nearly 7 per cent.

[1] Curbing the Epidemic: Governments and the Economics of Tobacco Control. 1999 ISBN 9 780821 345191

NHS Prescriptions/Dental Treatment

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to provide further help for people on low incomes with the cost of *(a)* NHS prescriptions and *(b)* dental treatment. [4244]

Ms Blears: The current exemption and charge remission arrangements are intended to ensure that no one need be deterred from obtaining any necessary treatment on financial grounds. People who have to pay can seek help under the National Health Service low income scheme which provides help on an income related basis broadly following Income Support arrangements. We have no plans at present to change these arrangements.

Bursaries (Nurses)

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing students from non-European countries have received bursaries in *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 1996, *(c)* 1997, *(d)* 1998, *(e)* 1999 and *(f)* 2000. [4333]

Mr. Hutton: The National Health Service Student Grants Unit's best estimate is that, as of 16 July 2001, some 2,400 students from non-European countries, at different stages of diploma courses in nursing and midwifery, were in receipt of NHS bursaries. Reliable figures on a comparable basis from earlier time periods are not available.

The Nursing and Midwifery Admissions Service (NMAS) reports that the number of students from non-European countries accepted for entry to pre-registration diploma level nurse training programmes at English universities from 1997 to 2000 was:

Academic year 1997–98—331

Academic year 1998–99—627

Academic year 1999–2000—774

A small proportion of these students are likely to have been self-funded, that is, not in receipt of an NHS bursary. NMAS acceptance figures for earlier years, 1995–96 and 1996–97 are not available.

NMAS acceptance figures for academic year 2000–01 will not be available until after 31 August 2001, the end of the current academic year.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the adequacy of accident and emergency facilities in Birmingham, with particular reference to its impact on the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust; and if he will make a statement. [4133]

Yvette Cooper: We are aware of the recent pressures experienced by accident and emergency departments in Birmingham.

The recent negotiations between Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Health Authority, with the support of the Department, have addressed the situation in relation to delayed transfers of care in Birmingham. All the agencies involved will continue to work together to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to meet any future additional pressure on accident and emergency departments in Birmingham, which will minimise any possible impact on the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals National Health Service Trust.

Breast Screening

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has set a target for breast screening coverage. [4028]

Yvette Cooper: The National Health Service breast screening programme has a target of 70 per cent. for uptake of breast screening invitations. This was the level recommended by the Forrest Report on Breast Cancer Screening (1986) and has been in place since the start of the programme in 1988. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the cost of extending breast screening to women over the age of 70 years; and how many more women would receive breast screening as a result. [4083]

Yvette Cooper *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* It is estimated that it would cost an extra £104 million a year to extend the National Health Service breast screening programme to women over the age of 70 years. It is estimated that the current programme costs £52 million a year and the current cost per woman screened is £40.

It is estimated that 2.6 million women aged 70 and over would participate in the programme taking account of 2001 population projection data and if uptake were in line with younger groups (75.6 per cent. in 1999–2000).

The Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer Screening is keeping this issue under review as new research evidence emerges.

Chiropodists

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he plans to take to increase the number of chiropodists/podiatrists. [4278]

Mr. Hutton: The number of chiropodists/podiatrists will increase as part of the NHS Plan commitment to provide more staff for the National Health Service. The NHS Plan states that by 2004 there will be 6,500 more therapists and other health professionals (including chiropodists/podiatrists) in post by 2004 and that 4,450 more therapists and key professional staff (including chiropodists/podiatrists) will be being trained.

Consultant Psychiatrists

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many vacancies there were for consultant psychiatry posts in each region in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [4139]

Mr. Hutton: Information about vacancies for consultant psychiatry posts is available only from 1999 onwards. This information is provided in the tables.

The NHS Plan provides for an additional 7,500 consultants by 2004. While those posts are filled there will inevitably be a temporary increase in the number of vacancies.

Department of Health Vacancies Survey, March 2001

Three month vacancy rates [1,2] and numbers for total consultant psychiatry posts in NHS Trusts in England as at 31 March for each year

	Psychiatry group of specialities			
	1999[3]		2000[3]	
	Rates (Percentage)	Posts (Number)	Rates (Percentage)	Posts (Number)
England	6.8	170	6.9	190
Northern and Yorkshire	7.3	20	7.7	30
Trent	4.0	10	5.0	10
West Midlands	9.0	20	11.4	30
North West	10.5	30	7.9	30
Eastern	4.4	10	6.0	10
London	5.5	30	7.4	40
South East	6.2	20	4.7	20
South West	7.5	20	2.2	10

	Total for 2001[3,4]		of which:							
	Rates (Percentage)	Posts (Number)	Rates (Percentage)				Posts			
			Forensic	General	Old age	Learning disabilities	Forensic	General	Old age	Learning disabilities
England	8.3	190	5.2	7.8	9.3	13.3	10	130	30	30
Northern and Yorkshire	9.0	30	0.0	8.2	10.0	13.5	0	20	10	10
Trent	7.0	20	0.0	4.0	11.4	26.3	0	10	0	10
West Midlands	9.6	20	0.0	11.0	7.9	8.3	0	20	0	0
North West	13.5	40	18.2	12.2	14.6	21.7	0	30	10	10
Eastern	7.7	20	0.0	5.8	16.1	10.3	0	10	10	0
London	7.3	40	8.5	7.5	2.3	12.2	0	30	0	0
South East	1.5	30	7.7	10.2	8.5	11.1	0	30	10	0
South West	1.5	0	[5]—	1.3	0.0	6.7	[5]—	0	0	0

[1] Three month vacancies are vacancies as at 31 March for each year which trusts are actively trying to fill, which had lasted for three months or more (whole-time equivalents).
[2] Three month vacancy rates are three month vacancies expressed as a percentage of three month vacancies plus staff in post from the September medical and dental and non-medical workforce censuses (whole-time equivalent).
[3] In 1999 and 2000 breakdown of data was not available and includes consultants within child and adolescent and psychotherapy. The figures are therefore not comparable with the 2001 figures.
[4] Total for consultants in forensic psychiatry, general psychiatry, learning disabilities and old age psychiatry.
[5] Figures based on less than 10 posts.
Notes:
1. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Percentages rounded to one decimal place.
3. Totals may not equal sum of component parts due to rounding.

Consultant Neurologists

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health *(a)* how many consultants in neurology there are in the London NHS region and *(b)* what the level of vacancies is; and if he will make a statement. [4142]

Mr. Hutton: Information on the number of consultants in neurology there are in the London National Health Service region is provided in the table.

Hospital medical consultants within neurology in the London region

As at 30 September 2000	Number
Neurology consultants	100

Note:
Figures are rounded to the nearest 10
Source:
Department of Health medical and dental work force census

The Department does not collect information on vacancies in neurology.

We are well aware of the need for more consultants, in this and other specialities. There are currently 54 specialist registrars, in London-based programmes, currently undergoing training to be neurologists. Over the next two years 27 of these will complete their training and be ready to take up consultant posts.

Alcoholics

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the services available for rehabilitation of alcoholics in Milton Keynes, indicating the number of *(a)* residential places and *(b)* non-residential places for rehabilitation and counselling. [4347]

Ms Blears: The information requested is not held centrally. The information should be available from the Chairman of the Buckinghamshire Health Authority.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the numbers of alcoholics requiring rehabilitation in Milton Keynes; and how many of these are being offered treatment. [4387]

Ms Blears: No assessment has been made centrally on the numbers of alcoholics requiring rehabilitation in Milton Keynes. Further information on planning for treatment services for alcoholics should be available from the Chairman of the Buckinghamshire Health Authority.

Hospital Infections

Mr. Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many hospital acquired infections were detected in NHS hospitals in East Sussex in *(a)* 2000 and *(b)* 2001; [4020]

(2) how many NHS patients contracted hospital-acquired infections in *(a)* 2000 and *(b)* 2001 in East Sussex. [4019]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* This information is not collected centrally. Further local information can be obtained from the Chairmen of the East Sussex Hospital Trusts.

From April 2001 all trusts are required to collect data on MRSA.

Ice Lollies

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Randall) of 28 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 171W, on food labelling, if he will ensure that the working group addresses the specific problems associated with the labelling of ice lollies. [4554]

Yvette Cooper: The working group is looking at a range of issues, including ways of ensuring the presence of ingredients that can cause allergic or intolerance reactions is clearly and recognisably indicated. In addition, we have been pressing the European Commission to bring forward proposals for changes to European labelling rules to make this obligatory.

Regent GM Laboratories

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date, and for what reasons the licence held by Regent GM Laboratories was suspended by the Medicines Control Agency; and on what date, and for what reason, it was subsequently reinstated. [4320]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The Manufacturer's Licence ML 13994 for Regent GM Laboratories was suspended by the Medicines Control Agency (MCA) on 18 December 1998.

The licence was suspended because the company had contravened the provisions of the licence and had failed to a critical extent to comply with the principles and guidelines of good manufacturing practice.

The suspension was lifted and the licence reinstated on 3 December 1999 following inspection of the manufacturing facilities in August 1999 and November 1999 when the licensing authority was satisfied that the deficiencies identified prior to the suspension had been rectified.

Older People

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his Department will publish the Older People information strategy; and if he will make a statement on its contents. [4088]

Jacqui Smith *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The information strategy for Older People will address the information needs of older people, those treating and caring for them and those commissioning or managing services for older people. The strategy aims to be ambitious, looking ahead both in terms of treatment and care issues and information technology developments, and be creative about the potential of new and developing technologies to provide solutions.

The information strategy for older people will be launched later this year.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the regional reviews referred to in paragraph 25, page 119, of the National Service Framework for Older People will be completed and published. [4079]

Jacqui Smith *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People stated that the monitoring and planning of its implementation would include reviews at regional level. These will bring together work undertaken at local level, plan progress and set down the future direction of work. The reviews will be published annually, starting one year after the NSF's publication.

Flu Vaccine

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the cost of offering flu vaccine to all front-line social care workers. [4318]

Yvette Cooper *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* As last year, National Health Service employers have been asked to offer influenza immunisation to employees directly involved in patient care. Social care employers should consider similar action. The level of cost will depend on take-up.

It has been estimated that there are approximately 300,000 "front line" social care staff. There are five manufacturers supplying flu vaccine this year at varying prices. If all 300,000 staff received influenza immunisation, then based on the weighted mean average list price of vaccine the cost would be approximately £1.6 million.

Not all social care employers have occupational health functions; there may be additional costs to these employers if they have to make contractual arrangements with local general practitioner practices or external third party companies to provide an immunisation service for their staff.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to increase the take-up of flu vaccine among people aged over 65 years. [4077]

Yvette Cooper *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* Following on from last year's successful campaign, we are this year extending the minimum target uptake for influenza immunisation in people aged 65 and over from 60 per cent. to 65 per cent.

The Department has met with the vaccine manufacturers to ensure sufficient supplies of vaccine will be made available; general practitioners and other health professionals have been informed of this increased target via a letter from the Chief Medical Officer. Nursing and Pharmaceutical Officers and GPs have been asked to order sufficient supplies of vaccine; we are also planning once more to use national and local media (newspaper and television) to publicise the campaign.

Surveys

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department has issued to NHS trusts and primary care trusts to ensure comparability of results when constructing surveys of users and carers; when the first round of surveys will be completed; and how this will be monitored. [4080]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The NHS Plan and Public Service Agreement made new commitments about patient surveys. We will improve the quality of patient experience through measurement of performance, from the patient perspective, to drive real service improvement year on year.

Work is in hand to select survey contractors who will be able to run surveys of acute hospital patients during 2001–02. The survey will include a common national core—which will include the requirements for the performance framework—with the option of adding local questions to inform local actions. Detailed guidance will be issued to all acute national health service trusts in late summer.

From October 2001 NHS trusts will begin to carry out new trust-based patient surveys. From April 2002, results from core questions will be available and feed into the national performance information and traffic lights during 2002, as a first stage in measuring the patient experience of local health services as part of NHS performance management arrangements.

Stroke Units

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general hospitals in the NHS had stroke units in each of the last five years. [4097]

Jacqui Smith: The information requested is not collected centrally. However, many hospitals already have, or plan to introduce, specialist stroke services.

The Department published the National Service Framework for Older People (NSF) on 27 March. It sets out a comprehensive strategy to ensure fair, high quality, integrated health and social care and reduce variations in services for older people.

The NSF addresses a number of specific conditions which are significant for, although not limited to, older people. It includes a standard on stroke and service models which should apply to all who need them regardless of age.

The stroke standard provides for stroke prevention, immediate care, early and continuing rehabilitation, and long-term support as components of a service model for integrated specialist stroke services which will build on current arrangements and be in place in all general hospitals which care for people with stroke by April 2004.

Research Expenditure

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money was spent in the last five years on research into *(a)* heart disease, *(b)* cancer and *(c)* stroke and stroke-related problems. [4098]

Yvette Cooper: Funding for research in cancer, heart disease and stroke is provided from a number of different sources, including the Government, charities and industry. The Department does not routinely collect information on all research expenditure.

The main Government agency for research into the causes of and treatments for disease is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its funding via the Department of Trade and Industry. The Department funds research to support policy and the delivery of effective practice in the national health service. The Department also provides NHS support finding for research commissioned by the research councils and charities that takes place in the NHS.

Management of much of the research supported by NHS research and development funding is devolved and expenditure at project level is not held centrally by the Department. The information is therefore not available in the format requested for all years.

We are currently investing over £150 million a year in research that is directly relevant to cancer. Detailed figures for departmental and MRC estimated expenditure on cancer research are available for the following years:

£ million

	Department of Health	*Medical Research Council*
1999–2000	77.4	52
1998–99	75.4	28.5
1997–98	53	27

It is important to note that scientific definitions have evolved over time and that the MRC has improved methods of capturing data and identifying spend. For these reasons, spend figures from one year to the next are incommensurable.

The MRC's estimated expenditure on stroke research for the last five years was:

	£ million
2000–01	3.4
1999–2000	4.0
1998–99	4.0
1997–98	3.3
1996–97	2.6

The MRC spent £12.3 million on heart disease research in 1998–99 and £10.5 million in 1999–2000. The Department spent approximately £48.9 million on research for cardiovascular disease and stroke in 1998–99 and approximately £49.1 million in 1999–2000. Research is currently being supported in these areas via regional and national research and development programmes.

Out-patient Appointments

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of patients failed to attend their out-patient appointments for *(a)* general medicine, *(b)* surgery, *(c)* radiology and *(d)* professions allied to medicine, in the last 12 months; [4566]

(2) what estimate he has made of the annual cost to the NHS of missed out-patient appointments; [4568]

(3) what plans he has to penalise patients who fail to attend out-patient appointments; [4567]

(4) what assessment he has made of the regional differences in missed out-patient appointments. [4569]

Mr. Hutton: Information on patients who, in 2000–01, failed to turn up for their out-patient appointments for general medicine, general surgery and radiology is given in the table. We do not collect information on out-patient appointments with professions allied to medicine.

Percentage

Specialty	*Did not attend (DNA) rate*
General medicine	11.0
General surgery	10.1
Radiology	8.7

Note:
DNA Rate: percentage of patients who failed to attend their first out-patient appointment without notifying the trust
Source:
QM08 quarterly returns

Regional variations for all specialities is given in the following table.

Percentage

	DNA rate	
Region	*1996–97*	*2000–01*
Northern and Yorkshire	10.2	10.6
Trent	10.1	10.3
Eastern	8.7	8.7
London	15.7	16.7

Percentage

Region	DNA rate 1996–97	DNA rate 2000–01
South-east	8.6	9.7
South-west	8.3	7.9
West Midlands	11.3	10.8
North-west	11.2	12.1
England	11.0	11.4

Source:
QM08 quarterly returns

We fully accept that missed appointments can result in wasted resources and patients waiting longer than they need to. It is not possible to estimate the financial cost of this to the national health service because trusts usually have systems in place to minimise the impact of patients failing to turn up.

We do not plan to penalise patients who fail to attend. Instead we are introducing booking systems that give patients the opportunity to choose a date and time for their appointment that is convenient for them. By knowing their dates well in advance patients are able to make work, child care or any other arrangements in good time. These systems also make it easier for patients to change their appointments if they find they cannot make the date they originally agreed. Booking systems have been proved to reduce DNA rates significantly.

Under our NHS Plan two thirds of out-patient appointments with consultants and elective admissions to hospital will be pre-booked by March 2004 and all will be pre-booked by the end of 2005.

NHS Charter

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce a staff charter for staff working in the NHS, to cover *(a)* working conditions, *(b)* catering facilities, *(c)* housing and transport and *(d)* safety. [4570]

Mr. Hutton: The improving working lives standard commits all National Health Service employers to improve all aspects of the working lives of all staff groups in the NHS. The NHS Plan sets a target for all NHS employers to be accredited as putting the improving working lives standard into practice by April 2003. NHS employers will be assessed against this standard. All NHS trusts have achieved the first stage towards full accreditation against the improving working lives standard. A copy of the standard is available in the Library

St. Leonard's Hospital, Dorset

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will instruct NHS Estates to demolish the redundant buildings in their ownership at St. Leonard's Hospital, Dorset; and if he will make a statement. [4755]

Ms Blears: National Health Service Estates appealed in April 2000 against the non-determination of the planning application for the St. Leonard's Hospital site by East Dorset district council.

In July 2000 the planning inspectorate requested that NHS Estates undertake an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the site. Work for the EIA has been completed and submitted. A date for the public inquiry into the planning appeal is awaited from the planning inspectorate.

It would be inappropriate to demolish the buildings until the conclusion of the planning appeal.

Meat Hygiene Service

Margaret Moran: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the 2000–01 annual report and accounts for the Meat Hygiene Service will be laid before Parliament. [5391]

Yvette Cooper: The 2000–01 Annual Report and Accounts for the Meat Hygiene Service were laid before Parliament today. Copies are available in the Library, but formal printing and publication will not occur for another four to six weeks, pending preparation of a version in Welsh as required by the Welsh Language Act 1993.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Teachers

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many and what proportion of the total teaching population of *(a)* teachers and *(b)* deputy headteachers are not registered with the General Teaching Council; and if she will make a statement. [4663]

Mr. Timms: Details relating to the numbers and proportions of teachers and deputy headteachers registered with the General Teaching Council (GTC) are a matter for the GTC. I have asked the Chief Executive of the GTC to write to the hon. Member with the information requested. A copy of her response will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent representations she has received from teachers and headteachers who are not registered with the General Teaching Council; and if she will make a statement. [4662]

Mr. Timms: My Department has received a large number of inquiries about registration over the past three months and, where appropriate, these have been forwarded to the General Teaching Council (GTC) to deal with. My officials do not routinely check with the GTC whether or not someone contacting the Department about a GTC related issue is a registered teacher. Consequently, we do not maintain a record of representations made from teachers or headteachers who are not registered.

FE Student Funding

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the average funding per student was in the further education sector in each of the last 10 years. [2993]

John Healey *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* The unit of funding for further education students based on total funding for the sector is as follows:

£

Year	*Unit of funding*
1993–94[1]	3,210
1994–95[1]	3,170
1995–96[1]	3,040
1996–97[1]	3,050
1997–98[1]	3,070
1998–99[1]	3,130
1999–2000[2]	3,400

[1] Actual
[2] Provisional
Note:
Unit of funding is rounded to nearest £10. Figures include assumed additional employer contributions and exclude FEFC administration and student support
Source:
Further Education Funding Council's individualised student record and DfES estimates and projects

There are no comparable figures available prior to 1993–94.

Curriculum and Staffing Survey

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will outline the proposed timetable for the next curriculum and staffing survey. [3364]

Mr. Timms: The possibility of conducting a secondary curriculum and staffing survey in 2001–02 is being considered at present.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when she last travelled on the London Underground in the course of her official duties. [3687]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State uses the most efficient and cost effective mode of transport, in accordance with the requirements of the "Ministerial Code" and "Travel by Ministers".

Student Support

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what financial support is available for UK citizens attending UK universities whose parents are overseas as *(a)* civilians working in the European Union in the private sector, *(b)* civilians working in the European Union on behalf of the (i) UK Government, (ii) other UK public body and (iii) the EU, *(c)* civilians working in the private sector in a non-EU country, *(d)* civilians working on behalf of the (1) UK Government and (2) other UK public body in a non-EU country, *(e)* a member of HM armed forces based in a European Union country and *(f)* a member of HM armed forces based in a non-EU country. [3688]

Margaret Hodge: It has been the policy of successive Governments that eligibility for student support should be based on residence in the UK, or in the case of tuition fee support the EU or European Economic Area (EEA). To receive a student loan, tuition fee support and other supplementary grants, a student (and not their parents) must normally be able to satisfy three requirements relating to their residence and immigration status on the first day of the first academic year of their course. They must:

be settled in the UK, in other words ordinarily resident here without being subject under the immigration laws to any restriction on the period for which they may stay;

be ordinarily resident in England or Wales;

have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and Islands throughout the three year period preceding that date other than wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education.

Where a local education authority (LEA) is satisfied that a student (or their spouse or parent) is, or was, temporarily employed outside the United Kingdom and Islands, and the student meets the other eligibility criteria, they will exceptionally be eligible for support, whether or not they travel with their parents (or spouse) or stay in the UK. Where a parent's absence is not of a temporary nature and the student has remained in the UK throughout the period of the employment abroad, not wholly for the purpose of education, it may be possible for the student to establish ordinary residence in their own right. We urge LEAs to be as flexible as possible in their use of their discretion in interpreting the temporary absence provisions.

A specific exception is made for members of the armed forces serving abroad, and their children and spouses, who are considered to satisfy the temporary employment provision because of the nature of their postings. This exception does not include MOD employees or other staff who are abroad catering for or serving the armed forces (i.e. teachers at forces schools overseas or reservists), nor does it include Government employees working abroad as they are not under the same degree of compulsion to work abroad as a member of the armed forces.

Students who are not eligible for full student support under the normal criteria and whose LEA is satisfied that they do not qualify on the basis of temporary absence provisions may nevertheless qualify for assistance with their tuition fees. All EU nationals, including UK nationals, who have been resident in the European Economic Area (EEA) throughout the last three years are eligible to apply for income-assessed assistance with their tuition fees.

My Department has produced a guide for students and their parents who are or have been temporarily employed overseas which is available from our website at www.dfee.gov.uk/student support.

Child Care

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many new day care places in neighbourhood nurseries have been created in Coventry since 1997. [3928]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative was launched earlier this year. Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) bids are presently being considered by the DFES and an announcement will be made on funding for each EYDCP shortly.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many out of school hours child care places have been created by the three-year

start-up fund in Coventry; and how much money from the New Opportunities Fund has gone to Coventry for this purpose. [3929]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The New Opportunities Fund have confirmed an indicative allocation of £1,227,153 for the Out of School Hours programme for the Coventry Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership over the next two years, some of which will be available for three-year start up funds in disadvantaged areas. Assessment by the New Opportunities Fund of the first applications submitted on 1 July for this new funding will take place over the next few months.

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will define the phrase "disadvantaged areas" as used for determining resources via the National Childcare Strategy. [4623]

Mr. Timms: "Disadvantaged Areas" are, for the purposes of the allocation of funding for the National Childcare Strategy, defined as those wards calculated to be the 20 per cent. most disadvantaged nationally against the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) index of multiple deprivation. In some cases, grants may also be made for pockets of disadvantage where it is identified that levels of deprivation are at an equivalent level to those wards in the 20 per cent. most disadvantaged banding.

School Premises (Coventry)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools in Coventry *(a)* have received refurbishment and repair in the past four years and *(b)* will receive improvement projects by the end of this year. [3931]

Mr. Timms: Information showing the schools in Coventry that have benefited from refurbishment and repair investment under the New Deal for Schools programme in the four years from 1997–98 to 2000–01 is shown in the table. Over the same period, schools in Coventry have also benefited from other capital refurbishment and repair funding, including formula capital funding devolved to every maintained school from 2000–01. Coventry local education authority will have details of funding going to individual schools.

Capital investment for schools already allocated to Coventry local education authority from 2001–02 to 2003–04 amounts to £20.8 million. It is for the local education authority to decide how and when to invest this money, along with any other funding from its own resources, in line with school building improvement and repair priorities in its local Asset Management Plan.

Table of New Deal for Schools Allocations, Coventry local education authority

£

Project	*NDS 1 1997–98*	*NDS 2 1998–99*	*NDS 3 1999–2000*	*NDS 4 2000–01*
Cardinal Newman RC Secondary School—Refurbishment of science laboratories	[1]—	—	—	—
Woodway Park Secondary School—Refurbishment of science laboratories	[1]—	—	—	—
Woodway Park Secondary School—Refurbishment of design and technology accommodation	[1]—	—	—	—
Finham Park Secondary—Safer lighting in the Design Technology Block	—	6,480	—	—
John Gulson Primary—Safer water storage, burners, electricity and lighting	—	6,180	—	—
Good Shepherd RC VA Primary—Safer water storage, burners, electricity and lighting	—	13,880	—	—
Sherbourne Fields Special School—Safer water storage, burners, electricity and lighting	—	8,805	—	—
St. Elizabeth's RC VA Primary—Safer water storage, burners, electricity and lighting	—	9,880	—	—
Three Spires Special School—Safer water storage, burners, electricity and lighting	—	14,571	—	—
Whoberley Hall Primary—Safer water storage, burners, electricity and lighting	—	61,493	—	—
Clifford Bridge Primary—Safer water storage, burners, electricity and lighting	—	57,457	—	—
Baginton Fields Special—Safer water storage, burners, electricity and lighting	—	45,713	—	—
Blue Coat CE SA Secondary—Upgrade obsolete electrical mains distribution panel	—	17,250	—	—
Park Hill Primary—Safer lighting	—	1,620	—	—
Ernesford Grange—Safer lighting	—	3,240	—	—
All Souls RC VA Primary—Renew electrical distribution and lighting installation	—	41,400	—	—
Whoberley Hall Primary School—Safer electrical supply and distribution	—	8,910	—	—
Deedmore Special—Create a barrier access between cars and pupils	—	24,300	—	—
Parkgate Primary School—Toilet refurbishment	—	12,150	—	—
Cardinal Newman RC VA Secondary—Toilet refurbishment	—	32,400	—	—
The Woodlands Secondary School—Toilet refurbishment (all House Block toilets)	—	32,400	—	—
Sacred Heart RC VA Secondary—Toilet refurbishment (all toilet areas to school)	—	10,800	—	—
Richard Lee Primary—Toilet refurbishment (all toilet areas in school)	—	32,400	—	—
Five schools—Replacement of obsolete boilers	—	—	[2]133,302	—
Christ the King Infants—Replacement of obsolete boilers	—	—	16,507	—
Two schools—Remove friable asbestos/Heating Mains	—	—	[2]115,439	—
Two schools—Replacement of dangerous and leaking roofs	—	—	[2]46,953	—
16 schools—Remove and replace corroded water tanks	—	—	[2]415,608	—
Bishop Ullathorne RC Secondary—Remove and replace corroded water tanks	—	—	18,196	—
Blue Coat CE Secondary—Remove and replace corroded water tanks	—	—	9,190	—
Cardinal Newman RC Secondary—Remove and replace corroded water tanks	—	—	22,952	—
Cardinal Wiseman RC Secondary—Remove and replace corroded water tanks	—	—	22,165	—
19 schools—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	[2]573,373	—
Cardinal Newman RC Secondary—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	71,765	—
Christ the King Infant—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	11,706	—
Holy Family RC Primary—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	20,626	—
St. Anne's RC Primary—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	9,898	—

Table of New Deal for Schools Allocations, Coventry local education authority

£

Project	NDS 1 1997–98	NDS 2 1998–99	NDS 3 1999–2000	NDS 4 2000–01
St. Augustine's RC Primary—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	11,798	—
St. Elizabeth's RC Primary—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	14,520	—
St. John Fisher RC Primary—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	12,705	—
St. Thomas More RC Primary—Replace faulty and inadequate fire alarms	—	—	22,688	—
Bishop Ullathorne RC Secondary—Create fire escape routes	—	—	56,955	—
Bishop Ullathorne RC Secondary—Refurbishment of obsolete design and technology area to counteract health and safety hazards	—	—	73,786	—
John Gulson Primary—Improve inadequate ventilation to teaching areas	—	—	11,602	—
Three schools—Repair and replacement of damaged roofs	—	—	[2]166,667	—
Sidney Stringer Secondary—Replacement of hazardous external cladding in disrepair	—	—	43,212	—
Caludon Castle, John Gulson and St. John Fisher Schools—Boiler replacement	—	—	—	118,914
President Kennedy School and Community College—replacement of obsolete water tanks	—	—	—	62,902
Stoke Park, Manor Park, Hearsall and Whitley Abbey Primary Schools—Repair of roofs	—	—	—	96,037
Moseley, Parkhill, Stivichall, Eburne and Easter Green Junior Schools—Boiler replacement	—	—	—	206,153
Aldermoor Farm, Grange Farm and Wainbody Wood Schools—Replacement of electrical low voltage switchgear	—	—	—	10,928
Barrs Hill, Stoke Park and Hearsall Schools—Flood relief	—	—	—	38,682
Caludon Castle, Moseley, Coundon Court, Deedmore and Parkhill Schools—Refurbishment of domestic hot water system and boiler plant	—	—	—	150,187
Coundon Primary—Replacement of junior building	—	—	—	966,000
Barr's Hill School and Community College—Refurbishment of science accommodation	—	—	—	267,866
Alderman Callow School and Community College—Refurbishment of science accommodation	—	—	—	213,380
Ernesford Grange School and Community College—Refurbishment of design technology accommodation	—	—	—	232,324
Caludon Castle—Refurbishment of design technology accommodation	—	—	—	261,109
Caludon Castle, Coundon Court, Ernesford Grange, Bishop Ullathorne, President Kennedy and Stoke Park Schools—Refurbishment of science accommodation	—	—	—	933,881
Ravensdale Primary School—Replace temporary accommodation with new block and playground	—	—	—	617,797
Foleshill CE Primary School—Replace temporary class base and playground	—	—	—	221,640
Total	[1]668,000	441,329	43,212	4,397,800

[1] Local education authorities were not required to specify individual project costs for Phase 1 (1997–98) of the New Deal for Schools programme. Coventry local education authority holds this information.
[2] For NDS three allocations, individual details of amounts awarded to schools within a package project were not required. Coventry local education authority will be able to provide the value of projects at schools that have benefited from these allocations.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what the terms of reference are for the Green Minister in her Department; and if she will make a statement; [3983]

(2) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in her Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if she will make a statement. [3972]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 690W.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills on what dates her Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if she will make a statement. [4826]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

Nursery Places

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to bring forward proposals to provide for free nursery places for all three-year-olds in England. [4270]

Mr. Timms: Since September 1998 all four-year-olds have been able to access a free, part-time nursery education place. This Government are committed to providing all three-year-olds with a free place by September 2004. We are currently on target to provide 66 per cent. of all three-year-olds with a part-time place by March 2002.

Early Years Places (Chorley)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many day care places in nurseries have been created in Chorley since 1997. [4362]

Mr. Timms: Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have only provided details of the new child care places that have opened by constituency since April 1999. Between April 1999 and March 2001 Lancashire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has reported the creation of 267 day care places[1] in the constituency of Chorley.

[1] This figure includes day care places created in day nurseries, pre-schools and playgroups. No separate figure is available for nurseries only.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many out of school hours child care places have been created since 1997; and how much money has been provided for them in Chorley. [4363]

Mr. Timms: Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have only provided details of the new child care places that have opened by constituency since April 1999. Between April 1999 and March 2001 Lancashire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has reported the creation of 322 new out of school hours places[1] in Chorley.

We are not able to identify the exact amount of funding made available to support these out of school places. Since April 1999 the New Opportunities Fund has made four awards totalling over £947,000 in response to applications for funding from the Chorley area for out of school child care projects. However, two of these were consortium bids covering the whole of Lancashire. In addition since April 1999, Lancashire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has spent around £404,000 of Childcare Grant to fund new out of school hours childcare places across the county.

[1] Data include places created in out of school clubs and holiday schemes.

Education Action Zones

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the *(a)* targeted and *(b)* actual private sector funding for each education action zone. [4413]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* Each large education action zone aims to raise up to £250,000 pa from the private sector; each small education action zone aims to raise £50,000 pa from the private sector.

The amounts of actual private sector sponsorship obtained by each education action zone to the end of the last financial year, along with the zone's start date, is shown in the following tables:

Education action zones matched funding as reported to March 2001

Start date	*Education action zone*	*Total[1] (£000)*
Large zones		
September 1998	Barnsley	429
January 1999	Birmingham (Aston and Nechells)	133
January 1999	Birmingham (Kitts Green and Shard End)	498
September 1998	Blackburn with Darwen	566
January 1999	East Basildon	201
January 1999	East Brighton	489
September 1998	East Middlesbrough	631
January 1999	Halifax	668
September 1998	Herefordshire	124
January 1999	Kingston upon Hull	327
September 1998	CfBT/Lambeth	244
September 1998	Leicester South and West	374
January 1999	Leigh (Wigan)	361
September 1998	New Addington (Croydon)	484
September 1998	Newcastle	306
September 1998	Newham	991
September 1998	North East Lincolnshire (Grimsby)	167
January 1999	North East Sheffield	393
September 1998	North Somerset (Weston-Super-Mare)	176
January 1999	North Southwark	693
January 1999	Nottingham	364
January 1999	Plymouth	422
September 1998	Salford and Trafford	567
January 1999	South Tyneside	220
January 1999	Thetford (Norfolk)	445
January 2000	Ashington	183
January 2000	Barrow-in-Furness	255
January 2000	Bedford	816
January 2000	Bolton	190
January 2000	Bridgwater	78
April 2000	Bristol	183
January 2000	Camborne Pool Redruth	261
January 2000	Clacton and Harwich	375
January 2000	Corby	420
January 2000	Coventry Millennium	221
April 2000	Derby North East	100
January 2000	Dingle, Granby and Toxteth (Liverpool)	240
January 2000	Downham and Bellingham (Lewisham)	187
December 1999	Dudley	197
January 2000	Easington and Seaham	484
January 2000	East Cleveland	271
December 1999	East Manchester	311
January 2000	Epicentre LEAP (Ellesmere Port)	131
January 2000	Gillingham Partnership	224
January 2000	Gloucester	276
April 2000	Great Yarmouth	161
September 1999	Greenwich	228
December 1999	Hackney	485
December 1999	Hastings and St. Leonards	428
December 1999	Kent/Somerset Virtual	128
January 2000	Leigh Park (Havant)	201
December 1999	North East Derbyshire Coalfields	287
December 1999	North Islington	344
April 2000	North Stockton	71
April 2000	North West Shropshire	28
September 2000	Hamilton Oxford Schools	826
January 2000	Peterlee	527
December 1999	Preston	158
January 2000	Rainbow Zone (Stoke-on-Trent)	255
December 1999	Heart of Slough	179
January 2000	South Bradford	152
April 2000	South East England Virtual	251
April 2000	South East Sheffield	171
December 1999	Southend	255
January 2000	Speke Garston (Liverpool)	236
January 2000	Sunderland	134
December 1999	Telford and Wrekin	235
January 2000	Wakefield	121
December 1999	Wednesbury (Sandwell)	223
May 2000	Westminster	10
January 2000	Withernsea and Southern Holderness	285
January 2000	Wolverhampton	257
December 1999	Wythenshawe (Manchester)	311
Total		22,623

[1] These figures are compiled taking account of a mixture of audited annual accounts and, where unavailable, unaudited annual accounts up to March 2001

Start date	*Name of zone*	*Total £[1]*
Small zones		
April 2000	Achieving Excellence in Battersea	5,050
April 2000	Hammersmith and Fulham	1,655
April 2000	Learning Partnerships (Leeds)	53,287
April 2000	Liverpool FOCUS	0
April 2000	Manor Park (Newham)	37,490
April 2000	Plumstead Pathfinder (Greenwich)	0
April 2000	Rotherham Clifton Partnership	50,000
April 2000	Rotherham Thrybergh	50,000
April 2000	Salford East	26,859
April 2000	Sheffield Abbeydale Corridor	0
April 2000	Tower Hamlets Globetown	50,000
April 2000	Woolwich Reach (Greenwich)	33,000
September 2000	Athena (Birmingham)	0
September 2000	Camden Learning Network	29,167
September 2000	Excellence 2000 (Knowsley)	0
September 2000	Haringey Zone of Excellence	0
September 2000	King's Cross (Islington)	0
September 2000	King's Norton (Birmingham)	0
September 2000	Kingstanding (Birmingham)	0
September 2000	Liverpool Excite	0

Start date	Name of zone	Total £[1]
September 2000	Liverpool North Deanery	0
September 2000	Moss Side and Hulme (Manchester)	0
September 2000	New River Partnership (Islington)	29,200
September 2000	Peckham (Southwark)	0
September 2000	Quinzone (Birmingham)	0
September 2000	Richmond Hill (Leeds)	0
January 2001	Creating Success (Lewisham)	0
January 2001	East Gateshead (Gateshead)	0
January 2001	East Shipley (Bradford)	0
January 2001	Educating Partners in Islington and Camden	50,000
January 2001	Excellence Plus (Waltham Forest)	0
January 2001	Highgate (Birmingham)	0
January 2001	Inner West Achievement (Leeds)	0
January 2001	Kimberworth (Rotherham)	0
January 2001	Learning Together (Sheffield)	0
January 2001	North East Liverpool Consort	0
January 2001	Popular Partnership (Tower Hamlets)	0
January 2001	REAP (Waltham Forest)	0
January 2001	Together We Can (Sheffield)	0
January 2001	Wyke (Bradford)	0
Total for all 40 zones		415,708

[1] 2000–01 to date

Note:

These figures are compiled from pledged sponsorship to date

School Governors

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has for ensuring that the skill-mix of school governing bodies is sufficient for the proper discharge of their responsibilities. [4428]

Mr. Timms: The Code of Practice on Local Education Authority-School Relations advises local education authorities to appoint as governors those who are best qualified to help schools improve and to have regard to the skills and experience of which particular schools have the greatest need. The Department's advice to governing bodies is to consider, when co-opting governors, what skills are needed to enable the full discharge of their responsibilities.

The Department will make available to governor trainers in local education authorities from September 2001 a package for governors to help ensure that they have the information to develop the skills to do the job.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has for improving the recruitment of school governors. [4427]

Mr. Timms: The Department for Education and Skills is funding the School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) to recruit people with business and management skills to become school governors in areas covered by all phases of the Government's Excellence in Cities programme. SGOSS is a private company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity. Since its inception in January 2000, SGOSS has found 1,098 candidates of whom 291 are serving governors and 181 are matched with schools and awaiting final placement.

The Department's strategy for supporting the recruitment of governors by schools and LEAs also includes the production of publicity materials. A national school governor advertising campaign took place last autumn and funding is available for a campaign extension to support the election and appointment of governors at the beginning of the autumn term this year.

Education (Bedfordshire)

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on the level of Government funding awarded per sixth form student in *(a)* a sixth form further education college and *(b)* a sixth form situated in a secondary school in the 2000–01 academic year. [4463]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In the 2000–01 financial year the range of funding delegated to schools across LEAs for their school sixth form pupils was £2,600 to £4,100. Funding for each further education college depends on the size of each individual student's programme of study, but the average for all full-time equivalent students in 2000–01 was some £3,300. Figures for funding comparisons on an academic year basis are not currently available.

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to enable schools in Bedfordshire to fund more programmes to tackle drug abuse. [4711]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Funding to support drug, alcohol and tobacco education will rise from £14.5 million in 2001–02 to £15.5 million in 2002–03 and £17.5 million in 2003–04. This funding will improve the quality and coverage of drug education programmes in schools, provide funding for every school to have access to an LEA drug adviser and will fund drug education training for teachers and Connexions advisers. Bedfordshire LEA will receive £98,600 in 2001–02 as part of this funding. No specific figures are available beyond 2001–02.

In addition to this specific funding, schools will receive £15 million in 2001–02 to support Personal Social and Health Education and Citizenship, which they can choose to spend on programmes to tackle drug misuse if they wish. Bedfordshire LEA have been allocated £87,300 from this fund.

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many unfilled vacancies there are in the further education sector for lecturer posts in Bedfordshire; and how many there were in 1997. [4712]

John Healey: The information requested is not collected centrally. The Learning and Skills Council collect information on staff numbers in Further Education (FE) sector colleges by the Staff Individualised Record (SIR). SIR does not include details on vacancies, leavers, salary or grade.

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of three year olds in *(a)* Bedfordshire and *(b)* England have free early years places. [4713]

Mr. Timms: In March 2001, around 55 per cent. of three year olds in England had access to a free part-time early education place. We are currently on target to provide 66 per cent. of all three year olds with a free place by March 2002. We are committed to providing all three year olds with a free place by September 2004.

Bedfordshire local education authority estimate that around 44 per cent. of three year olds have access to a free early education place in their area.

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time teaching vacancies there are in (i) lower, (ii) middle, (iii) upper and (iv) special schools in Bedfordshire. [4716]

Mr. Timms: The number of full-time vacancies for teachers in the maintained schools sector in Bedfordshire local authority at January 2001 (provisional) is as follows:

	Vacancies	*Vacancy rate (percentage)*
Nursery/Primary	23	2.3
Secondary	48	2.7
Special	5	3.7
Total	76	2.6

Data are not collected on part-time vacancies.

Data are not collected on a lower, middle or upper school basis.

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* lower, *(b)* middle and *(c)* upper school teachers there were in Bedfordshire on 1 May; and how many are projected for 1 May 2002. [4719]

Mr. Timms: Full-time equivalents of regular teachers (excluding short-term supply) employed in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary sector in Bedfordshire local authority at January 2001 (provisional) are as follows:

	Number
Nursery	30
Primary	1,100
Secondary	1,970
Total	3,090

Notes:
Figures rounded to the nearest 10.
The total does not equal the sum of the component parts because of rounding.
Regular teacher data are collected in January of each year. Figures for May 2001 and projected figures for May 2002 will not be collected or estimated.
Data are not collected on a lower, middle or upper school basis.

GM Technology (Teaching Materials)

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if information provided by the Biotechnology Institute on GM technology is an approved teaching aid in United Kingdom schools. [4510]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* A wide range of organisations disseminate resources and information which can be used to support the delivery of the school curriculum. The Department for Education and Skills does not approve or quality assure such resources for use in schools in England. Teachers use their professional judgment to decide which resources will best meet the educational needs of their pupils.

School Places (Wandsworth)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many pupils living in the London borough of Wandsworth have not been allocated a secondary school place within the borough for the autumn term. [4529]

Mr. Timms: My Department does not hold this information. However, Wandsworth LEA has told my officials that it is in the process of identifying and contacting children who have not obtained a place at their parents' preferred school. The LEA has said that there are sufficient secondary school places available in Wandsworth to be able to place any children in the area who do not yet have a school.

Standard Spending Assessment

Tony Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what the SSA per primary and secondary pupil is for *(a)* Staffordshire and *(b)* Hertfordshire; [4549]

(2) what the percentage variation was of *(a)* Staffordshire and *(b)* Hertfordshire from the shire county average in terms of SSA per primary pupil and secondary pupil in (i) 1992–93 and (ii) 2001–02. [4550]

Mr. Timms: The table shows for 1998–99 and 2001–02 the Education SSA per primary and secondary school for Staffordshire and Hertfordshire and compares them with the shire county average. It is not possible to produce comparable figures for 1992–93, because of local government re-organisation, which was completed on 1 April 1998.

Standard spending assessments (SSAs) in cash terms

	Staffordshire	*Hertfordshire*	*Shire county average*
1998–99			
Primary (£)	2,040	2,260	2,150
Percentage variation from shire county average	−5.1	+5.1	—
Secondary (£)	2,650	2,930	2,790
Percentage variation	−5.0	+5.0	—
2001–02			
Primary (£)	2,330	2,610	2,460
Percentage variation	−5.3	+6.1	—
Secondary (£)	3,000	3,330	3,160
Percentage variation	−5.1	+5.4	—

Universities (Management)

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what arrangements she has made for the audit of management practice in universities. [4565]

Margaret Hodge: The Financial Memorandum between the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and each institution it funds requires institutions to have sound systems of internal control and to demonstrate they are securing good value for money. The HEFCE Audit Code of Practice states that these systems should be audited by the institution's internal and external auditors, and that the institution's audit committee should report annually on their effectiveness. In addition, the HEFCE Audit Service reviews high-level

management arrangements as well as the effectiveness of institutions' governance and audit arrangements by means of a programme of audit visits. In line with corporate governance changes nationally, institutions will in future be required to include a statement of internal control, including risk management, in their published and audited financial statements every year.

Education Funding Strategy Group

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when she expects the Education Funding Strategy Group to report; and if she will make a statement. [4615]

Mr. Timms: The Education Funding Strategy Group has been set up to develop the proposals outlined in the September 2000 Green Paper "Modernising Local Government Finance". No firm date has been set for the completion of its work.

Examinations

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what notification schools were given about recent increases in the cost of examinations; and if she will make a statement. [4660]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: It is for the independent awarding bodies to determine their own procedures with regard to notifying examination centres about examination fees. However, I understand that for the summer 2001 examinations, the notice given centres varied from March to November 2000, depending upon the awarding body. Awarding bodies also post details of fees on their websites.

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the average examination fee was for *(a)* GCSEs, *(b)* AS-levels and *(c)* A-levels, for each year since 1990 in (i) cash prices and (ii) real terms prices against a 1990 baseline. [4661]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: As the fees are set by the individual awarding bodies and can vary between subjects, it is not possible to provide precise figures. Also, given the changes to the complement of, and services provided by, the awarding bodies over the period it is not possible to provide figures before the academic year 1995–96. Estimates of the amounts charged in cash prices and real terms from 1995–96 are given in the table.

£

	GCSE		*GCE A-level*[1]		*GCE A-level*[2]		*GCE AS-level*[2]	
Academic year	*Cash price*	*Real terms*	*Cash price*	*Real terms*	*Cash price*	*Real terms*	*Cash price*	*Real terms*
1995–96	16.50	—	26.90	—	—	—	—	—
1996–97	17.03	16.95	27.50	27.63	—	—	—	—
1997–98	17.50	17.50	28.50	28.25	—	—	—	—
1998–99	17.64	18.13	29.60	29.53	—	—	—	—
1999–2000	18.20	18.01	30.30	30.22	[3]49.50	—	—	—
2000–01	18.30	18.63	32.50	31.01	51.00	50.66	25.50	n/a

[1] Linear
[2] Modular
[3] A direct comparison with A-level (modular) prices in 2000–01 is not possible as there were several models in use, that is two modules, four modules, six modules etc. This figure has been determined using an average of the six module course
Note:
This information has been provided by the Joint Council for General Qualifications

School Transport

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what arrangements exist to pay education authorities for post-16 school transport. [4665]

Mr. Timms: Funding for post-16 transport is distributed via local education authorities as part of the Education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA). LEAs will continue to receive recognition in SSAs for this after the responsibility for funding post 16-school provision passes to the Learning and Skills Council in 2002–03. LEAs also receive School Access Funds to help students meet the costs of their learning, including travel. Education Maintenance Allowances, which are means tested payments to the student, are being piloted in 56 LEAs and this money is frequently used to cover transport costs. Five of the pilots are specifically designed to address transport costs.

Computers

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many low income families in the Christchurch constituency have received a computer under the Computers Within Reach initiative; and how many are expected to do so during the next year; [4758]

(2) how many low income families in each constituency have gained access to computers under the Computers Within Reach initiative. [4761]

John Healey: No low income families have so far received a computer under the scheme in the Christchurch constituency, as it is not within a Computers Within Reach pilot area. I have not made decisions on the location of any future pilots.

We do not hold the information by constituency but the numbers of low income families who have, or will benefit from phase 1 of the Computers Within Reach scheme by area—with the relevant constituencies covered in each area listed after the total number of customers—are as follows.

Pilot area	*Number delivered by 13 July*	*Total number to be delivered into area during pilot phase*	*Constituency*
Aidis	106	151	Cover all pilot areas
Birmingham	1,467	2,000	Birmingham, Edgbaston
			Birmingham, Erdington
			Birmingham, Hall Green
			Birmingham, Hodge Hill
			Birmingham, Ladywood
			Birmingham, North Field
			Birmingham, Perry Bar
			Birmingham, Selly Oak
			Birmingham, Sparkbrook and Small Heath
			Birmingham, Yardley
Hull	404	427	Hull, West and Hessle
			Hull, East
			Hull, North
Portsmouth	320	320	Portsmouth, North
			Portsmouth, South
Rotherham	936	2,222	Rotherham
			Rother Valley
			Wentworth
Doncaster	898	2,301	Barnsley East and Mexborough
			Doncaster, Central
			Doncaster, North
Sheffield	1,517	4,106	Sheffield, Attercliffe
			Sheffield, Brightside
			Sheffield, Central
			Sheffield, Hallam
			Sheffield, Heeley
			Hillsborough
Manchester	1,024	2,389	Manchester, Blackley
			Manchester, Central
			Manchester, Gorton
			Manchester, Withington
Leeds	1,610	1,610	Leeds, Central
			Leeds, East
			Leeds, North-East
			Leeds, North-West
			Leeds, West
Liverpool	1,635	2,321	Liverpool, Garston
Wired up Communities Pilot—Liverpool	2,000	2,000	Liverpool, Riverside
			Liverpool, Walton
			Liverpool, Wavertree
			Liverpool, West Derby
London	581	2,416	Bexleyheath and Crayford
			Erith and Thamesmead
			Old Bexley and Sidcup
			Hackney, North and Stoke Newington
			Hackney, South and Shoreditch
			Dulwich and West Norwood
			Streatham
			Vauxhall
			Camberwell and Peckham
			Southwark and Bermondsey
			Bethnal Green and Bow
			Poplar and Canning Town
			Cities of London and Westminster
Bradford	225	483	Bradford, North
			Bradford, South
			Bradford, West
			Keighley
			Shipley
Halifax	0	8	Halifax
Huddersfield	0	18	Huddersfield
			Colne Valley
Luton	119	119	Luton, North
			Luton, South
Plymouth	914	1,000	Devon, South-West
			Plymouth, Devonport
			Plymouth, Sutton

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many low income families have so far obtained access to computers under the Computers Within Reach initiative launched in December 1999; and at what cost to public funds; [4759]

(2) if she will make a statement on the progress of the scheme announced on 28 October 1999 to extend access to computers to low income families within three years and the date by which she expects the 100,000 families to gain access to a computer; [4760]

(3) how many people have so far applied for computers under the Computers Within Reach initiative; and what the average length of time between application and delivery is. [4766]

John Healey: The first phase of the Computers Within Reach scheme became operational with the launch of a number of locally based pilots in England in October 2000. The proposed subsidy for the scheme was that—in addition to the £60 paid by the customer—the contractor would receive funding of £150 per computer and printer package delivered—with extra subsidy available if the customer was disabled. We have made a number of changes to the proposed approach in terms of enhanced software and specification and purchased a suite of office applications software to be used on each PC and in certain circumstances increased the funding available to contractors in respect of increases in the specification of the computers supplied.

Phase 1 of the scheme will be closed by the end of August 2001 and 24,051 PCs will have been delivered by this time. This will ensure that everyone on the waiting list will have received a computer. We do not hold data on the average length of time between application and delivery of computers but became aware of issues which were causing delays. These problems have now been resolved and all outstanding applicants will receive a computer before the end of phase 1.

The scheme is subject to an external research evaluation contract and we will be using this and our internal evaluation to learn the lessons from the first phase. We are currently considering how to take the scheme forward.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many computers have been installed in homes and schools under the Wired up Communities initiative; and how many will be installed by 31 December. [4762]

John Healey: So far under the Wired up Communities initiative, 1,840 recycled computers have been installed into homes in the phase one project in Kensington, Liverpool. No computers have yet been installed in schools. There is no target for installation of computers by 31 December 2001.

However, by 31 March 2002, the seven Wired up Communities projects aim to connect 14,000 homes to the Internet using a variety of devices, including new and recycled computers and television set-top boxes.

Also, through the national e-Learning Foundation, 33 schools in the Wired up Communities areas will be wired up using technology such as electronic whiteboards and laptops. Some 12,000 schoolchildren will benefit from this new technology.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on her plans for issuing a replacement Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. [4775]

Mr. Timms: A revised Draft Code of Practice will be placed before Parliament for approval following the summer recess. The revised Code will contain revised wording on quantifying provision in statements of special educational needs. The Code is planned to take effect from January 2002.

Connexions Card

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what progress has been made on the introduction of the Connexions Card for 16 to 19-year-olds. [5491]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Following an extensive procurement exercise conducted under the European Union Procurement Directive's Negotiated Procedure, the Government have selected Capita as their private sector partner to develop and deliver the Connexions Card.

The Connexions Card is an exciting and innovative development, which will provide a powerful incentive to young people to stay in learning.

The Connexions Card will be rolled out initially in one region (the North East) from autumn of this year and then progressively so that it will be available across England from autumn 2002.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria he uses in balancing trade relations with the human rights records of trading partners; and if he will make a statement. [2102]

Peter Hain: The Government are committed to developing and maintaining open relationships with trading partners across the world, in order both to support British business and to promote human rights internationally. We continue to believe that human rights in countries with which we trade are better protected by a UK and EU-wide policy of engagement in all but the most extreme circumstances. Maintaining trade agreements, and a full political dialogue, preserves UK leverage in such countries.

The Government raise the profile of human rights in relation to trade in a number of ways. Examples include the introduction of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's (ECGD) Business Principles under which ECGD now screens applications for support to assess the environmental and social impact of projects and, more generally, the promotion of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises to UK companies operating overseas.

Our advice to UK business on market conditions overseas also reflects the Government's position on human rights, for example on the desirability of trade with certain countries. It is however for UK companies to judge whether to bid for projects or invest in particular markets.

Zimbabwe

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments regarding land distribution in Zimbabwe. [2715]

Mr. Bradshaw: We have consistently said that we are willing to support a land reform programme in Zimbabwe that is in line with the principles agreed by international donors and the Government of Zimbabwe at the 1998 Land Conference.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was discussed when he met Morgan Tsvangirai on 2 July. [2717]

Mr. Bradshaw: The discussion was wide-ranging. It included the current situation in Zimbabwe, international support for free and fair elections, progress of the EU/Zimbabwe dialogue and sustainable land reform.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the ministerial resolution discussed at the recent summit of the Organisation of African Unity which related to the land reform programme in Zimbabwe. [4037]

Mr. Bradshaw: As I stated during FCO questions on 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 657, the ministerial statement should be viewed in the context of the OAU's desire to maintain unity. In order to attract international donor support, including from the UK, land reform in Zimbabwe must be carried out in line with the principles agreed, by donors and the Government of Zimbabwe, at the 1998 Land Conference.

EU-Israel Association Committee

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 5 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 254W, on the EU-Israel Association Committee, which Ministers have been informed of the decisions taken by the Committee. [3170]

Peter Hain: The outcome of the 21 May EU-Israel Association Committee has been reflected in advice on EU-Israel issues provided to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the Under-Secretary my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Bradshaw) and myself since the election.

Bermuda Regiment

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidance he has given in respect of compliance with the European convention on human rights on conscription into the Bermuda Regiment. [2495]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* None.

Pakistan

Andy King: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Pakistani authorities concerning the continuing imprisonment of Parvez Masih and Ayub Masih. [3869]

Mr. Bradshaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by the then Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 27 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 421–22W. We are deeply concerned about the misuse of the blasphemy laws in Pakistan and about the thousands of Pakistani citizens imprisoned under these laws, including many from the religious minorities. We raise the blasphemy laws at regular intervals with the Pakistani authorities and have previously raised the case of Ayub Masih. The EU Troika raised the blasphemy laws with the Pakistani Minister of Law, Justice and Human Rights, Ms Shahida Jamil, on 3 May.

Andy King: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Pakistani authorities concerning violent attacks perpetrated upon Christian women by Muslim extremists in Pakistan. [3870]

Mr. Bradshaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by the then Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 1 May 2001, *Official Report*, column 579W. Representations were made to the Pakistani authorities concerning the allegations of violence against and kidnapping of Naira Nadia, a Christian girl. We regularly raise the treatment of religious minorities and the treatment of women with the Pakistani authorities. We also keep in regular contact with groups campaigning for the rights of religious minorities and women in Pakistan. We welcomed General Musharraf's speech of 5 June to religious leaders in which he condemned religious violence and intolerance.

Andy King: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has made to the Pakistani authorities concerning the disappearance of Naira Nadia. [3868]

Mr. Bradshaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by the then Minister of State, my hon. Friend, the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 1 May 2001, *Official Report*, column 579W. The Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement inform us that a settlement is under discussion between Ms Nadia's family and those accused of her kidnapping.

Brigadier Stephen Saunders

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the investigation into the murder of Brigadier Stephen Saunders, former Defence Attaché to Greece. [3807]

Mr. Bradshaw: We, along with the Greek Government, are firmly committed to bringing those responsible for Brigadier Saunders' assassination to justice.

We co-operate fully with the Greek authorities. There are regular visits to and from Greece at ministerial and official level. I cannot disclose the operational details. The

Metropolitan police and the Greek police in Athens continue to work well together on the investigation. Their objective is to ensure that there is a thorough and complete investigation leading to a successful prosecution.

Spoliation

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as part of the EU accession process, of the policy of *(a)* Hungary, *(b)* the Czech Republic and *(c)* Poland towards the restitution of assets to refugees from, and survivors of, Nazi persecution and their families; and if he will make a statement. [4128]

Peter Hain: The UK continues to urge the candidate countries to resolve any outstanding restitution issues as soon as possible. However, their policies on this issue fall outside the criteria they are required to meet for accession to the European Union and are not therefore part of the enlargement process.

Botswana

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet representatives of the Government of Botswana; and what issues will be discussed. [4283]

Mr. Bradshaw: There are no plans at present for the Foreign Secretary to meet with Government representatives of Botswana. British Ministers and officials meet their Botswanan counterparts regularly. Most recently, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met President Mogae in London on 28 June.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with *(a)* Botswana and *(b)* Namibia. [4282]

Mr. Bradshaw: The United Kingdom maintains a high level of official and ministerial contact with Botswana and Namibia, which ensures that bilateral relations with both countries are open and cordial.

Namibia

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet representatives of the Government of Namibia; and what issues will be discussed. [4284]

Mr. Bradshaw: There are no current plans for the Foreign Secretary to meet with Government representatives of Namibia. The UK maintains a regular and steady dialogue with the Government of Namibia on a wide range of issues of mutual interest.

Egypt

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last held discussions with the Egyptian authorities about the human rights of Christians in Egypt. [4126]

Mr. Bradshaw: Our Embassy in Egypt closely follows all cases of human rights concern. We raise human rights cases, regardless of ethnic or religious background, with the Egyptian authorities. We do this both bilaterally and through the EU.

We believe that it is important to improve relations between faiths in Egypt and that is why the promotion of interfaith dialogue remains a key focus of our efforts.

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the infringement of the human rights of Christians in Egypt. [4127]

Mr. Bradshaw: We are, of course, interested in the human rights of all in Egypt regardless of their religious background. We maintain a regular dialogue with many Coptic Christians and we listen to their views and opinions. Not surprisingly we hear a range of different opinions, not least on the question of discrimination. While some Copts talk of persecution, others tell us there is no Government policy of discrimination against Christians, nor do they talk of persecution. Our embassy in Cairo assesses that there is no general policy of discrimination against Christians, a view shared by many leading Copts. We do, however, raise individual cases of concern.

Kashmir

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet his Indian and Pakistani counterparts following the recent bilateral talks on the future of Kashmir. [4269]

Mr. Bradshaw: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary saw the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar, on 12 June and spoke to the Indian Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh, on 20 June. Although there are no firm plans for a ministerial meeting in the immediate future, we expect to discuss a meeting between the Indian and Pakistani leaders during our next exchanges with both India and Pakistan.

Middle East

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to secure a settlement in the middle east. [4140]

Mr. Bradshaw: We are actively engaged with the parties, and are working closely with the US, our EU partners and the UN to move the process forward. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have recently met Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Peres, US Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condi Rice, and EU counterparts. Lord Levy visited the region and met Sharon and Arafat on 11 and 12 July. Our message to all parties is the same: that the recommendations of the Sharm El Sheikh (Mitchell) Committee report are the roadmap for the return to political negotiations. We look to the Israelis and the Palestinians to take steps to end the violence, cease unilateral action which undermines the basis for peace, and immediately begin the full implementation of the Mitchell recommendations.

I will be visiting the region between 18 and 25 July. I will restate this message and urge both sides to seize the opportunity that the Mitchell report provides.

Aung San Suu Kyi

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received about whether Aung San Suu Kyi will be released from house arrest. [4737]

Mr. Bradshaw: The recent release of political prisoners in Burma has inevitably led to speculation that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will also soon be released from the period of house arrest she has undergone since September 2000. I very much hope that this will happen.

Amnesty International estimates that over 1,700 political prisoners remain in detention in Burma including, contrary to earlier reports, a number of MPs elect from the National League for Democracy. I will continue to urge the release of all political prisoners in Burma.

Afghanistan

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the regime in Afghanistan about the proposed law which will require Hindus to identify themselves by wearing yellow badges. [4736]

Mr. Bradshaw: Our High Commission in Islamabad raised our concerns about the edict with the Taliban mission in Islamabad on 23 May. We worked closely with our EU partners on the 25 May EU Declaration which urged the Taliban not to implement this edict and reminded them of their obligations under international human rights law. We understand that the edict has not yet been formally implemented, and that an alternative identity card system is under consideration.

Corporate Risk International

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with Corporate Risk International; and if he will make a statement. [4729]

Mr. Bradshaw: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had no recent discussions with Corporate Risk International.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if he will make a statement. [4815]

Peter Hain: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

Institute of Export

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice and assistance his Department *(a)* gives and *(b)* has given during the last three years to the Institute of Export; how many Foreign Office employees have been seconded to the Institute of Export in each of the last three years; for what purposes; and at what cost to public funds. [4770]

Mr. MacShane: My Department—through British Trade International (BTI)—maintains close links with the Institute of Export and supports the Institute's work to promote the importance of exporting and to improve the performance of British exporters. In the last three years BTI and the Institute of Export (IOE) have worked together on the development of the regional delivery of BTI services, the design of a self-diagnostic test for potential exporters and the development of a training package for BTI staff.

In the last three years the FCO seconded two members of staff to the IOE, each for a period of approximately 18 months. These placements were managed by British Trade International as part of its remit to increase private sector expertise among its FCO and DTI staff. In previous years similar secondments were also undertaken by DTI staff. Staff remained on the payroll of their parent department. Any other costs associated with undertaking these assignments were met by the IOE.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4901]

Mr. Straw: It is not the normal practice of the Government to publish the daily ministerial Duty Roster. This Department will ensure that it has enough cover through the summer recess in line with the requirements of the Ministerial Code.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Women in Science

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to review the career structures of women in science. [1732]

Mr. Wilson: The Department is currently undertaking a review of women's scientific careers as outlined in "Excellence and Opportunity", the 2000 Science and Innovation White Paper. The study has interviewed women in the public and private sector who have both returned to a scientific career and who have left and wish to return.

The study is due to report at the end of the summer, at which time we will consult stakeholders in the development of an action plan. DTI and DFES will both be involved in this process.

Marconi

Annette Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussion she had with Marconi prior to the recent announcement of redundancies. [3158]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry did not have any prior discussion with Marconi about its announcement of further job losses in the UK.

Data Protection Act

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what date her Department received a request for documents under the Data Protection Act 1984 from Lord Ashcroft; on what dates her Department replied to the request; and if she will make a statement. [3820]

Ms Hewitt: The Data Protection Act 1998 prohibits disclosure of personal data to a third party without the consent of the individual concerned. The position is recognised by the exemption in the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information covering statutory and other restrictions.

Transco

Mr. Chaytor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Transco price review will include consideration of the financing of extension to the gas network; and if she will make a statement. [3713]

Mr. Wilson: Transco's price review is a matter for the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem). The latest proposals for the price control can be found on the Ofgem website at www.Ofgem.gov.uk. The Government's draft Fuel Poverty Strategy included a commitment to working with Ofgem to ensure that, wherever possible, the gas network provides the widest viable coverage and fullest viable capacity. A working group, whose membership includes representatives of Government, Ofgem, the industry and consumers, is taking this work forward.

Bank Holidays

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the case for introducing bank holidays on non-Christian holy days. [4254]

Alan Johnson: No such assessment has been made. However, the Government encourage employers to be flexible when agreeing time off for cultural and religious observance.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Alan Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment has been made of the impact of the new electricity trading arrangements on smaller companies in relation to their role as *(a)* suppliers and *(b)* generators. [4265]

Mr. Wilson: In late February, the Minister for Energy at the time asked the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) to undertake a review of the impact of the new electricity trading arrangements (NETA) on smaller generators based on the first two months of NETA operation. Ofgem is due to publish its review by August.

In addition, Ofgem is producing regular assessments of how NETA is working, including the impact on smaller suppliers, for the Department of Trade and Industry. It is expected that many of the issues relating to smaller generators apply also to smaller suppliers.

The Government will consult on any necessary action, including in relation to smaller suppliers, once Ofgem's review report is published.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if revised estimates of emissions of carbon dioxide from the electricity sector have been made to reflect the changes in operational management of *(a)* combined heat and power and renewable electricity generating plant and *(b)* centralised power stations since the start of the new electricity trading arrangements; and if these changes are reflected in the Government's UK climate change strategy. [4753]

Mr. Wilson: CO_2 emissions from the electricity generation sector for the first full quarter under the new electricity trading arrangements (NETA) are not yet available. Government projections of CO_2 emissions were last published in November 2000 as Energy Paper 68.[1] These, along with the Government's climate change strategy, are long-term by their nature and we see no reason to revise either at this stage. We do not, as yet, have sufficient information on CHP, renewable or indeed any generation to assess resulting changes in the electricity sector fully. In any event, we are still in the early days of NETA and generator behaviour in response to the new arrangements is unlikely to have settled down. There have been particular issues regarding the impact of NETA on renewables and CHP generation, which Ofgem will shortly be publishing a report on.

[1] Energy Projections for the UK, 2000–2020—Energy Paper 68—published November 2000.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she intends to implement the proposals set out in February in the DTI Responses to Consultations and Final Proposals document concerning exemptions from the requirement for a licence to generate, distribute or supply electricity. [4466]

Mr. Wilson: The Government plan that an order implementing these proposals should be made in the next few weeks.

Energy Policy

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the Government's target is for the use of renewable energy by *(a)* 2020, *(b)* 2030 and *(c)* 2040; and if she will make a statement. [4444]

Mr. Wilson: The Government have proposed targets for renewable energy for 2003 and 2010 subject to the cost being acceptable to consumers. We shall be considering the possibility of setting additional targets in the light of the energy review being carried out by the Performance and Innovation Unit.

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the subsidy paid to *(a)* the UK nuclear industry and *(b)* renewable sources of energy for each year since 1997; and if she will make a statement. [4441]

Mr. Wilson: No Government investment or subsidy has been paid in years since 1997 toward the production of nuclear power or to the development, planning or construction of nuclear power stations. There is no current expectation that there will be any in the period to 2005–6.

The levy funds paid for production and development of power from renewable sources under the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation in respect of England and Wales for each year from 1997–98 are shown in the table.

	£ million
1997–98	115.9
1998–99	113.7
1999–2000	41.9
2000–01	52.1
2001–02 (estimate)	111.0

Additional sums will have been made available under the obligations operating in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Support for renewable energy in years from 2002–03 will depend upon the detailed terms of the renewables obligation, on which I will be consulting shortly.

In addition to support to be provided under the renewables obligation, the Government have pledged over £260 million over the next three years in direct support for the production and development of renewable energy. Renewables will also be helped indirectly through exemption from the climate change levy.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of changes in *(a)* demand and *(b)* production of energy in (i) the UK, (ii) Wales and (iii) Scotland until 2020, broken down by (A) nuclear, (B) renewable and (C) fossil fuel; and what proportion of demand will be met from maximum forecast (x) nuclear, (y) renewable and (z) fossil fuel output. [3936]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The DTI published, in Energy Paper 68 (EP68), energy demand projections for the period 2000 to 2020 in November 2000. The projections covered the UK as a whole. The DTI has made no assessment of prospects for demand and supply in separate regions of the UK.

The projected total energy demands and contributions of each fuel, under a range of different economic conditions, are shown in Annexe H of EP68.

Energy Paper 68 is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the maximum output is from *(a)* nuclear, *(b)* renewable and *(c)* fossil fuel sources; and how these capacities will vary in each year until 2020 for (i) Scotland, (ii) the UK and (iii) Wales. [3935]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* At the end of 2000 major power producer maximum UK electrical generating capacity was 12.5GW at nuclear stations, 55.8GW at fossil fuel plants, and 2.4GW at all renewable plants (excluding pumped storage plant).

The DTI published, in Energy Paper 68 (EP68), energy demand projections for the period 2000 to 2020 in November 2000. Figures in Annexe G of EP68 show the assumed or projected capacities for a range of generating plant in a number of scenarios. The projections cover the UK as a whole. As a broad indication, in 2010, nuclear capacity is estimated to be 10GW, renewables capacity between 7 and 8GW and fossil capacity between 50 and 55GW.

Separate official figures are not available for Scotland and Wales, although the British Energy website gives output data for recent periods www.british-energy.com. The Government have not attempted to predict where capacity by fuel type will be geographically located.

Energy Paper 68 is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will estimate as proportions of energy *(a)* produced and *(b)* forecast to be produced in (1) UK, (2) Scotland and (3) Wales from (i) nuclear, (ii) renewable and (iii) fossil fuel sources for each year from 1997–98 to 2005–06. [3934]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* DTI publishes each year in the Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics electricity supplied by each type of fuel. These data are for the United Kingdom as a whole and are on a calendar year basis. Separate official figures are not available for Scotland and Wales, although the British Energy website gives output data for recent periods (www.british-energy.com). The figures for 2000 will be published in the 2001 Digest on 26 July 2001 and a copy of the digest will be made available in the Library of the House. The electricity supplied figures for the years 1997 to 2000 are as follows:

Electricity supplied (gross) by all generating companies in the UK (TWh)[1]

Year	*Nuclear*	*Renewables*	*Fossil fuels*
1997	89.3	7.2	234.0
1998	90.6	8.8	244.8
1999	87.7	9.9	251.3
2000	78.3	10.2	267.5

[1] Supplies from pumped storage stations, and imports of electricity are excluded.

The DTI published, in Energy Paper 68 (EP68), energy demand projections for the period 2000 to 2020 in November 2000. The projections cover the whole of the UK and no assessment was made of energy demand or supply prospects by region. Projections of the amount of electricity generated by the various types of plant are shown in Annexe D of Energy Paper 68. Annual projections of energy demand and supply are not available. In terms of the major producers of power, in the year 2005 nuclear is projected to account for around 24 per cent., renewables around 6 per cent. and other fossil sources around 67 per cent. of electricity supply. The remaining supply is in the form of pumped storage output or imports of electricity through the electricity link with France.

Foot and Mouth

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with leading banks about offering special facilities to non-farming businesses which have been affected by foot and mouth disease; and if she will make a statement. [4289]

Ms Hewitt: My officials continue to have discussions with the banks about the problems faced by all businesses affected by foot and mouth disease. The Small Business Service is working closely with the banking industry, via the British Bankers Association.

Extensions to the small firms loan guarantee scheme for businesses affected by foot and mouth disease were announced on 6 April 2001.

Enterprise Grants

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what the criteria are for enterprise grants; [4031]

(2) what recent changes there have been in the criteria for the awarding of enterprise grants. [4147]

Alan Johnson: The criteria for enterprise grants are set out in the scheme brochure, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. The brochure is also available at http://www2.dti.gov.uk/enterprisegrant/index.htm.

Following an internal review of the workings of this new scheme, two changes to the criteria were agreed in February of this year, to allow:

1. Firms to apply for more than one grant within the overall ceiling of £75,000; and
2. a degree of flexibility to exceed the normal ceiling of £500,000 for capital investment.

Post Office

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps she has taken to ensure that the Post Office does not use its powers under the Representation of the People Acts for its commercial advantage. [4123]

Mr. Alexander: The Representation of the People Acts allow free delivery of parliamentary candidates' electoral mailings by universal service providers. Universal service providers are reimbursed for providing this service out of the Consolidated Fund at a rate negotiated by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.

Royal Mail

Siobhain McDonagh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment the Government have made of the impact on jobs and postal services of Royal Mail plans to restructure its provision of sorting offices in London. [4591]

Mr. Alexander: Under the Government's reforms of postal services, we have established an arm's-length relationship with Consignia and operational matters, such as the restructuring of Royal Mail's sorting offices, are a matter for the company.

End of Life Vehicle Directive

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if the EU end of life vehicle directive will be restricted to new cars; and if UK vehicle manufacturers will be required to pick up retrospective liabilities *(a)* immediately and *(b)* in the future; [4108]

(2) if she will make a statement on the implementation of the EU's end of life vehicle directive. [4109]

Mr. Wilson: The Government will issue a consultation paper on the implementation of the end of life vehicles directive as soon as possible. The directive introduces tightened environmental treatment standards which must apply for all vehicles scrapped from 2002 onwards. The consultation paper will focus on how obligations might be apportioned between different operators and views from all parties on the paper will be welcomed.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* PFI and *(b)* PPP contracts have been agreed by his Department over the last five years; how many have been satisfactorily completed; and in how many has compensation been (i) paid and (ii) claimed for performance failure. [4597]

Ms Hewitt: The Department and its agencies have signed three PFI/PPP contracts in the last five years. All three are on-going. No compensation has been paid in relation to these contracts. In the case of one contract, service credits amounting to £8,500 have accumulated for performance failure.

Appointments

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many appointments she has made since May 1997 in accordance with the Nolan criteria; how many appointees were aged over 60 years at the time of appointment; and how many declared a political affiliation for *(a)* the Conservative Party, *(b)* the Labour Party and *(c)* the Liberal Democrats. [4708]

Ms Hewitt: The information requested is not held centrally for the period since May 1997. It is being collated and I will write to the right hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Work-related Illnesses (Legal Costs)

Paddy Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what have been the total payments from public funds to date to legal advisers of claimants in respect of *(a)* chronic bronchitis and emphysema and *(b)* vibration white finger; and what estimate she has made of the likely total final costs. [3664]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) on 16 July 2001, *Official Report,* column 33W.

Chemical and Man-made Fibre Industries

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance his Department is planning to help the chemicals and man-made fibres industries. [4647]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The chemicals industry is undergoing radical restructuring through divestment and acquisition, which has prompted a review of the Department's analysis and strategies towards the sector. This includes the development with industry of a learning and skills strategy; a programme to

promote the spread of best practice; support for chemical industry cluster initiatives in several parts of the country; and a new programme to support chemicals inward investment from North America, which we have initiated with regional partners and InvestUK. The Department also has a programme of activities to help promote research and development, and support for the transfer of science and technology.

To help support this activity, the Department contributed around £4.6 million in 2000–01 to a number of programmes designed to improve the competitiveness of the chemicals and man-made fibres industries. This included the establishment of an Industry Forum for the chemicals sector to help improve process efficiency; a £2 million Faraday Partnership to improve the two-way flow of information and people in formulation technology; and a £3 million 'Manufacturing Molecules' programme to help reduce the time taken to develop and make complex molecules.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what factors underlie the recent significant reduction in business investment in the private sector managed chemicals and man-made fibres industries. [4648]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* Figures produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 25 June show that private sector manufacturing business investment in the chemicals and man-made fibres sector, based on seasonally adjusted figures, has increased by 5.6 per cent. (at current prices) in 2001 Q1 when compared with 2000 Q4.

These figures also show that there has been an increase in investment of 0.6 per cent. on the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

Enterprise Scholarship Scheme

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on how the enterprise scholarship scheme will encourage British entrepreneurs abroad to establish companies in the United Kingdom. [3926]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The recent White Paper on Enterprise, Skills and Innovation "Opportunity for all in a world of change" announced an enterprise scholarship scheme to attract the best young graduates from overseas, particularly in high-tech subjects, who want to come to the UK to develop their careers and start new businesses. The scheme will offer a tailored package of measures including postgraduate study in a business-related subject, work experience and help in starting up a business in the UK.

In addition British Trade International is working on a pilot scheme to encourage established overseas entrepreneurs to set up companies in the UK to pursue innovative business proposals. This pilot, which will target expatriate British and other entrepreneurs, is currently being developed in consultation with Development Agencies, the Small Business Service, DTI, FCO and other partners.

There is global competition for talent and it is the Government's aim to attract skilled and able entrepreneurs to the UK especially in areas where there is a short supply. These measures will support the creation of new jobs and prosperity in the UK and enhance our competitiveness in international markets.

Nuclear Material (Russia)

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 477–79W, how much of the funding pledged by Her Majesty's Government to tackle nuclear problems in the former Soviet Union has so far been spent. [4094]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* Of the some £84 million assistance over the next three years announced by HMG in July 2000, some £10.5 million has been firmly committed, of which some £4.2 million has already been spent.

The spend breaks down as follows:

£3.84 million—contribution to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund

£0.03 million—nuclear materials accountancy

£0.13 million—Nuclear Safety Projects

£0.03 million—physical protection of sites projects

£0.09 million—NW Russia spent nuclear fuel storage facility.

Further spend, commitments and project proposals are in the pipeline.

National Weights and Measures Laboratory

Brian White: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what targets she has set her Department's National Weights and Measures Laboratory for 2001–02. [5738]

Ms Hewitt: I have set the National Weights and Measures Laboratory the following quality of service and efficiency targets for 2001–02.

Financial Targets

To report a break-even situation in the Income and Expenditure Account 2001–02.

To meet the net vote target in 2001–02.

To contribute to continuous efficiency improvement by ensuring that total overhead costs are less than 55 per cent. of total costs.

To achieve continuous growth in its non-DTI income, with an increase of 7.5 per cent. in 2001–02.

Operational Targets

To meet the expectations of its customers by completing at least 90 per cent. of European type approvals within 10 weeks.

To complete European type approvals within an average of six weeks.

To complete calibration jobs within the time requested by customers, with at least 95 per cent. of all jobs (including preparation of certificates) completed within 18 working days of acceptance of the work and an average completion time of less than 14 days.

To complete the National Measurement System (NMS) legal metrology programme, and achieve 72 per cent. of the milestones in the programme by their due dates.

To satisfy its customers as demonstrated by at least 95 per cent. of them rating NWML's provision of services as satisfactory or better.

Questions delegated to the Chief Executive

Chief Executive to reply within 10 working days to all letters from Members of Parliament delegated to him for reply.

University Employment Tribunals

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information she has collated on the number of academic staff employment tribunals conducted in each university in the last two years. [4664]

Alan Johnson: No information has been collated on the number of academic staff who may have taken cases to employment tribunals in the last two years.

Seeboard

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information she has collated on the number of power cuts experienced by residents and businesses in the Seeboard area over the last five years; and what representations she has made to energy producers concerning cuts in supply to customers. [4573]

Mr. Wilson: Over the last five years the number of power cuts in the Seeboard area has varied between 95.5 and 88.5 per 100 customers. Over the same period the average duration of a power cut in the Seeboard area has varied between 92 minutes and 74.5 minutes.

Ofgem will shortly carry out initial consultation with the electricity companies in order to extend the guaranteed and overall standards to include the maximum number of power cuts, which individual customers should experience in any single year. This is being carried out under Ofgem's information and incentive project with the aim of introducing it in April 2002. The target figure has yet to be set on the maximum number of power cuts.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4891]

Ms Hewitt: It is not the normal practice of Government to publish a ministerial duty roster. The Department will ensure that it has sufficient cover through the summer recess in line with the requirements of the Ministerial Code.

Dounreay

Mr. MacDonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she will announce a decision about the future of the prototype reactor fuel at Dounreay; and if she will make a statement. [5607]

Mr. Wilson: I have considered carefully the advice I have received about the future of this fuel, and the implications of this decision for the major goal of restoring the Dounreay site. I have concluded that refurbishment of the reprocessing facilities at Dounreay is not justified. I have consequently asked UKAEA to take whatever action is necessary to ensure the safety and security of the PFR fuel, and to agree with its regulators the most appropriate means of doing so.

I am confident that this decision will allow the management and workforce at Dounreay to focus exclusively on the environmental restoration of the site. This is a project of national importance and the staff at Dounreay have my full support in undertaking this challenging task.

I am placing a copy of a document summarising my decision along with the responses to the public consultation in the Library of the House.

Institute of Export

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice and assistance her Department *(a)* gives and *(b)* has given during the last two years to the Institute of Export. [4772]

Nigel Griffiths: The Department of Trade and Industry—through British Trade International—maintains close links with the Institute of Export and supports the institute's work to promote the importance of exporting and to improve the performance of British exporters. In the last two years BTI and the Institute of Export have worked together on the development of the regional delivery of BTI services, the design of a self-diagnostic test for potential exporters and the development of a training package for BTI staff.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will set out the terms of reference for the role of the Green Minister in her Department; and if she will make a statement. [4825]

Mr. Wilson: I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minster for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report,* column 690W.

Research Council (Luxembourg)

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the outcome was of the Research Council held in Luxembourg on 26 June; and if she will make a statement. [5739]

Ms Hewitt: The Research Council of 26 June:

1. Held an orientation debate on Commission proposals for the next EU Research and Development Framework Programme. Subsequently the Council adopted conclusions inviting COREPER to pursue its examination of all outstanding issues with a view to enabling the Council to reach a common position as soon as possible. The Council also invited the Commission to provide further clarification on a number of elements of the proposals, including research in support of Community policies and the application of new funding mechanisms.
2. Adopted a Resolution on Science and Society and conclusions on Research Infrastructures.
3. Received progress reports from the Commission on the benchmarking of national research policies, the mobility of researchers and the international dimension of the next Framework Programme.
4. Received a progress report from the Commission on the production of a comprehensive inventory of research into Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies.
5. Received a progress report from the Commission on strategic initiatives in biotechnology, on which the Commission plan to issue a communication by the end of the year.
6. Under other business, received a progress report from the Commission on the Global Monitoring on Environment and Security satellite system (GMES).

Energy Efficiency Commitment

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her policy is on assets purchased by a utility company in order to deliver its commitment under the Energy Efficiency Commitment; and to whom and in what manner the assets should accrue. [4408]

Mr. Meacher: I have been asked to reply.

Under the proposed Energy Efficiency Commitment for 2002–05, electricity and gas suppliers will be required to meet energy efficiency targets. It is proposed that companies should be free to develop schemes to meet their targets in the most cost-effective way. I propose to issue a consultation paper on the commitment in the summer.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Passport Agency

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the United Kingdom Passport Agency will publish its annual report and accounts for 2000–01. [5485]

Angela Eagle: The United Kingdom Passport Service annual report and accounts have been published today and I am pleased to say that copies have been placed in the Library.

Immigration and Nationality Directorate

Mr. Borrow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on changes in the membership of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate's Independent Complaints Audit Committee. [5488]

Angela Eagle: Ms Ros Gardner has been appointed as the new chair of the Complaints Audit Committee to replace Arden Bhattacharya, whose three year term of tenure ended in March. Ms Gardner has been a member of the Committee since January 2000. She presently runs a consultancy in customer care and complaint handling. She was formerly Manager of the Customer Services Department of Marks and Spencer, and was a member of the Cabinet Office's Citizens Charter Complaints Task Force.

Mr. Paul Manning has been appointed as a new member of the Committee. Mr. Manning has over 30 years' experience in senior operational and management positions in the police. He recently retired from being an Assistant Commissioner in the Metropolitan Police Service.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Wyatt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will issue guidelines to local authorities for production of the 2002–03 electoral registers with special reference to legislative changes regarding opting out. [4613]

Dr. Whitehead: I have been asked to reply.

We intend, subject to parliamentary approval, to make regulations on the edited electoral register before next spring, which will be followed by the Electoral Commission issuing guidance to electoral registration officers.

Airwave Radio System

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many communications masts are to be erected as a result of the introduction of the Airwave radio system; [1251]

(2) if he will make a statement on the impact of the foot and mouth crisis on the roll-out of the Airwave radio system. [1252]

Mr. Denham: The current estimate is that 3,200 radio sites will be required for British Telecommunications (BT) to provide the Airwave service.

Each of these sites will need a radio mast for the transmission of Airwave signals. The sites will reuse existing masts or use new masts mounted either on buildings or on the ground.

The exact deployment of masts is determined by BT's coverage planning process, which complies with national planning and safety requirements. The current plans cover the first two years of the phased roll out of the Airwave service.

Chief Constable (Sussex Constabulary)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions he had with members of the Sussex Police Authority about his recent media release concerning the Chief Constable of Sussex before he released it; [3134]

(2) for what reason he did not seek to discuss his recent media release concerning the Chief Constable of Sussex with the Chief Constable before he released it. [3135]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* The Police Authority were informed by officials shortly before my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's letter to the Police Authority dated 22 June was released to the press. This letter was about the role and responsibilities of the Police Authority, and for this reason was discussed with the Chief Constable.

Police Custody Units

Mr. Breed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many operational police custody units there were in Devon and Cornwall in each year from 1980 to 2001; and if he will make a statement. [3412]

Mr. Denham: I understand from the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, that on the basis that the definition for 'Custody Units' is individual cells, the figures are as follows:

Year	*Custody Units*
1980 to 1985	200
1986 and 1987	201
1988	199
1989 and 1990	204
1991 and 1992	202
1993	201

Year	Custody Units
1994	208
1995	207
1996	205
1997	204
1998 and 1999	[1]185
2000	207
2001	[1]219

[1] Torquay Police Station was closed in 1998–99 and its replacement opened this year.

Devon and Cornwall Constabulary has eight custody centres under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 for handling those who are detained in excess of six hours. These centres are located at Camborne, Plymouth, Barnstaple, St. Austell, Torquay, Exeter, Newquay and Crownhill (Plymouth).

Immigration

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are detained under the Immigration Act 1971, broken down by *(a)* nationality, *(b)* gender, *(c)* place of detention, *(d)* length of detention, (f) stage of application and (f) immigration status at the time of detention. [3262]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* The latest available information relating to the number of persons detained under Immigration Act powers by place of detention and nationality is given in the tables. Corresponding information on gender, length of detention, stage of application and immigration is not held centrally and could be obtained only by examining individual case files at disproportionate cost.

Persons recorded as being in detention[1] in the United Kingdom solely under Immigration Act powers as at 31 may 2001, by place of detention

Location	Total detainees
Immigration detention centres[2]	
Campsfield House	172
Tinsley House	100
Dover Harbour	17
Harmondsworth	87
Longport	6
Manchester Airport	13
Other Detention Centres	1
Prison establishments[3]	
Bedford	5
Belmarsh	48
Birmingham	4
Blakenhurst	6
Bristol	3
Brixton	20
Bullingdon	6
Canterbury	3
Cardiff	52
Chelmsford	7
Cornton Vale	3
Craiginches	4
Doncaster	13
Dorchester	2
Durham	2
Elmley	6
Feltham	10
Forest Bank	7
Gateside	40
Glen Parva	3
Haslar	151
High Down	66
Holloway	35
Holme House	49
Leeds	10
Lewes	3
Lindholme	94
Liverpool	104
Maghabberry	4
Magilliagan	12
Manchester	6
Norwich	5
Pentonville	7
Rochester	183
Styal	3
Wandsworth	50
Winchester	39
Woodhill	2
Wormwood Scrubs	70
Other prison establishments	7
Oakington Reception Centre	247
Total	1,787

[1] Figures exclude persons detained in police cells (other than at Dover Harbour)

[2] Figures include the use of police cells at Dover Harbour

[3] The figures for prison establishments may include some persons detained under dual immigration and other powers.

Source:

England and Wales data from IS Detention Services and the Offenders and Corrections Unit (RDS), and Scotland and NI data from IS Glasgow.

Persons recorded as being in detention[1] in the United Kingdom solely under Immigration Act powers as at 31 May 2001, by place of detention

Nationality	Total detainees[2]
Afghanistan	20
Albania	69
Algeria	63
Angola	6
Australia	2
Bangladesh	35
Bolivia	3
Bosnia-Hercegovina	3
Brazil	4
Bulgaria	4
Burundi	2
Cameroon	16
China (Peoples Rep of China)	105
Colombia	14
Congo	5
Congo, Democratic Republic (form. Zaire)	3
Czech Republic	85
Czechoslovakia	14
Ecuador	7
Estonia	3
France	6
Gambia	8
Ghana	42
Greece	2
Guinea	2
Haiti	2
Hungary	2
India	113
Iran	17
Iraq	27
Ivory Coast	6
Jamaica	210

Persons recorded as being in detention[1] in the United Kingdom solely under Immigration Act powers as at 31 May 2001, by place of detention

Nationality	*Total detainees*[2]
Kenya	24
Latvia	8
Libya	3
Lithuania	22
Macedonia	2
Malaysia	3
Moldova	6
Morocco	8
Nepal	3
Netherlands	4
Nigeria	95
Pakistan	105
Palestine	2
Poland	34
Romania	57
Rwanda	4
Sierra Leone	10
Slovakia	2
Somalia	7
South Africa	14
Sri Lanka	80
St. Lucia	3
Syria	3
Taiwan	2
Tanzania	6
Togo	4
Trinidad and Tobago	2
Turkey	35
Uganda	15
Ukraine	14
United States of America	4
Unknown (officially designated)	32
USSR	43
Vietnam	2
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of	111
Zimbabwe	84
Other nationalities	34
Total	1,787

[1] Figures exclude persons detained in police cells (other than Dover Harbour).

[2] The figures for Prison establishments may include some persons detained under dual immigration and other powers.

Source:

England and Wales data from IS Detention Services and the Offenders and Corrections Unit (RDS), and Scotland and NI data from IS Glasgow.

Murdered Children

Margaret Moran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children murdered in each of the last five years had child contact orders extant. [3830]

Mr. Denham: There is no information held centrally on numbers of children murdered who were the subject of child contact orders.

Criminal Proceeds

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the financial benefits from the confiscation of criminals' assets are apportioned between police forces which seize the assets and the Treasury; and how this apportionment will change under the Government's legislative proposals. [2350]

Mr. Denham: Under the Confiscated Assets Fund (CAF), which the Government established on a non-statutory basis in April 1999, a proportion of receipts from confiscation orders made against persons convicted of drug trafficking is recycled into projects in support of the Anti-Drugs Strategy. Projects funded by the CAF cover all four strands of the strategy including law enforcement projects.

The Government intend to replace the CAF with a new Recovered Assets Fund. This is to be financed by up to 50 per cent. of all confiscation, cash forfeiture and (assuming enactment of the Proceeds of Crime Bill) civil recovery receipts. Both drug trafficking and non-drug trafficking receipts will be included. The fund, which will again operate on a non-statutory basis, will be used primarily to support the Anti-Drugs and Asset Recovery Strategies. It will also provide additional funding for community regeneration and local crime reduction projects.

Petty Crime

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his proposed petty crime busting scheme; what assessment he has made of the impact of the scheme on Castle Point; and what proportion of the funding will go to Castle Point. [1850]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 3 July 2001]:* I assume the hon. Member is referring to the Capital Modernisation Fund project to assist small retailers in deprived areas, which I announced on 27 June.

The problem of crime affecting small retailers, particularly in deprived areas, is one which was highlighted in the report of the Social Exclusion Unit's Policy Action Team 13, which considered access to decent shopping facilities. The Retail Crime Reduction Action Team has also been examining this issue in conjunction with organisations which represent small retailers, with a view to developing schemes which may be able to assist those businesses.

We are providing funding of £15 million over three years for a project to improve security of small retailers in the most deprived areas throughout England and Wales, with £3 million to be spent this financial year and £6 million for each of the years 2002–03 and 2003–04. We will be working with local communities to identify specific sites which can most benefit from the scheme. This may include shopping parades, individual shops or a combination of both. The money will be used to help small retailers to enhance security of their premises by installing additional locks or shutters, or may be used to make improvements to their immediate environments. We aim to maximise the value and effectiveness of these schemes by ensuring, wherever possible, that they complement other existing schemes designed to improve the quality of life of a neighbourhood.

The regional funding allocation and the specific sites which will benefit from the scheme will be announced in due course.

Hertfordshire Police

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were serving in the Hertsmere division of the Hertfordshire police force on *(a)* 1 April 2000 and *(b)* 1 April 2001. [3630]

Mr. Denham: I understand from the Chief Constable that the Hertsmere division had 132 officers on 1 April 2000 and 130 officers on 1 April 2001.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many secondees from the Metropolitan police force have returned to the Metropolitan force from Hertsmere in each month since 1 January; how many secondees are due to return; how many officers have been allocated to Hertsmere by the Hertfordshire force to replace them; and how many more it is planned to allocate to Hertsmere to replace the secondees. [3629]

Mr. Denham: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the number of secondees to the Hertfordshire Constabulary who have returned to the Metropolitan police since 1 January is:

Month	*Number of officers*
January	2
February	1
March	2
April	6
May	11
June	9

All secondees are expected to return to the Metropolitan police by 31 March 2002.

I am told by the Chief Constable of Hertfordshire that the policing structure of the county is changing and will be based on the National Intelligence Model. This means the force will no longer be comparing like with like as the structure in existence on 1 April 2000, when the boundary changes were implemented, will be replaced. The Hertsmere division will be combined with two other divisions to become the Central Area with its management team based in Borehamwood. I am told that between 1 January and 1 July the number of Hertfordshire constables in Hertsmere has been doubled from 18 to 36 as Metropolitan police officers are replaced. The Chief Constable also has a programme in place to post more experienced officers to Hertsmere. He plans to have moved 32 such officers to Hertsmere by 1 October.

The Chief Constable will review the situation on 1 November to assess the requirement for further postings to Hertsmere. At this point there will remain 18 Metropolitan police secondees. Police officers will be deployed throughout the force area to reflect the operational priorities of the force.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many residents of Hertsmere were recruited into *(a)* the Hertfordshire police and *(b)* the Metropolitan force in the last year for which figures are available. [3632]

Mr. Denham: I am informed by Hertfordshire Constabulary that in the year 2000–01 three residents of Hertsmere were appointed to the force as new recruits.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) inform me that information about the number of residents from Hertsmere joining the MPS is not regularly recorded.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in his Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement; [3896]

(2) what are the terms of reference for the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement. [3975]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report,* columns 689–90W.

Speed Cameras (Lancashire)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many speed cameras have been placed in *(a)* accident black spots and *(b)* elsewhere in Lancashire. [4291]

Mr. Denham: The Lancashire police force area has 69 fixed speed camera sites. I am informed that, in accordance with Home Office guidelines (HO Circular 38/1992), all 69 sites were selected to reduce high casualty rates at locations where the major contributory crash factor is excessive speed.

Security Industry Authority

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on the establishment of the Security Industry Authority. [4038]

Mr. Denham: The Private Security Industry Act 2001 provides for the establishment of a Security Industry Authority, which will license individuals employed in designated sectors of the security industry and approve companies.

Plans to implement the provisions of the Act are currently being drawn up with the aim of establishing the authority as soon as possible. Once established, the authority will draw up its licensing criteria and institute a rolling programme of licensing. The relevant provisions of the Act will then be brought into force by means of commencement orders when the authority is ready to begin its licensing operations.

Asylum Seekers

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 28 June 2001, *Official Report,* column 126W, on asylum seekers, if central records are maintained of the number of asylum seekers dispersed under the disperal arrangements of 1999; and what duty authorities concerned have to keep in touch with the dispersed persons. [2308]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 5 July 2001]:* Records are not collected by the Home Office on the number of asylum seekers dispersed under the voluntary dispersal arrangements of 1999. Statistics on voluntary dispersal are collected by individual local authorities.

The National Asylum Support Service has no power to require local authorities to remain in contact with the asylum seekers they are supporting. But local authorities need to keep in contact with those asylum seekers they have dispersed to ensure that they still have a duty to support them.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been detained in asylum-seeker detention facilities in each quarter of the last year; and how many were in detention on the last night for which figures are available. [1761]

Angela Eagle: Information on the number of children detained under Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 powers is not held centrally. The information is available only by the examination of individual case files at disproportionate cost.

Unaccompanied minors are detained only in the most exceptional circumstances and then only overnight with appropriate care. Children and young persons may be cared for in detention centres as part of a family unit in preference to separating them from their parents. Where this occurs, such family units are held together in appropriate family accommodation within the detention centre. There may also be a small number of cases of detained persons who claim to be minors but where the available evidence strongly suggests that they are in fact adults: such persons may be treated as adults until the contrary is established and may be detained as such.

Family accommodation is currently available only at Tinsley House Detention Centre and Oakington Reception Centre. The latest information provided by these two centres indicates that for the period 16 to 22 June a total of 28 children had been detained at Oakington as dependants of families held there while their asylum claims were considered, while during the month of June Tinsley House accommodated 23 child dependants in family accommodation and the average length of stay was two nights.

Uniformed Police Patrols

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the level of uniformed police patrols was in *(a)* England and Wales as a whole and *(b)* each individual police force in England and Wales in each of the last five years for which data are available; and if he will make a statement. [2939]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* The information requested has been provided by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) and covers the years 1995–96 to 1999–2000. The table records the number of officers who are predominately assigned to foot, car and beat patrol duties for each year from 1995–96 to 1999–2000. Information for 2000–01 will be available in the autumn after it has been collated and verified by HMIC.

I understand from HMIC that in 1999–2000 50.3 per cent. of the total number of officers in forces in England and Wales were deployed to patrol duties. Most of the other half of the police service are deployed to other operational duties, such as CID, traffic, and other specialist operational activities.

Decisions on the allocation of resources to patrol and other functions such as CID are operational decisions for the professional judgment of Chief Officers of Police.

The number of officers available for deployment is increasing. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 10/01, published on 28 June 2001, shows that by 31 March 2001 the strength of the police service in England and Wales had grown to 125,519 police officers (full-time equivalents), up 1,349 since March 2000. We expect police strength to reach record numbers by March 2003 and to reach 130,000 by March 2004.

Number of full-time equivalent police officers allocated to patrol duties

Force	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*
Avon and Somerset	1,401.0	1,442.2	1,432.2	1,438.3	1,538.6
Bedfordshire	455.0	543.5	457.0	479.1	478.3
Cambridgeshire	556.0	655.7	614.0	586.2	581.9
Cheshire	934.6	976.2	1,022.9	969.9	867.3
City of London	363.8	369.9	353.2	385.2	342.2
Cleveland	742.8	771.2	742.7	552.0	676.1
Cumbria	596.0	607.0	630.0	619.0	571.1
Derbyshire	880.5	911.2	867.7	842.9	818.7
Devon and Cornwall	1,503.5	1,499.9	1,522.4	1,488.1	1,444.4
Dorset	690.0	671.0	663.0	665.0	612.1
Durham	666.2	694.9	720.1	764.0	741.7
Dyfed-Powys	586.0	559.4	601.3	595.9	598.7
Essex	1,370.7	1,407.6	1,549.4	1,512.4	1,535.9
Gloucestershire	540.8	565.0	551.2	533.4	501.9
Greater Manchester	3,113.6	3,245.6	3,361.2	3,321.4	3,615.6
Gwent	543.0	732.5	707.8	770.1	735.4
Hampshire	1,819.5	1,975.8	2,094.3	2,030.1	1,912.3
Hertfordshire	868.0	919.5	910.6	878.7	968.8
Humberside	1,112.0	1,081.6	1,100.6	1,106.5	1,147.5
Kent	1,512.3	1,542.1	1,352.1	1,116.8	1,132.3
Lancashire	1,395.6	1,465.9	1,274.0	1,489.7	1,585.6
Leicestershire	935.0	1,010.4	1,007.0	1,016.0	1,083.5
Lincolnshire	672.6	607.8	717.1	661.2	613.8
Merseyside	2,300.0	2,300.0	2,211.7	2,033.2	2,098.1
Metropolitan police	13,160.5	12,307.0	12,158.7	11,716.4	12,312.2
Norfolk	727.4	761.7	789.0	714.0	691.4
North Wales	737.5	730.0	752.0	615.0	656.0
North Yorkshire	680.8	685.4	716.2	713.4	749.3

Number of full-time equivalent police officers allocated to patrol duties

Force	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*
Northamptonshire	594.0	622.4	592.8	648.6	557.5
Northumbria	1,966.4	1,965.7	1,909.3	1,972.9	2,069.8
Nottinghamshire	1,199.2	1,198.1	1,198.1	1,185.2	1,099.7
South Wales	1,916.0	1,537.0	1,472.9	1,604.7	1,610.6
South Yorkshire	1,371.4	1,404.9	1,498.9	1,418.0	1,467.6
Staffordshire	1,199.0	1,044.0	1,255.7	1,220.2	996.7
Suffolk	639.8	660.4	642.7	628.7	639.7
Surrey	846.6	813.5	659.8	786.4	710.8
Sussex	1,397.2	1,601.4	1,512.0	1,324.9	1,175.8
Thames Valley	1,921.0	1,888.8	1,906.3	2,001.7	1,761.0
Warwickshire	456.0	429.9	452.4	450.6	458.7
West Mercia	1,023.1	906.0	925.9	903.9	798.0
West Midlands	3,601.2	3,841.6	3,994.7	4,410.6	4,401.9
West Yorkshire	2,620.0	2,677.6	2,725.3	2,614.3	2,487.4
Wiltshire	578.6	541.6	577.3	593.2	555.6
England and Wales	62,194.0	62,172.4	62,202.7	61,377.5	61,401.3

Source:
Data from HMICs Annual Statistical Return

Drugs (Medicinal Uses)

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which countries supply Britain with *(a)* cannabis, *(b)* coca and *(c)* opium for use in (i) the legal pharmaceutical industry and (ii) research and development to investigate possible medicinal uses. [4571]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: None of these substances are imported for pharmaceutical industrial purposes. A small amount of processed cannabis has recently been imported from Germany for medical research.

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the research and development projects being carried out to investigate the possible medicinal uses of *(a)* cannabis, *(b)* coca and *(c)* opium. [4667]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: There are 25 licences currently valid for cannabis research. The licence holders and the purposes are:

Licence holders	*Purpose*
Prof. A. D. Smith (Univ. of Oxford)	Academic
Dr. R. Middleton (Univ. of Hull)	Academic
Dr. C. Hunter (Univ. of the West of England)	Academic
Dr. M. A. Sackville (Univ. of Sunderland)	Academic
Dr. C. Wright (Univ. of Bradford)	Academic
Dr. P. M. Dewick (Univ. of Nottingham)	Academic
Dr. J. Smart (Univ. of Portsmouth)	Academic
Dr. Geoffrey Hall (De Montfort Univ)	Academic
Prof. P. J. Houghton (Kings College London)	Academic
Dr. Alexander (Univ. of Edinburgh)	Academic
Dr. J. Cole (Royal Liverpool Univ. Hospital)	Academic
Prof. J. F. Alder (Univ. of Manchester Institute	Academic
Mr. Malcolm Aiken (Univ. of Brighton)*	Academic
Dr. K. Brain (Welsh Sch. of Pharmacy)	Academic
Prof. Redfern (Univ. of Bath)	Academic
Prof. J. Kelly (Univ. of Edinburgh)	Academic
Prof. T. Stone (Univ. of Glasgow)	Academic
Dr. D. Todd (James Paget Hospital)	Researching general therapeutic benefits
Dr. D. Baker (Univ. College London)	Immune systems (inc. Multiple Sclerosis (MS) research)
Dr. R. Pertwee (Univ. of Aberdeen)	Neuropharmacology research
Dr. C. Heard (Welsh Sch. of Pharmacy)	Research into transdermal administration
Dr. E. Williamson (Univ. of London)	Research into Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
Prof. R. Rainsford (Sheffield Hallam Univ.)	Research into arthritis
G. W. Pharmaceuticals (Porton Down)	Research into Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and other conditions
Dr. J. Zajicek (Derriford Hospital)	Research into Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

None covers coca and opium.

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many licences have been granted for research and development to investigate possible medicinal uses of *(a)* cannabis, *(b)* coca and *(c)* opium in each of the last 10 years. [4666]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: According to existing records, the following number of licences have been granted to investigate the possible medicinal uses of cannabis during the last 10 years.

	Number
1991	1
1992	0
1993	0
1994	4
1995	1
1996	0
1997	3
1998	1
1999	3
2000	12
2001	38

No applications were received in respect of coca and opium during the same period.

Child Pornography (Young Offenders)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been in England and Wales during the last 12 months where children have been involved in the production of pornography. [2845]

Mr. Denham: There is no separate offence of producing pornography. Any prosecution is likely to be for possessing, taking or making indecent photographs, or pseudo-photographs, of children: and, in the case of young offenders, for possessing obscene material for gain.

The available information, taken from the Home Office Court Proceedings and Cautions Database and given in the table, shows that there were four prosecutions and two convictions of persons aged 10–17 during 1999 for possessing obscene material for gain.

There were 175 prosecutions and 139 convictions of persons during 1999 for taking or making indecent photographs, or pseudo-photographs, of children: none of these defendants were aged 10–17. There were also 163 prosecutions and 99 convictions for possessing indecent photographs, or pseudo-photographs, of children: again, none of these defendants were aged 10–17.

The number of defendants prosecuted at the magistrates court and convicted at all courts, by age, for possessing obscene material for gain, England and Wales 1999

Offence	*Short title of principal statute*	*Age*	*Total prosecuted*	*Total convicted*
Possessing obscene material for gain	Obscene Publications Act 1959 S.2 as amended by the Obscene Publications Act 1964 Sec.1	All ages	131	96
		of which:		
		16	2	—
		17	2	2
Take or to make indecent photographs, or pseudo-photographs, of children	Protection of Children Act 1978 Secs 1, 6 as amended by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 Sec. 84	All ages	175	139
		of which:		
		16	—	—
		17	—	—
Possession of an indecent photograph, or pseudo-photograph, of a child	Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1988 Sec. 160 as amended by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 Secs 84(4) and 86(1)	All ages	163	99
		of which:		
		16	—	—
		17	—	—

Norwich Prison

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the Norwich Prison Board of Visitors report to the Prison Reform Trust on the subject of overcrowding at Norwich Prison. [3147]

Beverley Hughes: I am not aware of any report from the Board of Visitors at Norwich prison to the Prison Reform Trust. Norwich prison was not named as causing particular concern in the Prison Reform Trust's recent press release on overcrowding. The Board of Visitors at Norwich did however refer to the issue of overcrowding in their annual report to the Secretary of State for the year 2000.

The Certified Normal Accommodation (that is, the uncrowded capacity) of Norwich prison is 561 and the operational (that is, maximum) capacity 794. The operational capacity was increased by 50 places in October 2000, for which the prison received additional funding of £397,000. The average population during 2000 was 631, a reduction from 1999 (681). On average 35 per cent. of the population at Norwich prison share a cell, which is less than the establishment's target of 45 per cent.

Criminal Justice and Police Act

Mr. Fabian Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when section 71 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 will come into force. [2871]

Mr. Denham: Section 71 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 will come into force by way of a commencement order on 1 October 2001. Prior to implementation we shall issue a Home Office Circular advising law enforcement agencies and others about the new powers of arrest for kerb crawling and hit and run driving contained in section 71.

The circular will also include guidance on section 71 of the Act (making importation of indecent or obscene material a serious arrestable offence) which will come into force at the same time as section 71.

Asylum Appeals

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum appeals, having been received by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, are awaiting transmission to the Immigration Appellate Authority; and what the equivalent figure was on *(a)* 1 January 2000 and *(b)* 1 January 2001. [3305]

Angela Eagle: Provisional data indicate that on 30 May 2001 there were approximately 33,000 appeals lodged with Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) which had not been sent to the Immigration Appellate Authority (IAA). The comparable figures on 1 January 2000 and 1 January 2001 were less than 1,000 and approximately 15,000 respectively. Over the same period there was a 296 per cent. increase in decision making, from 33,720 initial decisions in 1999 to 133,695 in 2000–01.

For every appeal lodged, IND has to review the grounds advanced and may as a consequence need to reconsider all the circumstances of the case. Appeals are not forwarded to the IAA until this consideration has been completed and appeal papers have been prepared.

Antisocial Behaviour Orders

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evaluation has been made of the effectiveness and ease of implementation of antisocial behaviour *(a)* contracts and *(b)* orders; and what advice he is giving to local councils and the police on the merits and demerits of each. [2355]

Mr. Denham: Pursuant to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Twickenham on 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 412W, the first paragraph of my response should have read as follows:

> "As my predecessor confirmed in a written answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 5 February 2001, *Official Report*, column 424W, we are researching the operation and effectiveness of the antisocial behaviour order. We will also examine the effectiveness of the acceptable behaviour scheme in Islington".

Income Support

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the level of Income Support available to *(a)* children aged under 16 years and *(b)* asylum seeking children in the UK aged under 16 years. [3876]

Malcolm Wicks: I have been asked to reply.

From 3 April 2000 the Home Office is responsible for supporting and accommodating asylum seekers awaiting a determination of their case. Those asylum seekers in receipt of benefits prior to 3 April 2000 continue to be eligible to claim Income Support. Payment for any dependent children is at normal rates. Asylum seekers whose applications are accepted and who are awarded either refugee status or exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom are eligible for social security benefits in the usual way.

The levels of Income Support personal allowances for younger people take account of the fact that the majority of this group live in someone else's household and can reasonably be assumed to have fewer financial responsibilities than people who are older and who are more likely to live independently. However, those 16 and 17-year-olds who are forced to claim independently can receive Income Support at higher rates.

There is no provision for payment of Income Support to children aged under 16 in their own right. A dependant's allowance may be payable to people claiming benefit who have a dependent child or children living with them as part of their family.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Freedom of Information

Annette Brooke: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will outline the timetable for the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for *(a)* Government Departments and *(b)* local government. [4255]

Mr. Wills: The Freedom of Information Act received Royal Assent on 30 November 2000 and it must be fully implemented by 30 November 2005. However, the Government intend to implement the Act, so far as is practicable, well within the statutory five years. While, as yet, there is no timetable other than that outer date, the Lord Chancellor will have a statutory duty to report to Parliament on the progress made towards implementation, by 30 November.

There is a parallel to be drawn here between the Freedom of Information Act and the Human Rights Act 1998. Time was taken to make sure that the Human Rights Act was implemented properly, in spite of criticism at the time, and the Act's eventual implementation was a resounding success with the time having been put to good use.

The Freedom of Information Act similarly imposes rigorous duties on over 50,000 bodies across the public sector and so even greater care needs to be taken with its implementation. I am confident that the time taken for implementation of the Act will lead to a great success in this Government's aim to create more open government.

1911 Decennial Census

Mr. John Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many hon. Members have made representations to the Lord Chancellor this year to use his powers to open the 1911 Decennial Census records in 2002; and what the Lord Chancellor's response has been. [2826]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Pursuant to the answer I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 577W, letters from three hon. Members were passed by the Lord Chancellor's Department to the Registrar General, who has responsibility for access to the 1911 Census records. The Registrar General has replied to these letters.

Constitutional Arrangements

41. **Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what legislative proposals he has to alter the existing constitutional arrangements. [2622]

Mr. Wills: None. Our plans for the reform of the other place will maintain a bicameral Parliament in which this House will retain its supremacy.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will publish the 2000–01 annual report and accounts for the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science. [5489]

Mr. Meacher: The 2000–01 annual report and accounts for the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science were laid before Parliament yesterday. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will publish the responses to the consultation on the first stage financial, management and policy review report on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee announced in March. [5490]

Mr. Meacher: We have today made the responses to the consultation exercise available on the websites of JNCC and my Department, and I have also placed copies in the House Libraries. We are now considering the responses.

Pesticides Safety Directorate

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will publish the 2000–01 annual report for the Pesticides Safety Directorate. [5387]

Margaret Beckett: The 2000–01 annual report and accounts for the Pesticides Safety Directorate were laid before Parliament yesterday. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Flooding (Vale of York)

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has received on increasing the Bellwin scheme for parts of North Yorkshire and the City of York most seriously affected by floods in November 2000. [4438]

Dr. Whitehead: I have been asked to reply.

To date North Yorkshire county council has requested assistance through the Bellwin scheme in connection with three separate events: the severe weather events during October to December 2000; the train crash at Great Heck and more recently with the foot and mouth disease outbreak.

In the case of the October to December severe weather events scheme, North Yorkshire did not take up the offer of an advance payment. Payment will be made within 15 days of receipt of its audited claim.

Officials are currently looking into the circumstances of claims from North Yorkshire county council and North Yorkshire police authority for assistance with the emergency clear-up costs following the train crash at Great Heck. It is hoped that a decision on whether to activate a scheme will be reached soon.

On 24 April, the then Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Beverley Hughes), announced the activation of the Bellwin scheme to provide emergency financial assistance to local authorities to help them meet some of the costs of responding to outbreaks of foot and mouth disease. North Yorkshire county council has registered an intention to make a claim under that scheme.

The City of York asked for assistance through the October to December severe weather scheme. It applied for an advance of grant for 80 per cent. of eligible costs above threshold and payment was made within 15 working days of receipt of a claim.

Infected Foodstuffs

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the adequacy of resources available to port health authorities to protect the UK from infected foodstuffs. [1995]

Yvette Cooper: I have been asked to reply.

The level of port health resources is a matter for the relevant local authority which allocates funds according to local need.

Imports of food of animal origin such as meat and meat products are subject to harmonised European Union legislation. Such products must enter the EU through a border inspection post (BIP) and are subject to specified import checks. The costs of these inspections are charged to importers. The performance of BIPs is audited by the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office and monitored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The inspection of imported food of non-animal origin such as fruit and vegetables is not a harmonised EU area and the regulations are national legislation. Such inspections are not funded through the charge of fees to importers. These costs fall to the local authority that has responsibility for a particular port health authority. The Food Standards Agency monitors general food enforcement activity by all local authorities, including port health authorities, and has recently begun a programme of audits to provide more detailed information on enforcement standards. Local authorities would be expected to take notice of the outcome of the audits and any recommendations made.

The FSA is aware of concerns about imported food. The FSA is carrying out a review of import controls and will make recommendations. The FSA is also working closely with port health authorities to encourage more effective and consistent enforcement of food law. This includes involvement in a benchmarking exercise recently started by the Association of Port Health Authorities, the representative body for port health authorities, aimed at producing a more uniform approach to service levels,

policies and procedures. The FSA is participating in a cross-Whitehall initiative to ensure that import controls are made as effective as possible.

Fly Tipping

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to reform the law on *(a)* illegal fly tipping and *(b)* illegal dumping of cars. [3691]

Mr. Meacher: *(a)* There are no plans to reform the law on fly tipping. The Government have put in place strict controls to ensure that waste is disposed of safely and the penalties for contravention of these controls are severe. The action being taken by the Government on fly tipping, and other forms of illegal waste disposal, was set out most recently in the Government's response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee's Report on the Environment Agency (Cm 4832—paragraphs 55–60).

(b) A review has been carried out into the current legislation covering abandoned vehicles in order to meet our manifesto commitment that the system for removal of untaxed and abandoned cars would be streamlined. We will be consulting on possible changes to the Removal and Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 1986 later this summer.

BNFL

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on progress made to date by British Nuclear Fuels in meeting its obligations to reduce radioactive discharges under the 1998 Sintra Agreement of the Ospar Commission. [3951]

Mr. Meacher: The Government are committed to meeting the obligations they entered into at Sintra and have demonstrated this, with regard to radioactive substances, by issuing for consultation last year a draft UK Strategy for Radioactive Discharges 2001–20. The final strategy will be published later this year. It will take account of information on discharges provided by British Nuclear Fuels, including that provided to the Environment Agency in the context of its current review of the Sellafield site.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will place in the Library copies of *(a)* UK submissions and *(b)* other submissions with relevance to the United Kingdom to the Ospar meeting held in Valencia on 25 and 28 June. [3952]

Mr. Meacher: I am arranging for copies of the Summary Record of the recent Ospar meeting to be placed in the Libraries of the House. This is a full record of the issues discussed and the decisions reached at the meeting held in Valencia on 25 to 29 June. The Summary Record is also available on the Ospar website: www.ospar.org.

Sellafield

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if a licence will be issued to British Nuclear Fuels to operate the mixed oxide plant at Sellafield; and if she will make a statement. [3723]

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Secretary of State for Health will decide whether the operation of Sellafield mixed oxide plant is justified when they have considered all relevant issues. First, we intend to publish for public comment the report of our independent consultants Arthur D. Little Ltd., as I said in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Chaytor), 27 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 109W.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information was provided by the Government in the recent consultation process on the mixed oxide plant at the Sellafield reprocessing plant; and if she will make a statement. [3724]

Mr. Meacher: On 28 March the Government published a consultant paper, "British Nuclear Fuels plc—Sellafield Mixed Oxide Plant". This included a copy of the Government's previous consultation exercise in 1999, a copy of BNFL's economic and commercial justification for the plant, a copy of BNFL's March 2001 MOX market review and an endorsement of the review by the Department of Trade and Industry. The paper and annexes were placed in the House Library on 28 March.

Abandoned Vehicles

Margaret Moran: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the cost was of disposing of abandoned vehicles in *(a)* Luton and *(b)* all local authorities in England in each of the last four years. [3829]

Mr. Meacher: Luton borough council estimate that their costs in disposing of abandoned vehicles were £60,000 in 2000–01 and £15,000 in 1999–2000. They do not have information for earlier years.

The Department holds no central records of the costs for individual authorities of disposing of abandoned vehicles each year but is considering what further information on abandoned vehicles can be collected in the next Municipal Waste Management Survey later this year.

Pitsea Tip

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if she will publish a list of the uses made of potentially contaminated ash from Pitsea tip and the locations involved in each particular use; [3884]

(2) on what date deposits of poisonous ash at Pitsea tip were first suspected; and on what date those deposits were stopped. [3889]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I understand that deposits of mixed bottom ash and precipator ash at the Pitsea landfill site began in early 1998 under the terms of its waste management licence. In the course of its supervision and inspection of the site, the Environment Agency became aware of the use of this ash to provide temporary cover for household waste. The Agency estimated the dioxin levels in the mixed ash to be 735 ng/kg. In the light of these estimates, the Agency wrote to the licence holder in July 1998 instructing them to cease using the mixed ash as cover material. Subsequent supervision and inspection of the site by the

Agency confirmed that (a) the use of the mixed ash as temporary cover ceased in July 1998 and (b) acceptance of the ash for disposal at the site ceased by the end of 1998.

The Environment Agency is carrying out a thorough investigation into the destinations of ash from municipal waste incinerators and a report will be published by the Agency on completion of its investigation. The Agency has no evidence that ash accepted at the Pitsea landfill site was subsequently consigned from the site for use elsewhere. However, the Agency will address this possibility in the context of its current investigation.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the extent to which ash from *(a)* Pitsea tip and *(b)* the Edmonton incinerator has been used in (i) civil engineering, (ii) other construction works and (iii) the manufacture of blocks for building, in Castle Point; and if he will make a statement. [4066]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Environment Agency is carrying out a thorough investigation into the destinations of ash from municipal waste incinerators, the environmental implications of its use and what steps may be needed in the light of these findings. A report will be published by the Agency on completion of its investigation. The Agency has no evidence that ash accepted at the Pitsea landfill site was subsequently consigned from the site for use elsewhere. However, the Agency will address this possibility in the context of its current investigation.

National Parks

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to increase the number of national parks. [3914]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Countryside Agency is responsible for designating National Parks in England, subject to the confirmation of a designation order by the Secretary of State. In September 1999 the Government asked the Countryside Agency to consider designating two National Parks in the South Downs and the New Forest and we await their recommendations.

Waste Disposal Site (Derbyshire)

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what studies have been undertaken by the Environment Agency to establish whether radioactive isotypes and toxins have leached into watercourses surrounding the Rolls Royce waste disposal site in Crich, Derbyshire; and if she will publish the results. [4396]

Mr. Meacher: The Environment Agency and its predecessor bodies has sampled water and silt in watercourses around Hilts Quarry, Crich over many years and the analysis results are available on the Agency's public registers. As part of its determination of two applications for revised radioactive waste disposal authorisations submitted by Rolls Royce Marine Power Operations Limited, the Agency has asked for further information and analysis to be undertaken. In particular the Agency asked Rolls Royce on 18 May 2001 to conduct a detailed analysis of the site under Regulation 15 of the Waste Management Licence Regulations 1994 (The Protection of Groundwater with Respect to Landfill). The assessment is likely to take six to 12 months, depending on the complexity of the investigation.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if she will take steps to close Rolls Royce's waste disposal site at Crich, Derbyshire; [4395]

(2) if she will take steps to ensure that the Rolls Royce waste disposal site in Crich, Derbyshire, is securely lined and that unauthorised access to the site is prohibited. [4303]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Waste disposal sites operate under the terms of waste management licences and are subject to the controls set out in Part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994. The purpose of licences is to ensure that waste is disposed of in ways which protect the environment and human health. Failure to comply with a licence condition, or the disposal of waste in a manner likely to cause environmental pollution or harm to human health, is a criminal offence.

The Environment Agency has a legal duty to inspect all licensed sites and section 42 of the 1990 Act requires the Agency to take the steps needed to ensure that (a) the activities authorised by a licence do not cause environmental pollution, harm to human health or serious detriment to local amenities; and (b) the conditions of a licence are complied with. It is the responsibility of the Environment Agency to assess whether any steps are needed to ensure compliance with these provisions.

The Environment Agency may suspend or revoke a licence in the circumstances set out in section 38 of the 1990 Act. I understand that, on the basis of the evidence currently available to it, the Agency has no plans to serve a notice of suspension or revocation in relation to the licence for the Crich site.

However, I understand that the Environment Agency has initiated a review of the licence for the Crich site under regulation 15 of the 1994 Regulations. The aim of this review is to assess the impact, if any, of the disposal of waste on groundwater and to ensure its protection by the use, so far as may be necessary, of the Agency's powers under sections 37 and 38 of the 1990 Act (variation, suspension or revocation of licences). I am also advised that the current licence conditions for the Crich site require the licence holder to provide and maintain sites gates and boundary fencing in a manner which prohibits unauthorised access; and that the gates must be securely locked when the site is unmanned.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent measurements have been taken of levels of radioactivity in *(a)* water and *(b)* air at the Rolls Royce waste disposal site at Crich, Derbyshire. [4304]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Environment Agency took samples of water and silt in surrounding watercourses on 19 June 2001, and the analysis results were placed on the public register on 9 July 2001. This sampling exercise did not detect any

radioactivity above background levels. No air analysis is carried out in the Crich area, as the material from the Rolls Royce site in Derby is buried at the site.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the impact of emissions from the Rolls Royce site at Crich, Derbyshire, on *(a)* local residential properties and *(b)* schools. [4305]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Environment Agency and its predecessor bodies has carried out assessments of the impact of emissions from the landfill site at Hilts Quarry, Crich, since the first authorisation was granted to Rolls Royce to dispose of very low level radioactive waste there in the 1960s. In the context of applications that Rolls Royce Marine Power Operations Ltd. made last year for the disposal of limited quantities of very low level radioactive waste, the Environment Agency is examining the continued suitability of the Crich site for this purpose. The Agency's assessment will include impacts in the vicinity of the site.

White Goods (Recycling)

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if it is the policy of the Government that manufacturers of electrical and electronic equipment should meet the cost of collecting such equipment from private householders when it is put out for disposal. [3912]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* No decisions have been taken on which party or parties should be made responsible or partly responsible for the cost of collecting electrical and electronic equipment from private householders. In reaching its decision the Government will consider the relevant costs and benefits to all parties and take in to account the adopted Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive.

Recycling

Mr. Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much of the Waste Recovery Action Programme's 2001–02 budget to stimulate recycling has been allocated *(a)* in total and *(b)* to each project involved. [4070]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Total Government funding for WRAP for 2001–02 is £9,615,000. This includes contributions from DEFRA, DTI, the Scottish Executive and the National Assembly for Wales. That funding has been initially allocated to core costs, programme development costs and to eight areas of programme delivery as set out in the following table. WRAP are currently in the process of developing individual projects, along the lines set out in their business plan, which can be viewed at www.wrap.org.uk.

	Total (£)
Core	1,237,048
Development	835,250
Paper	1,307,953
Glass	1,245,536
Plastic	1,371,303
Wood	697,199
Commercial Instruments	263,124
Procurement	954,386
Standards	604,803
Communication/Information	1,098,398
Total	9,615,000

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what assessments she has made of the method of reporting of progress by energy conservation authorities under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995; and if she will work in conjunction with energy conservation authorities via the National HECA Forum to prepare a better reporting system of energy conservation authorities' progress under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995; [3862]

(2) what steps she has taken *(a)* to encourage energy conservation authorities to reach her energy efficiency target by 2010 and *(b)* to assist them in reaching that target; [3864]

(3) if energy conservation authorities are on course to reach the improvement target in energy efficiency by 2010 under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995; [3861]

(4) what steps she proposes to take in each of the next three years to assist energy conservation authorities to meet the energy efficiency target set under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995; and what plans she has to publish a long-term strategy to help energy conservation authorities reach that target. [3863]

Mr. Meacher: *[holding answers 16 July 2001]:* Under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA), energy conservation authorities are obliged to prepare a report identifying practicable and cost effective measures to improve significantly the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in their area and to report on progress made in implementing those measures. There is no statutory target, but "significant" has been defined as 30 per cent. and strategies are expected to make at least substantial progress towards 30 per cent. improvement over 10 years.

Details of the reported percentage improvements in the period 1 April 1996 to 31 March 2000 have been placed in the Libraries of the House in my reply to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Linda Gilroy) on 30 November 2000, *Official Report*, columns 757–58W.

The Government assist local authorities with their work on energy efficiency by providing financial support for the Energy Saving Trust's local authority programme. Over the last six years, the HECAction initiative has awarded grants to 339 local authorities, totalling £23 million. This pump-priming has levered in an estimated £200 million in private sector funding.

I recently announced a review of the policy framework within which local authorities carry out their energy efficiency activities, to be completed by the end of the year. One of the issues that this will address is the operation of HECA, including its reporting requirements

and how they might be improved. We will involve stakeholders in the review process and will actively seek the views of energy conservation authorities on how they can make greater progress in improving energy efficiency in the future.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which Departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4897]

Mr. Morley: Throughout the summer break, a Minister will be on duty for the Department, in line with para. 68 of the current Ministerial Code.

Foot and Mouth

Mr. Salter: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what arrangements will be put in place to allow autumn movements of livestock without spreading foot and mouth disease. [5611]

Margaret Beckett: My Department has had intensive discussions with a wide range of industry interests and the European Commission about this, with a view to putting a strategy in place by the end of July, to apply from 1 September onwards. In the meantime, all possible action is being taken to eradicate the disease as soon as possible.

All concerned are clear that in considering autumn livestock movements, control of foot and mouth disease and safeguarding animal welfare must continue to be our primary concerns. We are proceeding on the basis of veterinary and scientific advice. Full details will be published as soon as possible, but the arrangements for the autumn will cover the following aspects:

the possibility of holding livestock markets in counties which have been free of foot and mouth disease for three months or more and where testing has been completed;

the possibility of some relaxation in the criteria covering livestock movements outside infected areas; and

the possibility of promoting the domestic consumption of lamb in particular, and of negotiating with the European Commission an early resumption of pigmeat and sheepmeat exports, while not disrupting the domestic food supply chain.

We are formally asking the European Commission to introduce a Private Storage Aid Scheme for sheepmeat in the autumn and are discussing with them the possible adaptation of the Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme to handle disposal of surplus lambs, and in the medium term the possible use of quota suspension or buy-out.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Stakeholder Pensions

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of employer awareness of stakeholder pensions; and if he will make a statement. [5612]

Mr. Darling: I have today placed in both Houses copies of research into employer awareness of stakeholder pensions.

The research illustrates that awareness of stakeholder pensions is very high with 94 per cent. of respondents saying that they are aware of these pensions.

Benefit Fraud (Brent)

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he will publish the inspection report of the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate in respect of the London borough of Brent. [5613]

Malcolm Wicks: The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) report was published today in respect of the London borough of Brent and copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

The report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, as well as its counter fraud activities.

The report notes that the authority was experiencing serious problems in delivering its benefit service at the time of the inspection. Inspectors found long delays and large backlogs of work in most areas. This had led to poor customer service and some significant security weaknesses, such as in verification. Although the report acknowledges that the inspection took place just after implementing new benefit processing software, inspectors consider that considerable improvements must be made to deliver adequate levels of service and security.

The report notes the positive work done by the council to counter fraud effectively, such as its detailed investigation of prosecution cases. However, BFI inspectors were disappointed that it is not supported by more rigorous recovery of overpayments.

BFI inspectors consider that achieving lasting improvements will not be an easy task for the council. The report notes the council has tried to use its contractual arrangements to bring about improvements in the service. The report also notes the council told BFI that it believes it is complying with 76 of a total 102 recommendations and has plans to address most of the others. Inspectors consider this demonstrates a good commitment to improve.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is now considering the report and will be asking the council for its proposals in response to the findings and recommendations of the BFI.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will estimate the numbers of Incapacity Benefit claimants *(a)* under the age of 40, *(b)* between 40 and 50, *(c)* between 50 and 60 and *(d)* over 60 years in each region and nation of the UK; [3092]

(2) if he will estimate the numbers of *(a)* men and *(b)* women (i) entering and (ii) leaving a period of Incapacity Benefit claim in each region and nation of the UK; [3094]

(3) if he will estimate the present numbers of *(a)* men and *(b)* women on Incapacity Benefit in each region and nation of the UK; [3096]

(4) if he will estimate the numbers of new *(a)* male and *(b)* female Incapacity Benefit claimants in the last 12 months (i) in total and (ii) in each region and nation of the UK. [3098]

Malcolm Wicks: The information for Great Britain is in the tables. The Northern Ireland Assembly is responsible for social security matters within Northern Ireland.

Incapacity Benefit (IB) recipients by age group at 28 February 2001

Thousand

	All ages	*Under 40*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
All cases	2,324.4	621.9	517.3	844.9	340.3
North East	160.9	39.8	35.7	59.7	25.7
North West	393.4	105.6	87.9	142.8	57.1
Yorks and Humber	207.1	51.5	44.3	77.5	33.8
East Midlands	148.4	36.6	32.3	55.8	23.7
West Midlands	208.5	54.5	45.9	76.2	31.9
South West	146.3	40.0	31.0	54.1	21.2
Eastern	135.3	35.6	29.7	50.3	19.7
London	257.0	80.8	62.4	83.9	29.8
South East	178.1	47.9	41.6	63.9	24.7
England	1,835.0	492.3	410.8	664.2	267.7
Scotland	288.2	79.6	66.3	103.1	39.2
Wales	192.6	49.3	38.8	73.4	31.2
Overseas	8.6	0.8	1.3	4.2	2.2

Notes:

1. These figures are for all rates of IB and include Credits Only cases (a small number of which are over pension age and are incorrectly held on the INCAP computer system).
2. These figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample of the benefit computer system and will exclude a small number of clerically held cases.
3. They are expressed in thousands, rounded to the nearest hundred.

Awards and terminations of Incapacity Benefit from 1 March 2000 to 28 February 2001

Thousand

	Award of Incapacity Benefit		*Termination of Incapacity Benefit*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
All cases	435.5	254.7	306.3	176.0
North East	31.7	17.7	23.4	11.2
North West	72.6	42.7	51.2	30.5
Yorks and Humber	45.5	24.9	33.9	18.0
East Midlands	27.0	17.1	18.8	11.7
West Midlands	40.8	22.9	27.1	15.9
South West	32.0	17.9	22.5	13.1
Eastern	26.3	15.8	19.1	10.9
London	39.5	24.8	24.9	14.9
South East	34.6	20.3	23.6	13.5
England	349.9	204.0	244.4	139.8
Scotland	52.1	31.9	38.1	23.6
Wales	33.3	18.7	23.6	12.5
Overseas	[1]0.2	[1]0.1	[1]0.2	[1]0.1

[1] Figures based on a very few sample cases and are therefore subject to a high degree of sampling error and should be used as a guide to the current situation only

Notes:

1. These figures are based on 5 per cent. samples of the benefit computer system and will exclude a small number of clerically held cases.
2. They are expressed in thousands, rounded to the nearest hundred.
3. These figures include some clerical cases which have been re-entered onto the computer system and may not be new awards of Incapacity Benefit.
4. The termination figures are for all terminations excluding awards of retirement pension.
5. This table does not include Credits Only cases.

Incapacity Benefit recipients at 28 February 2001

Thousand

	Males	*Females*
All cases	1,458.5	865.9
North East	102.8	58.1
North West	246.6	146.8
Yorks and Humber	134.2	72.9
East Midlands	94.0	54.5
West Midlands	131.7	76.8
South West	94.1	52.1
Eastern	83.6	51.8
London	160.6	96.4
South East	112.5	65.6
England	1,160.1	675.0
Scotland	173.1	115.1
Wales	119.7	72.9
Overseas	5.6	3.0

Notes:

1. These figures are for all rates of Incapacity Benefit and will include Credits Only cases (a small number of which are over pension age and are incorrectly held on the INCAP computer system).
2. These figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample of the benefit computer system and will exclude a small number of clerically held cases.
3. They are expressed in thousands, rounded to the nearest hundred.

Mr. Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many women in the last 12 months for which figures are available were receiving Incapacity Benefit by the time they reached 60 years of age; [3537]

(2) how many men in the last 12 months for which figures are available were receiving Incapacity Benefit by the time they reached 65 years of age. [3538]

Malcolm Wicks: The available information is in the table.

Numbers of people leaving Incapacity Benefit in the period 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000

Thousand

	Number of people leaving
Women aged 60 plus	46.8
Men aged 65 plus	118.3

Notes:

1. Long-term rate Incapacity Benefit is not payable after state pension age.
2. Former Invalidity Benefit recipients who were over state pension age on 13 April 1995 may receive Incapacity Benefit for up to five years past state pension age. People awarded short-term rate Incapacity Benefit before they reached state pension age may also continue to receive it for up to 52 weeks. Therefore, the figures in the table will include some people who had left benefit after they had reached state pension age.
3. Figures will include some cases where the person received National Insurance credits only.
4. Figures are based on a 1 per cent. sample of claims to benefit.

New Deal

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people living in the Greater London area have obtained a new deal placement; and if he will make a statement. [3217]

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The new deals are giving people the skills, confidence and motivation to move into work. By the end of April this year 68,564 people had obtained jobs through the new deals in the region covered by the London government office.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in his Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement; [3969]

(2) what the terms of reference are for the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement. [3977]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 689–90W.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on what dates his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if he will make a statement. [4816]

Malcolm Wicks: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer from my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

Pensioners

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioner couples receive *(a)* two category A retirement pensions at the full rate, *(b)* two category A retirement pensions with one or both at less than the full rate, *(c)* a category A retirement pension and a category B retirement pension at the full rate and *(d)* a category A retirement pension and a category B retirement pension at less than the full rate. [4054]

Mr. McCartney: The information is not available in the format requested.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what advice his Department gives regarding the age limit on women receiving retirement state pension who are eligible for the Invalid Care Allowance. [4111]

Mr. McCartney: Information on the age limit and other eligibility conditions for claiming Invalid Care Allowance is available from various departmental sources including the Benefit Inquiry line, departmental internet website, and a range of leaflets for carers and pensioners. The information that is given to a woman receiving State Retirement Pension is that Invalid Care Allowance can be claimed up until the age of 65 but that receipt of the benefit can be affected by the receipt of other benefits.

Disability Benefits

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of appeals against a decision to withdraw a disability or carer's benefit following a departmental medical examination have been successful in each of the last five years. [4355]

Maria Eagle: Information is not available in the form requested. Available statistics on the outcomes of appeals do not show where the decision appealed against was made following a medical examination, or distinguish between appeals against withdrawal of an existing award of benefit and appeals against disallowance of a new claim.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the progress made in *(a)* the purchase and *(b)* the implementation of the information technology system needed to support the new Child Support Agency maintenance calculation formula. [4164]

Malcolm Wicks: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the Chief Executive, Mr. Doug Smith. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. Mike Isaac to Mr. Steve Webb, dated 18 July 2001:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Smith is unavailable and therefore I am writing to you on his behalf.

You have asked for a statement on the progress made in the purchase and implementation of the Information Technology system needed to support the new Child Support Agency maintenance calculation formula.

The contract for the design, development and subsequent operation of the new computer system to support Child Support Reforms was signed on the 8th August 2000.

The progress is still on course for the new Information Technology system to be ready in April 2002.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4895]

Mr. McCartney: It is not normal practice of Government to publish the daily ministerial duty roster. The Department will ensure that it has sufficient cover through the summer recess in line with the requirements of the ministerial code.

Minimum Income Guarantee (Leigh)

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of pensioners in the Leigh constituency eligible for the Minimum Income Guarantee have so far claimed it. [4185]

Mr. McCartney: Estimates of the numbers of people who may be eligible for, but who have not claimed Minimum Income Guarantee, are not available below national level.

As at February 2001 there were 3,100 Minimum Income Guarantee claimants in the Leigh constituency.

Income Support

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the

level of Income Support *(a)* available to persons aged 16 and under 18 years and *(b)* awarded to asylum seeking young people aged 16 and under 18 years; [3875]

Malcolm Wicks: From 3 April 2000 the Home Office is responsible for supporting and accommodating asylum seekers awaiting a determination of their case. Those asylum seekers in receipt of benefits prior to 3 April 2000 continue to be eligible to claim Income Support. Payment for any dependent children is at normal rates. Asylum seekers whose applications are accepted and who are awarded either refugee status or exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom are eligible for social security benefits in the usual way.

The levels of Income Support personal allowances for younger people take account of the fact that the majority of this group live in someone else's household and can reasonably be assumed to have fewer financial responsibilities than people who are older and who are more likely to live independently. However, those 16 and 17-year-olds who are forced to claim independently can receive Income Support at higher rates.

There is no provision for payment of Income Support to children aged under 16 in their own right. A dependant's allowance may be payable to people claiming benefit who have a dependent child or children living with them as part of their family.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Local Government

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if his plans for further powers for regional Government in England will entail other changes in the local government structure. [4122]

Mr. Raynsford: I have been asked to reply.

As my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister announced on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 80W, the Government intend to publish a White Paper on Regional Governance in England. This will set out the Government's thinking on these issues.

No decisions have yet been taken on what—if any—changes in local government structure might be involved in taking forward the Government's proposals in relation to elected regional assemblies.

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has for reforming local government. [4120]

Mr. Raynsford: I have been asked to reply.

The White Paper "Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People", published in 1998, set out a ten year programme for the reform and modernisation of local government in England so that councils everywhere can be effective leaders of their communities and can deliver the highest quality local services. We have already made considerable progress through the introduction of Best Value, Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs), new political management structures and a new ethical framework for local government.

We are now building on these achievements, easing the burden of regulation on councils, reforming the local government finance regime and developing our commitment to give freedoms and flexibilities to high performing councils. We intend during the Autumn to publish a new White Paper setting out an up-to-date picture of our plans.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4905]

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is not normal practice of Government to publish the daily Ministerial Duty Roster. This Department will ensure that it has sufficient cover through the summer recess in line with the requirements of the Ministerial Code.

Work Permits

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what representations were made, and when, to Government Departments on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Authority regarding the applications for work permits by Mr. Hector Sam and Mr. Carlos Edwards. [2089]

Mr. Leslie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Angela Eagle) on 27 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 97W.

Departmental Units

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the cross-departmental and other units run from within his Department, listing in each case *(a)* the reports which they have published to date and *(b)* the topics on which they are engaged; and if he will make a statement. [2678]

Mr. Leslie: I shall write to the hon. Member with a full answer as soon as the information is available, and place a copy in the Libraries of the House.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) if he will set out the terms of reference for the role of the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement; [4821]

(2) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in his Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement. [4822]

Mr. Leslie: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to him by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 689–90W.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister on what dates his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the

current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if he will make a statement. [4820]

Mr. Leslie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

Electronic Communications

Brian White: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans the Cabinet Office has to revise the guidance to Departments on the use of electronic communications at work. [5737]

Mr. Leslie: The second edition of guidance to Departments entitled "Electronic Communications at Work; What you Need to Know" will be published shortly by the Office of the E-Envoy. It seeks to support Departments in encouraging the responsible use of e-mails and the internet by their staff. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will be available on the E-Envoy's website.

E-Government

David Taylor: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what progress has been made on the second e-Government International Benchmarking Study. [5736]

Mr. Leslie: The second e-Government International Benchmarking Study has now concluded and the report is published today on the website of the E-Envoy at: http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/publications/reports/benchmarkingV2/intro.htm. Copies of the report have been laid in the Libraries of the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 19 July 2001

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria

David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will make a statement on the work of her Department in improving access to justice in Nigeria. [6346]

Clare Short: I have this month approved a £30 million programme to support Nigerian Government efforts, at both federal and state level, to enable poor people to obtain rapid and fair justice. This involves the whole justice system—courts, police, prisons, legal aid, and traditional and informal mediation. We plan to implement this programme particularly in the four states in which our programmes are focused. These are Benue, Ekiti, Jigawa and a state in the south-east yet to be selected. Jigawa State announced last August that it will apply Shari'a criminal law. We will ensure that the assistance programme is taken forward in all four states in ways that uphold international human rights standards.

Botswana and Namibia

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will make a statement on her Department's assistance to *(a)* Botswana and *(b)* Namibia. [4279]

Hilary Benn: In Botswana, DFID is supporting programmes in rural livelihoods, education and HIV/AIDS. In Namibia, DFID is supporting programmes in rural livelihoods, education and health. In the financial year 2000–01, DFID provided around £2.5 million of assistance directly to Botswana and £2.6 million to Namibia in addition to our contributions through multilateral agencies.

Over the next few years, DFID will be subsuming its bilateral programmes in Botswana and Namibia within a more regional approach to poverty elimination.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what are the terms of reference for the Green Minister in her Department; and if she will make a statement; [3984]

(2) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in her Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if she will make a statement. [3970]

Hilary Benn: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 690W.

Lord Ashcroft

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if officials in her Department have been disciplined for passing documents relating to Michael Ashcroft and his activities in Belize to *The Times* and *The Guardian* in July 1999 and December 2000. [4056]

Hilary Benn: No.

Belize

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development when KPMG sent letters to *(a)* Carlisle Holdings and *(b)* Sonisa during its study commissioned by her Department to review the regulation of offshore financial services in Belize and the effect of tax exemptions on pro-poor programmes; if she will place copies of these letters in the Library; and if she will make a statement. [4058]

Hilary Benn: I understand that KPMG wrote to Carlisle Holdings on 25 August in response to their letters of 10 and 18 August 2000. I am not aware of any KPMG correspondence with Sonisa. The correspondence is private to the parties concerned.

Debt Relief

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what progress she plans to make with the process of debt relief at the G8 Summit in Genoa. [2291]

Hilary Benn: To date, 23 countries have qualified for exceptional debt relief under the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. Relief totalling more than $53 billion will be provided to these countries, reducing their debts by more than two-thirds on average, and freeing up resources for spending on poverty reduction. At the G8 summit in Genoa, we will be urging our partners to push forward with implementation of the HIPC initiative, so that more countries will qualify for relief. However, making substantial progress will be difficult, as many of the remaining HIPC countries are affected by conflict.

Debt relief is only one part of what will be required by developed and developing countries alike if poverty is to be reduced and the International Development targets set for 2015 to be met. The Italian Government, which hold the Presidency of the G8 in 2001, have already issued a paper to be discussed at the Genoa summit entitled "Beyond Debt Relief"—which sets out some of the other key areas in which progress needs to be made: trade reform, generating investment and improving the quantity and quality of spending on health and education. These are all important issues for poverty reduction which can be taken forward effectively at international level through the G8 forum.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will list, for each

of the last three years, the deals established by the Commonwealth Development Corporation broken down by *(a)* country and *(b)* project. [2285]

Clare Short: The table summarises the number of deals completed by CDC in 1998, 1999 and 2000, distinguished by country. These include those where deals had previously been made in the same project.

Country	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*
Africa (pan)	1	0	1
Argentina	0	0	2
Asia Pacific (pan)	0	0	1
Bangladesh	0	1	0
Barbados	0	1	0
Belize	2	3	1
Bolivia	2	1	2
Caribbean	0	1	1
China	0	0	2
Costa Rica	5	4	4
Cote d'Ivoire	1	1	0
Cuba	1	1	0
Dominican Republic	2	1	3
Ecuador	0	1	0
El Salvador	0	0	1
Ghana	1	3	1
Guatemala	0	0	1
Guyana	0	1	0
India	8	0	0
Indonesia	0	3	2
Jamaica	0	1	0
Kenya	4	1	3
Malawi	0	1	0
Mauritius	1	0	0
Mexico	0	0	1
Mozambique	2	0	0
Nicaragua	0	1	0
Nigeria	0	0	1
Papua New Guinea	1	2	1
Pakistan	2	0	0
Peru	0	2	2
Philippines	2	0	0
South Africa	4	3	2
Sri Lanka	0	1	0
Swaziland	2	2	0
Tanzania	7	4	4
Thailand	2	1	0
Uganda	2	0	0
Zambia	3	1	3
Zimbabwe	2	2	0

A full list, detailed by project and country, will be placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Spoiled Ballot Papers

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many spoiled ballot papers there were in each district council area in Northern Ireland in the *(a)* most recent and *(b)* 1997 local elections. [3413]

Mr. Browne: The number of spoilt ballot papers received in each district council area in Northern Ireland in the *(a)* latest and *(b)* 1997 local elections are:

	2001			*1997*		
District council	*Number of spoilt votes*	*Percentage of total vote*	*Total votes polled*	*Number of spoilt votes*	*Percentage of total vote*	*Total votes polled*
Derry	1,390	2.81	49,435	939	2.23	42,145
Limavady	239	1.55	15,455	193	1.45	13,287
Coleraine	491	1.97	24,986	348	1.80	19,314
Ballymoney	268	2.09	12,826	182	1.88	9,681
Moyle	187	2.51	7,438	126	2.03	6,201
Larne	342	2.42	14,161	236	2.37	9,938
Ballymena	510	1.74	29,346	403	1.76	22,942
Magherafelt	429	1.87	22,882	326	1.60	20,371
Cookstown	360	1.89	19,086	307	1.72	17,900
Strabane	457	2.08	21,919	352	1.80	19,587
Omagh	599	2.20	27,233	575	2.51	22,920
Fermanagh	650	1.98	32,837	505	1.72	29,329
Dungannon	497	1.74	28,491	409	1.64	25,008
Craigavon	988	2.43	40,633	573	1.84	31,076
Armagh	552	1.81	30,514	386	1.45	26,553
Newry and Mourne	1,263	2.70	46,829	943	2.49	37,899
Banbridge	329	1.57	20,897	220	1.35	16,275
Down	677	2.22	30,560	383	1.65	23,192
Lisburn	1,085	2.27	47,844	575	1.75	32,780
Antrim	501	2.42	20,739	258	1.78	14,523
Newtownabbey	938	2.61	35,973	437	1.86	23,473
Carrickfergus	376	2.38	15,794	177	1.61	10,960
Northdown	782	2.35	33,279	360	1.88	19,167
Ards	652	2.88	22,606	405	2.02	20,004
Caslereagh	809	0.57	31,491	432	2.03	21,265
Belfast	4,106	3.25	126,294	2,948	2.69	109,402
Total	19,477	2.41	809,548	12,998	2.01	645,192

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many spoiled ballot papers were received in each constituency in Northern Ireland at the *(a)* 2001 and *(b)* 1997 general elections. [3414]

Mr. Browne: The number of spoiled ballot papers received in each constituency in Northern Ireland at the *(a)* 2001 and *(b)* general elections are:

	2001			1997		
Constituency name	*Number of spoilt votes*	*Percentage of total vote*	*Total votes polled*	*Number of spoilt votes*	*Percentage of total vote*	*Total votes polled*
Belfast, North	377	0.91	41,309	128	0.31	41,580
Belfast, South	233	0.61	38,185	244	0.61	39,728
Belfast, East	202	0.55	37,031	125	0.32	39,154
Belfast, West	716	1.72	41,698	238	0.52	46,123
North Antrim	328	0.66	36,327	115	0.25	46,301
South Antrim	196	0.44	44,354	148	0.37	40,343
East Antrim	327	0.98	40,268	90	0.26	34,437
East Londonderry	399	0.99	49,545	112	0.29	38,214
Foyle	495	1.00	49,374	219	0.25	48,034
Lagan Valley	281	0.61	46,222	133	0.46	44,443
Upper Bann	339	0.66	51,376	120	0.30	47,907
South Down	574	1.09	52,648	248	0.25	49,734
Newry and Armagh	587	1.04	56,208	228	0.43	53,503
Mid-Ulster	452	0.90	50,388	154	0.30	50,823
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	693	1.32	52,667	377	0.77	48,667
West Tyrone	434	0.89	48,964	260	0.56	46,535
North Down	188	0.50	37,377	97	0.26	36,653
Strangford	217	0.50	43,471	87	0.20	41,703
Total	7,038	0.86	817,412	3,120	0.39	793,882

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he plans to publish Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary 2000–01 report on the Royal Ulster Constabulary. [5971]

Jane Kennedy: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) 2000–01 report will be published on Tuesday 14 August 2001. Copies of the report will be placed in the House of Commons Library. The report will also be available to the public from that date.

Prison Population

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the prison population in Northern Ireland was on *(a)* 7 June 2001 and *(b)* 22 May 1998. [3395]

Jane Kennedy: The prison population in Northern Ireland on 7 June 2001 was 913 prisoners and on 22 May 1998 was 1,527 prisoners.

Stun Grenades

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what powers he has to prosecute a civilian found *(a)* to be in possession of or *(b)* to have fired a stun grenade. [1230]

Jane Kennedy: Dependent upon the precise circumstances of the case, a civilian would be likely to be prosecuted under Article 6 of the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. Other Articles of the Order might also be relevant.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has made to the report of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the recording of the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland. [1117]

Jane Kennedy: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland wrote to the Chief Commissioner on 12 June acknowledging receipt of the report. The Secretary of State assured the Commission that the Chief Constable would consider the recommendations carefully and where appropriate take the necessary action.

Inter-regional Road Infrastructure

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Secretary of State for Scotland in order to discuss inter-regional road infrastructure. [3168]

Dr. John Reid: I have had no discussions with the Secretary of State for Scotland on inter-regional road infrastructure since this is a devolved matter.

Weston Park

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the criteria adopted by the Government for deciding which parties should be invited to participate in the Weston Park talks; and if he will make a statement. [4106]

Dr. John Reid: The talks hosted by the British and Irish Governments at Weston Park concerned the implementation of the Belfast Agreement, and it was therefore appropriate to invite representative of all the parties to the Agreement.

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the people invited to participate in the talks at Weston Park during the week beginning 8 July. [4107]

Dr. John Reid: The British and Irish Governments invited representatives of the parties to the Belfast Agreement to participate in the talks at Weston Park held during 8–13 July. The parties invited to send representatives were:

the Ulster Unionist Party;

the Social Democratic and Labour Party;

Sinn Fein;

the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland;

the Progressive Unionist Party;

the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition;

the Ulster Democratic Party.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last travelled on the London Underground in the course of his official duties. [3680]

Dr. John Reid: I travel by the most efficient and cost effective mode of transport, subject to security considerations.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many additional appointments are to be made to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission; and on what date these appointments will be made. [2250]

Mr. Browne: Further appointments to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission will be made as soon as possible, and by the end of the summer. The response to the advertisements was very high (over 500 applications were received) so the process has taken longer than expected. The number of appointments is still to be determined.

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the extent to which the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission can extend its powers under the Paris Principles of 1991. [2251]

Mr. Browne: The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's powers and duties are set out in section 69 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Under sub-section 69(2) of that Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State about how its effectiveness might be improved; the adequacy and effectiveness of the functions conferred on it; and the adequacy and effectiveness of the provisions of that part of the Act relating to the Commission. The Secretary of State received these recommendations in March of this year and they are currently under consideration. The Secretary of State will respond formally in due course.

Polling Stations (Disabled Access)

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures will be taken to ensure that disabled voters have easy access to polling stations before the next Assembly elections. [4558]

Mr. Browne: Polling station schemes are a matter for the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland. However, I am aware that he takes his responsibilities on access very seriously. The Chief Electoral Officer is a designated public authority for the purposes of section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. He is currently drawing up an equality scheme which will be put out for public consultation. I know that he will ensure every reasonable measure is taken in providing access for the disabled voter.

Criminal Justice Bill

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what factors underlay the time taken to bring forward the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Bill. [3167]

Mr. Browne: The Government have broadly welcomed the report by the Criminal Justice Review Group, which produced 294 recommendations for change across the criminal justice system.

Detailed preparation of the draft legislation and an implementation plan, which will be published for consultation, is well advanced. Subject to the outcome of consultation, the Government expect to introduce a draft Justice (Northern Ireland) Bill in Parliament this Session.

Racial Crime

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to extend legislation on racially motivated crime to Northern Ireland. [1074]

Mr. Browne: The provisions in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which created categories of racially motivated offences were not extended to Northern Ireland. The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, however, makes provision for a range of offences of stirring up hatred or arousing fear on religious or racial grounds. In response to approaches that have been made in recent months, it is our intention to conduct a consultation exercise later this year to consider how best to legislate in Northern Ireland against race crime.

Sentencing

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to monitor sentencing of individuals according to *(a)* perceived community origin, *(b)* ethnic origin, *(c)* gender, *(d)* sexual orientation and *(e)* disability. [1073]

Mr. Browne: Some information is already available on sentencing trends according to gender. The Government are committed to developing a strategy for equity monitoring the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland as it affects different categories of people, while ensuring that such monitoring does not compromise judicial independence.

Patten Commission

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to ensure the records of the Patten Commission, the written submissions made to it and the transcripts of oral hearings are *(a)* made available to researchers and *(b)* archived for historians. [1224]

Jane Kennedy: After the Commission reported in September 1999, it arranged for the research material and the records of the oral submissions to be placed in the

Linenhall Library in Belfast. On written submissions, the Commission placed an advertisement in the main Northern Ireland newspapers in October 1999 advising the public that private or personal submissions which had been made to it would be destroyed. Other written submissions which were made to the Commission were passed to the Northern Ireland Office and will be made available in accordance with usual public record requirements.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4902]

Dr. John Reid: Throughout the summer break, a Minister will be on duty for the Department, in line with para. 68 of the current Ministerial Code.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Annual Reports

Shona McIsaac: To ask the Solicitor-General when the Director of the Serious Fraud Office intends to publish her annual report. [6043]

The Solicitor-General: I can confirm that I have today placed copies of the annual report in the Libraries of the House.

Shona McIsaac: To ask the Solicitor-General when the Director of Public Prosecutions will publish his annual report. [6044]

The Solicitor-General: I can confirm that I have today placed copies of the annual report in the Libraries of the House.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Sporting Talent

Siobhain McDonagh: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what evaluation methods are in place for projects designed to nurture sporting talent among young people competing at a national level, with special reference to cricket, rugby and tennis; and what results evaluations have shown about the success of such projects. [4592]

Mr. Caborn: The lottery funded World Class Potential and World Class Start programmes administered by Sport England are designed to support and nurture talented English athletes.

The World Class Potential programme aims to assist the development of talented athletes with the potential to win medals, or equivalent, in significant future international competitions and events within the next eight years (2 Olympic Cycles). The World Class Start programme aims to identify and nurture a specific number of English athletes who have the necessary characteristics to achieve future World Class success.

The first awards to the national governing bodies under the Potential and Start programmes were made in January 2000. Funding for Cricket has been agreed but the programmes have yet to be implemented; Tennis does not receive lottery funding support from Sport England (the Lawn Tennis Association administers its own sports development programme); and Rugby has been offered funding of £8 million over 8 years, but the governing body has yet to accept the award.

As the programmes for cricket and rugby have not started, no evaluation has taken place. However, both sports have identified a performer development model to reflect the transition of the athletes through the Start and Potential Programmes. It is too early to measure the success of these programmes, but I am confident that the lottery investment will enable our talented athletes to achieve success at the highest level.

Gambling

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she expects the Gambling Review, chaired by Sir Alan Budd, to report. [5878]

Mr. Caborn: The report was laid before Parliament and published on 17 July.

Mr. Pond: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she will take to implement the recommendations by the Gaming Board for Great Britain on the stakes and prizes in gaming machines. [6350]

Mr. Caborn: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have considered the Board's recommendations very carefully. We are grateful to them and to the industry associations for the work which has gone into their proposals.

We have also had to bear in mind the proposals for the far-reaching changes to the current law on gambling regulation which have been made by the independent review body chaired by Sir Alan Budd. This makes specific recommendations about the level of stakes and prizes in gaming machines. In laying the report before the House on 17 July, my right hon. Friend made clear her wish to undertake public consultations on the report before reaching firm decisions. For this reason, and bearing in mind that there are substantial points of difference between the two sets of recommendations, we do not propose to take any action to give effect to the Gaming Board's proposals before the consultations have been concluded.

Historic Environment

Paul Goggins: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what her policy is on the historic environment and the English Heritage document "Power of Place"; and if she will make a statement. [6349]

Tessa Jowell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions and I will issue a statement setting out the Government's vision for the historic environment and how we intend to work towards it. We will publish the statement in the autumn. Copies will be available from my Department at 2–4 Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5DH and from the

Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions at Eland House, Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5DU, and will be available at the Department's website at www.culture.gov.uk and www.dtlr.gov.uk. Copies will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Office of Communications

Dr. Palmer: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when the Government will appoint the Chair of the Office of Communications. [6351]

Tessa Jowell: It depends on the passage of the Office of Communications Bill. The Government do not intend to appoint the Chair of OFCOM before Spring 2002 at the earliest. This means that the process of appointing the rest of the Board of OFCOM for its preparatory work could not be completed before the summer of 2002.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Speaker's Advisory Panel

Ms Drown: To ask the President of the Council what progress has been made in setting up the Speaker's Advisory Panel. [6352]

Mr. Robin Cook: Following the debate in the House on 5 July 2001, I am pleased to announce that the Speaker has appointed to the Advisory Panel the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Allan), my hon. Friends the Members for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) and for Streatham (Keith Hill), the hon. Members for Beckenham (Mrs. Lait) and for West Derbyshire (Mr. McLoughlin), my hon. Friends the Members for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) and for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Twigg), as well as the Director of Finance and Administration, the Head of the Fees Office and the Director of Communications. It is hoped that the first meeting of the panel will be held soon.

PRIME MINISTER

US Export Administration Act

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Prime Minister what consultations he has had with the US Administration in relation to the US Export Administration Act in the past four years; and if he will make a statement. [3741]

The Prime Minister: I have had no contact with the United States Administration in relation to the US Export Administration Act in the past four years.

Performance and Innovation Unit

Ms Shipley: To ask the Prime Minister what additional projects are planned for the Performance and Innovation Unit; and if he will make a statement. [6182]

The Prime Minister: I have asked the Performance and Innovation Unit to undertake a further project looking at how to improve the Government's management of risk.

Effective management of a wide range of risks is essential both for the delivery of improved public services and for the achievement of the Government's wider goals.

The project will identify best practice in decision-making on risks and the best methods for promoting this within public services. The work will build on some of the steps that have already been taken to address the concerns raised by the Phillips Inquiry into BSE about the handling of risk and uncertainty across Government. The project will look at communications with the public and also at approaches to risk where some of the responsibility may fall to the private and voluntary sectors or to individuals.

The PIU will complete its work early next year.

The Minister of State, Cabinet Office will be the Sponsor Minister.

Public Duties Allowance

Andrew Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister what effect the abolition of the Office Costs Allowance will have on the Public Duties Allowance payable to former Prime Ministers. [6187]

The Prime Minister: The Public Duties Allowance can be claimed by former Prime Ministers for expenses incurred for their continuing work for the public service and charity. The allowance, which was formerly linked to the Office Costs Allowance, will from 5 July 2001 be set at the same level as the ceiling under the new centralised arrangements for the payment by the House Authorities of the support and secretarial staff of Members of Parliament with London constituencies. This is currently £70,000.

Business Appointments

Mrs. Ellman: To ask the Prime Minister if he has received the fourth report of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments. [6188]

The Prime Minister: The Committee has submitted its fourth report to me. Since 1975 the Committee has advised the Prime Minister of the day on the propriety of any business appointments that Crown servants take up when they leave Crown service. Following a recommendation of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, it also provides advice directly to former Ministers on their business appointments. I am grateful to the Committee for all their work on this. This report gives an account of their work in 2000–01. I have today placed copies in the Libraries of both Houses.

Intelligence and Security Committee

Lawrie Quinn: To ask the Prime Minister when he will respond to the Intelligence and Security Committee's interim report for 2000–01. [6190]

The Prime Minister: I have today laid the Government response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's Report before Parliament.

Champion for Children

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Prime Minister if he will appoint a Cabinet champion for children; and if he will establish an inter-ministerial group on children. [4922]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) on 10 July 2001, *Official Report*,

column 452W. The terms of reference of the Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People's Services are to co-ordinate policies to prevent poverty and underachievement among children and young people, co-ordinate and monitor the effectiveness of delivery and work with the voluntary sector to build a new alliance for children.

Poverty

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the responsibilities of departmental Ministers for reducing poverty following the reorganisation of Government Departments. [3943]

The Prime Minister: The Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury share a joint PSA target to reduce the number of children in poverty by at least a quarter by 2004.

Specific responsibilities for poverty and social exclusion are held by Baroness Hollis of Heigham and the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North (Malcolm Wicks). Other Ministers are involved where it is appropriate.

Electoral Arrangements

Richard Burden: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the breakdown of responsibilities of Ministers and Government Departments for electoral systems and electoral arrangements in the UK relating to elections for *(a)* councils, *(b)* the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, *(c)* the European Parliament and *(d)* the House of Commons, with particular reference to consideration of proposals for review and reform. [5063]

The Prime Minister: Overall responsibility for electoral law for the UK rests with the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. The law relating to European parliamentary elections, Westminster parliamentary elections and the National Assembly for Wales is wholly the responsibility of DTLR. Elections to the Scottish Parliament are the joint responsibility of DTLR and the Scotland Office. Council elections in England and Wales are the responsibility of DTLR. Council elections in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Office.

The relevant Ministers are: in DTLR, Mr. Stephen Byers, Mr. Nick Raynsford and Dr. Whitehead; in the Northern Ireland Office, Mr. Browne; and in the Scotland Office, Mrs. Helen Liddell.

Council elections in Scotland are devolved and therefore a matter for the Scottish Parliament.

Genetically Modified Maize

Mr. Alan Simpson: To ask the Prime Minister how many representations he has received calling for suspension of the marketing consent for the Aventis genetically modified maize, known as T25. [5651]

The Prime Minister: I have received a large number of cards and letters, which have been passed to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Unsolicited Commercial Communications

Mr. Allan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Government's support for an opt-out procedure for unsolicited commercial e-mails in the revised Telecommunications Data Protection Directive (com2000/189) extends to electronic messages, including *(a)* short messaging service, *(b)* mail to WAP phones and *(c)* other forms of electronic messaging; and what remedies she proposes for the consequent costs incurred by consumers. [3243]

Mr. Alexander: The proposed Communications Data Protection Directive treats all forms of electronic messaging, including text messages to mobile phones, as e-mails, for the purposes of regulatory controls on unsolicited commercial communications.

The UK Government have argued that member states should be allowed to choose between opt-in and opt-out controls on unsolicited commercial e-mail. This approach allows an assessment of the situation in the light of working experience of both approaches by the deadline for implementing the new directive.

Fishing Communities

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will publish the criteria used to apportion to the regional development agencies the money for regeneration of fishing communities announced in April. [4874]

Alan Johnson: RDAs were awarded £120,000 for each port in their region affected by the recent fishing quota reductions. This accounted for £3,840,000 of the £5,500,000 budget. The remaining £1,660,000 was distributed in proportion to the weight of the catch at these ports.

Each RDA has been given freedom to decide how best to direct funding to help with the regeneration of fishing communities in their regions. There is no compulsion to spend specific sums in specific ports.

Insolvency Service

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if consultants have been employed to undertake a pay and grading exercise in the Insolvency Service. [5870]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Yes.

Small Business Council

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what meetings she has had with the Small Business Council since 1997; and what response she has made to the recommendations contained in the SBC's first annual report. [5367]

Nigel Griffiths: The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I attended the first Small Business Council (SBC) meeting in May 2000. Since then my right hon. Friend and I have had several meetings with William Sargent, Chairman of the SBC. William Sargent met me and presented the first Annual Report of the SBC to me on 12 July 2001.

Some of the recommendations in the SBC report impact on several other Government Departments (HM Treasury, Cabinet Office and DfES) as well as the DTI. A copy of the SBC report has gone to these Departments for comment and my Department will provide a co-ordinated response to the SBC recommendations in the autumn.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements she intends to make for awarding licences for broadband fixed wireless access at 28 GHz that remained unsold after last November's spectrum auction. [5973]

Mr. Alexander: I intend to make available in September all of the licences that remained unsold after last year's auction. This will allow the provision of competitive services throughout the UK.

The key features of the award process will be:

Licences will be open for bids initially for a 12-month period.

Applications will be invited for licences in specified regions, with bids at no less than the reserve prices.

The first application for a licence in a region will be publicised and other applications invited within 20 working days. If there are no competing applicants for any of the licences on offer in the region all applicants will be awarded licences, subject to pre-qualification and associated bidder checks.

If there are competing demands for a licence a simple multiple round auction will be held for all available licences in a region to determine which bidders will be awarded licences.

Unsold licences will remain available until the closure of the 12-month period for applications.

A successful bidder will be able to hold just one licence in each licence region, but will be able to hold a licence in any number of licence regions. The conditions attached to the licences, including the reserve prices, will be those applying to the licences sold in last year's auction.

I will be publishing shortly draft regulations to be made under section 3 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1998 to provide for this award process. There will be a period of 28 days for comments to be received. With the draft regulations I will also publish for comment a draft of the notice that I intend to issue under the regulations. The notice will set out the detailed arrangements for the award process and will include the date from which applications may be made. I will place copies of the draft regulations and the draft notice in the Libraries of the House. I hope to lay the regulations before Parliament by the end of August.

Annual Reports

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Coal Authority's report and accounts for 2000–01 will be laid before Parliament. [5974]

Ms Hewitt: I have today laid a copy before each House of Parliament.

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she expects to receive the annual report of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. [5976]

Alan Johnson: The ACAS Report for 2000–2001 is being laid before both Houses of Parliament today. Copies are available from the Vote Office.

Shona McIsaac: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she has received the annual reports for 2000 from the recognised supervisory bodies for company auditors under Part II of the Companies Act 1989; and if she will make a statement. [5972]

Miss Melanie Johnson: I have received the annual reports for the year 2000 from the five recognised supervisory bodies for company auditors: a combined report from the Institutes of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and one each from the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants and the Association of Authorised Public Accountants. Copies of the reports have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Combined Heat and Power

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures the Government will take to ensure that the new electricity trading arrangements do not penalise CHP and renewable generators. [5184]

Mr. Wilson: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 263–64W.

Departmental Bills

Mr. Anthony D. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of bills were paid on time by Government Departments and their agencies during the financial year 2000–01. [5975]

Nigel Griffiths: I am today publishing tables setting out the payment performance of Government Departments and their Agencies in the financial year 2000–01. The publication of these tables is part of our commitment to tackle late payment and improve the UK's payment culture. We are determined that the public sector should lead by example.

Government Departments and Agencies are required to pay all valid invoices within 30 days, or other agreed credit period. The tables show that, overall, Government Departments and their Agencies paid 96.80 per cent. of bills within the agreed credit period.

Annex B

Percentage

Main departments	*Paid on time*
National Investment and Loans Office	100
Privy Council Office	99.86
Registry of Friendly Societies	99.8
Office of Water Services	99.75
Scotland Office	99.7
Department for National Savings	99.6
Land Registry	99.5
Public Records Office	99.2
HM Treasury	99.09
Ordnance Survey	99.06
Ministry of Defence	98.67
Inland Revenue	98.65
Office of Telecommunications	98.64
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce	98.62
Export Credits Guarantee Department	98.5
Health and Safety Executive	98.40
Northern Ireland Office	98.1
Electoral Commission	98
Government Actuary's Department	97.85

Annex B

Percentage

Main departments	*Paid on time*
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	97.79
Office of Gas and Electricity Markets	97.43
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions	97.41
Office of the Rail Regulator	97.4
HM Customs and Excise	97.36
Charity Commission	97.2
Department of Trade and Industry	95.7
Forestry Commission HQ	97.16
Government Communications HQ	96.75
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	96.7
Department for International Development	96.66
Office of Government Commerce HQ	96.37
Crown Prosecution Service	96.27
Cabinet Office (Total)	96.27
Department for Education and Employment	96.25
Office for Standards in Education	96.11
Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel	96.1
Department of Health	95.97
Office for National Statistics	95.45
Office of Fair Trading	95
Royal Mint	95
Lord Chancellor's Department	94.69
Department of Social Security HQ	94.4
Serious Fraud Office	93.67
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	93.56
ACAS	92
Home Office	91.7
Food Standards Agency	85.76
Treasury Solicitors Department	80.75
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales	67.5
Total	96.80

Research Councils

Helen Southworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the outcome of the first stage of the quinquennial review of the six grant-awarding research councils will be announced; and what its principal recommendations are. [5978]

Ms Hewitt: I am today able to announce the outcome of the first stage of the quinquennial review of the six grant-awarding Research Councils. I shall be placing a copy of the stage 1 report in the Libraries of both Houses.

Quinquennial reviews of Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) are a key part of our programme to modernise Government. The Government are committed to achieving better public services that are of higher quality and are more responsive to the needs of the people who use them. Regular NDPB reviews are an important element in ensuring that we have in place the right structures to deliver the Government's agenda effectively and to provide a strong focus on improving future performance. Under Cabinet Office guidance (31 January 2000), such reviews should be conducted in two stages.

The terms of reference for this review set the following objectives:

the first stage would examine the role and organisation of the Research Councils, by reference to their Charters and missions, and evidence of past practice. It would set the detailed terms of reference for the second stage;

the second stage would examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the Councils' operations and look for further opportunities for improving performance.

The principal recommendation of stage 1 is that the Research Councils should continue to be executive NDPBs. The review concluded that:

the Councils are a necessary mechanism for the delivery of Government policy for scientific research and postgraduate training;

the Councils individually and collectively are an important source of independent scientific advice to Government;

the Councils' existing individual missions provide an effective focus for their communities;

none of the alternative organisational models would offer equivalent benefits to the UK Science and Engineering Base at the present time;

the Councils have made considerable progress in adopting new ways of working to generate efficiency savings, demonstrate value for money and maximise spending on science;

NDPB status remains the most appropriate organisational model for maintaining the Haldane principle, ensuring effective accountability for public funds and engaging the scientific communities.

Stage 2 of the Review will now examine four broad themes, which were identified following the extensive stage 1 consultation. These are: mission, structure and governance; relations between the Research Councils and their clients; priority-setting and decision-making; the Councils' management and internal processes. Working groups, whose members will include a wide range of stakeholders, will be considering these areas, and there has been also been a second written consultation.

I welcome these recommendations, and I am grateful to the members of the steering group for their work on this review.

Regional Development Agencies

Helen Southworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the regional development agencies have prepared annual reports and accounts for 2000–01; and if she will make a statement. [5977]

Alan Johnson: The Regional Development Agencies' annual reports and accounts for 2000–01 have been published today. Copies have been placed in the Library. These cover the period from 1 April 2000 through to 31 March 2001. The Government welcome the continued progress made by Agencies in improving the economic regeneration, skills and competitiveness of the regions.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which of the Regional Development Agencies have published an action plan as part of their corporate/business plan for 2001–02 setting out how they propose to develop their evaluation and performance monitoring framework; and how many of those action plans contain a commitment to consulting the general public on the content of the frameworks. [4608]

Alan Johnson: Each Regional Development Agency (RDA) has produced an action plan as part of the corporate planning process for 2001–02 setting out how they propose to develop their evaluation and performance monitoring framework. RDAs are required to publish an abridged version of their corporate plan, but whether or not this includes the action plan is at their discretion.

RDAs were not required to consult the general public on the content of the frameworks, although several RDAs are developing and refining their frameworks in consultation with regional partners.

"Your Britain, Your Europe, Your North West"

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the definition is of trading links contained in her Department's document, 'Your Britain, Your Europe, Your North West'. [4324]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Companies with "trading links" means those in the North West which are associated with the export of goods and services to other EU member states.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for how many jobs in the North West membership of the single market is crucial according to her Department's document, "Your Britain, Your Europe, Your North West". [4325]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Membership of the Single Market makes the UK, including the North West, attractive to inward investment from across the world. As the document states this investment has amounted to £5.5 billion over the last ten years helping to create or safeguard over 100,000 jobs.

Construction Industry (Women)

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many women have been helped to enter the construction industry in the North West by EU funding. [4374]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Although gender breakdown of beneficiaries of European Social Fund projects is recorded and monitored, this is not in sufficient detail to show how many women have entered the construction industry as a consequence of European funding.

Manchester (EU Funding)

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of the cost of remodelling the Arndale Centre and the new Exchange Square in Manchester has been met from EU funding. [4373]

Miss Melanie Johnson: £20 million was allocated from the European Regional Development Fund for the redevelopment of Manchester City Centre. Of this, £1.79 million was directly allocated to the Exchange Square project. £4.4 million was allocated to 'public realm' improvements in the City Centre, which included work on the public areas surrounding the Arndale Centre.

Assisted Area Status (Scotland)

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what discussions she has had with the European Union with regard to assisted area status in Scotland; [5073]

(2) what proposals she has for the review of assisted area status in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Angus; [5071]

(3) what criteria will be used to determine which areas of Scotland will be put forward to the European Union for assisted area status; [5070]

(4) when she will next review the provision of assisted area status in Scotland; [5074]

(5) what representations she has had from *(a)* the Scottish Executive and *(b)* other organisations in Scotland in relation to assisted area status within Scotland. [5072]

Alan Johnson: The European Commission approved the UK areas eligible for regional state aid in July 2000; these were then implemented through the Assisted Areas Order 2000. The European Commission approval lasts until the end of 2006; the Government are not planning to review the assisted areas until it is necessary to develop proposals for the subsequent period. At that stage they will consult interested bodies on the selection of areas, including the Scottish Executive and others in Scotland.

Third Generation Telecommunications Technology

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what appraisal was undertaken of the environmental impacts of granting licences for the development of third generation communications technology; and if she will publish it. [3866]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* Installations are subject to planning law which deals with environmental considerations as it applies to Public Telecommunications Operators.

Government strongly encourage the sharing of masts and sites in order to minimise environmental impact and operators must show that they have considered sharing options as part of the planning process in order to minimise the environmental impact of networks.

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many additional telecommunications masts she estimates will be needed in *(a)* urban and *(b)* rural areas for the effective development of third generation telecommunications technology. [3865]

Mr. Alexander *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The number of additional telecommunications masts that will be needed for the effective development of third generation mobile communications will depend on commercial decisions by the network operators on how they configure and roll out their networks.

The Information Memorandum for the third generation mobile auction sets out the means by which the Government strongly encourage mobile telecommunications network operators to share masts and sites, in order to minimise the environmental impact of networks.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list for *(a)* each county and *(b)* each region the percentage of electricity generated by renewable sources; and if she will make a statement. [4440]

Mr. Wilson: Published statistics on renewable energy relate to the United Kingdom as a whole, as do published electricity generation statistics. In 2000, 2.8 per cent. of the electricity generated in the United Kingdom was from renewables.

Estimates by my Department show that in England about 1¼ per cent. of the electricity generated came from renewable resources in 2000, while in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the proportions were about 8¾ per cent, 3¼ per cent. and 1½ per cent., respectively. The percentages are higher in Scotland and Wales because large scale hydro generation (which accounts for almost half of generation from renewables) is concentrated there. In the United Kingdom as a whole, if large scale hydro generation is excluded, about 1½ per cent. of electricity was generated from renewable sources in 2000. On this basis the proportions in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were 1½ per cent, ½ per cent, 2 per cent. and 1½ per cent, respectively.

Information is not available on a county basis.

Trawlermen (Compensation)

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what *(a)* average, *(b)* mean and *(c)* median length of time is taken to process (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful applications from former Icelandic Waters trawlermen for compensation for each region and nation of the UK; and if she will make a statement. [3906]

Nigel Griffiths *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Statistics are not available in the form requested.

Mrs. Humble: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many claims for compensation have been received from former distant water trawlermen living in Lancashire; how many claims have been paid; and how much the total payment is for *(a)* Fleetwood, *(b)* Blackpool and *(c)* the remainder of Lancashire. [3809]

Nigel Griffiths: At 13 July 2001, 174 payments had been made to claimants living in Fleetwood totalling £1,812,204. The corresponding figures for Blackpool are 27 and £226,299. I regret that the other information requested is not available.

Energy Research

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what contribution the United Kingdom is making to the European Commission's MOX fuel research programme. [3946]

Mr. Wilson: Research projects on MOX fuel are included under the research area of the (European Atomic Energy Community) EURATOM Fission Programme aimed at improving the safety of existing nuclear installations and future systems. BNFL participates in one of these collaborative research projects, along with other European partners.

Slate Quarrymen (Industrial Diseases)

Hywel Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will recognise emphysema and chronic bronchitis as industrial diseases for slate quarrymen and former slate quarrymen. [4481]

Malcolm Wicks: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans to prescribe chronic bronchitis and emphysema as a prescribed disease in the industrial injuries scheme for slate quarrymen and former slate quarrymen. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, is advised on such questions by the independent Industrial Injuries Advisory Council who have reported on lung diseases, including chronic bronchitis and emphysema in 1973, 1988 and 1992 (Cmnd 5443, Cm 379 and Cm 2091).

The Council's present conclusions are that there is no scientific or medical evidence which would justify prescription of chronic bronchitis and emphysema for occupations other than coal workers. The Council keeps the list of prescribed diseases under review. If the hon. Member has evidence he wishes to submit to the Council, he is invited to write directly to the Chairman of the Council Professor Anthony Newman Taylor c/o Room 605, The Adelphi, 1–11 John Adam Street, London WC2 6HT.

Independent Insurance

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information, prior to Independent Insurance going into liquidation, was provided to *(a)* her Department and *(b)* the FSA relating to the French regulator's review of the company's French branch; and when this information was provided. [5286]

Ruth Kelly: I have been asked to reply.

The French regulator, the Commission de Contrôle des Assurances (CCA), first wrote to the FSA expressing their concerns about the French insurance subsidiary of the Independent Insurance Group on 11 January 2001. This company was a sister company of the UK-supervised insurer, representing about 5 per cent. of group premium income, and was subject to French supervision. The FSA, following discussions with the UK company, and having received copies of the company's own detailed responses to the French authorities, replied to the CCA in March 2001. In that letter, the FSA noted its understanding that the group had provided additional financing to the French subsidiary. The FSA subsequently had a number of further contacts with the CCA including a visit to their offices in Paris, provided financial information about the financial position of the UK company, and kept the CCA informed of events in the period leading to the company's closure.

DEFENCE

Disposal Services Agency

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the Disposal Services Agency for the financial year 2001–02. [5988]

Dr. Moonie: Since its launch in October 1994, the agency has positioned itself as the market leader in the disposal sales of surplus equipment and goods in the public sector. The key targets, which have been set for the chief executive of the Disposal Services Agency for this financial year, are aimed at securing disposal receipts from the sale of surplus capital assets and inventory items from both the Ministry of Defence and a range of public sector organisations. The chief executive of the agency has been set the following key targets for the financial year 2001–02.

Key target 1

To achieve a disposal sales gross income of £40 million from sales of surplus Government owned equipment and stores.

Key target 2

To maintain and where necessary improve Customer Satisfaction rates as recorded in the 2000 Customer Survey; particularly a 5 per cent. points increase in Collection Arrangements and Efficiency of Contractor Services.

Key target 3

To achieve the Customer Supplier Agreement Performance Standards for the removal of surplus equipment from Defence Logistic Organisation sites.

Key target 4

To develop an electronic exchange pilot programme for surplus IT equipment by 31 March 2002.

Key target 5

To secure £350,000 sales per person employed for commercial sales activities.

Defence Intelligence and Security Centre Defence Agency

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre Defence Agency for 2001–02. [5989]

Mr. Ingram: The role of the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre is to train the armed forces and other intelligence agencies in intelligence and security disciplines, and conduct after capture; to maintain an operational capability; and to contribute to effective and timely advice to the armed forces on appropriate intelligence and security matters. The key targets for the agency for the 12 months from April 2001 are:

Key Target 1:

To satisfy 100 per cent. of operational tasking required by the Department to the standard specified by the tasking authority.

This target will be met if all operational requirements for the field HUMINT team (1(UK) FHT) and the defence debriefing team (DDT) are fulfilled to the satisfaction of the tasking authority.

(a) 1(UK) FHT and DDT commensurate with allocated resources:

(1) The number of man training days (MTDs) deployed against those required by Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI) authorised tasking;

(2) Customer satisfaction is 100 per cent.

Key Target 2:

To deliver at least 90 per cent. of a Training Programme endorsed by the defence intelligence training policy group (DITPG) within agreed resources.

This target will be achieved if an endorsed programme of courses and MTDs are arranged by DISC. Poor take-up or Sponsor postponement/cancellation of courses shall not impact on the target. Additional resources provided for non-programmed tasks shall be subject to separate measurement.

(a) 90 per cent. of agreed total programme satisfactorily mounted. (MTDs offered for take up against previously agreed requirement within the allocated Resource Budget);

(b) 10 per cent. of required MTDs not provided due to lack of DISC resources or capability.

Key Target 3:

To ensure that the training provided by DISC meets the quality requirements of its customers.

This target will be met if the requirement for each course has been determined by the Statement of Training Requirement (SOTR) process and the quality of the training has been validated using the Systems Approach to Training (SAT) benchmark.

(a) 100 per cent. of all courses programmed have an agreed SOTR;

(b) 80 per cent. of all courses programmed have been SAT validated, up to and including Internal Validation, by April 2002 and thereafter maintained at this level or better;

(c) 90 per cent. of all DISC training staff have attended prescribed job related training within six months of appointment.

Key Target 4:

To reduce the "Real Terms" cost of delivering the average training place made available by the DISC by 2 per cent. in FY 2001–02.

The target will be met if a 2 per cent. or greater reduction in average MTD costs is achieved between 1 April 2001 and 31 March 2002.

Ballistic Missiles (Iraq)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of Iraq's capability to use ballistic missile technology to target surface-to-air missiles. [4040]

Mr. Hoon: Since December 1998, the Iraqi integrated air defence system has been engaged in a systematic campaign to shoot down coalition aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones. There have been over 1,800 direct threats from a range of Iraqi air defence assets, including surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft artillery. Coalition aircraft are authorised to respond in self-defence only against air defence targets, and have done so on some 270 occasions.

Over the past two and a half years, the Iraqis have evolved a range of novel tactics, aimed at maximising the threat to the coalition while minimising the risk of being targeted by a self-defence response. In particular, we assess that Iraqi surface-to-air missiles have been launched without the support of their fire control radars, in order to hide the position of the firing unit (thereby reducing its vulnerability).

Missiles launched in this way receive no guidance information during flight and are much less likely to hit a target in comparison to a conventionally guided missile. The corollary is that there is also an enhanced risk, as with Iraq's indiscriminate use of surface-to-surface rockets in this role, of damage to civilian facilities when the missiles return to earth. Although surface-to-air missiles operated in this way follow an unguided, ballistic trajectory, there is no evidence that Iraq has employed ballistic missile technology to guide these surface-to-air missiles.

Defence Diversification Agency

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff the Defence Diversification Agency has; and where its annual reports are published. [5075]

Dr. Moonie: The Defence Diversification Agency (DDA), part of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), currently has 24 staff of which seven are MOD employees (three within the defence science and technology laboratory and four, including the director, within MOD head office) and 17 employees of QinetiQ made available to the MOD under standard project support tasking arrangements. The DDA has three aims: to extend technology and expertise within the defence sector to civilian use; to foster partnerships and joint development programmes, recognising that the civil

sector has much potential benefit to defence; and to inform and assist the defence industry's own diversification planning. Until 1 July 2001, the DDA was part of the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA), the annual reports of which cover the activities of the DDA. The most recent report is the DERA annual report 1999–2000 published by The Stationery Office in July 2000 and which has sections on such issues as "Exploiting DERA's Technology" and "Defence Diversification and Regional Development" that deal with the DDA's activities. Following the DERA public-private partnership and the formation of the new company QinetiQ on 1 July 2001, the DDA has been brought into MOD head office. We are examining how best to report on its activities in future alongside our consideration of the formation of a Defence Diversification Council, which I have already announced our intention to establish once we have experience of how the DDA will operate in practice under the new structure. I will make a further announcement in due course.

Wind Farms

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his policy is with regard to the siting of wind farms in tactical training areas; and what research has been undertaken in developing this policy. [4872]

Dr. Moonie: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 22 March 2001, *Official Report*, column 296W, to my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Chapman).

Live Ammunition

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which foreign training sites are being used by the British Army; and at what percentage of those sites the British Army uses live ammunition. [2793]

Mr. Ingram: I will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Merlin Helicopter

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the *(a)* budget for and *(b)* cost of running and maintaining the Royal Navy Merlin helicopter squadron has been in each year since they were purchased. [4339]

Mr. Ingram: The first Merlin helicopter squadron (824 training squadron) was formed in June 2000. In the financial year 2000–01, the repair and maintenance, manpower, aviation fuel and support authority operating costs for the squadron is estimated at £12 million, by comparison with a budget of £15 million.

Nuclear Weapons

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will undertake a review of the *(a)* manufacture of nuclear warheads at Aldermaston/Burghfield by AWE plc, *(b)* deployment of Trident 2 as the UK's nuclear deterrent, *(c)* use of Faslane as the Trident submarine base and *(d)* commitment to maintain a nuclear deterrent. [4293]

Mr. Ingram: Following a fundamental re-examination of the issues, the 1998 Strategic Defence Review concluded that a minimum nuclear deterrent would remain a necessary element of our security. It determined that our deterrence requirements would be met by one Trident ballistic missile submarine on patrol at all times carrying 48 nuclear warheads, and a national stockpile of less than 200 operationally available warheads. I see no reason to conduct a further review.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his compliance with paragraph 105F of the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. [4294]

Mr. Hoon: Paragraph 105F of the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on the legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, given in July 1996, states that:

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control".

The UK had already signed and ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968. Article VI of the NPT commits all Parties to the Treaty

> "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

At the 2000 NPT Review Conference the United Kingdom, together with other participating countries, gave an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all states are committed under Article VI of the NPT. At the Review Conference the UK, together with other participating countries, also agreed to the establishment in the Conference of Disarmament of an appropriate body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament.

Discrimination (Compensation)

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 362W, on discrimination, how many outstanding compensation claims there are for *(a)* men and *(b)* women discriminated against on the basis of their sexuality following the ruling of the ECHR. [5279]

Mr. Ingram: There are 54 outstanding compensation claims from service personnel claiming that they were discriminated against on the basis of their sexuality following the ruling of the ECHR. Of these 41 are for men and 13 are for women.

Prisoners of War

Mr. Levitt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the British servicemen held as prisoners in Auschwitz during the second world war are known to be still alive; and what memorials exist to *(a)* them and *(b)* those who were interned in other such camps. [5076]

Dr. Moonie: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not hold complete information on how many British service men held as prisoners of war during the second world war are still alive.

All of those who lost their lives during the world wars are commemorated through the nation's central memorial, the Cenotaph. The MOD holds no central record of memorials erected at individual sites overseas.

Training and Assistance

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the *(a)* countries and *(b)* organisations which have received British military (i) training and (ii) assistance since 1997. [5342]

Mr. Hoon: I will write to the right hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

HMS Cromer

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to dispose of HMS Cromer. [3525]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* On current plans, HMS Cromer is due to be withdrawn from service towards the end of 2001. Plans for her disposal are currently under review.

National Missile Defence

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on *(a)* Fylingdales and *(b)* Menwith Hill in relation to recent proposals to install a national missile defence system at Fort Greely, Alaska; and if he will make a statement. [4856]

Mr. Hoon: In testimony to the US Senate Armed Services Committee on 12 July, the director of the US Ballistic Missile Defence Organisation set out plans to expand their ballistic missile defence "test bed" to include up to five ground-based silos at Fort Greely, Alaska. He stated that:

> "if directed, this test bed could also provide a basis for a contingency defensive capability if the security environment warrants".

However, facilities in the UK will not form part of this test bed; the US Administration have not decided what sort of missile defences it will ultimately seek to deploy; and the US Administration have made no request for the use of facilities in the UK for missile defence purposes.

Six-nation Framework Agreement

Mr. Simon Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which existing collaborative projects will become co-operative armaments programmes under the Six-nation Framework Agreement. [5360]

Dr. Moonie: Existing collaborative projects are already subject to their own conditions and procedures. It is too early to say whether there would be benefits from seeking to apply Framework Agreement procedures to such programmes.

Mr. Simon Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Government Departments will be involved in approving the permitted export lists under the Six-nation Framework Agreement. [5359]

Dr. Moonie: The Government Departments involved will be the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence, Department of Trade and Industry and, as required, the Department for International Development, in line with their respective responsibilities.

Nancekuke

Ms Atherton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, (1) pursuant to his answer of 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 581W, if he will place in the Library the incomplete record of materials which were deposited in the sea off the north Cornish coast when CDE Nancekuke was decommissioned; [5947]

(2) how the results of testing and decontamination of materials disposed of into the sea at Nancekuke when the base was decommissioned *(a)* were recorded and *(b)* will be published. [5791]

Dr. Moonie: I will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Defence Training Review

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the implementation of the Defence Training Review and related training estate matters; and if he will make a statement. [5990]

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications of the Defence Training Review for the future of RAF Halton. [4938]

Mr. Ingram: Work is in hand in the Ministry of Defence on the implementation of the Defence Training Review which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced to the House in March. A number of areas have been identified where rationalisation on a single site appears feasible, and scoping studies are taking place on these. These studies are examining, in the first instance, options for providing the training at MOD sites. These will serve as benchmarks, or Public Sector Comparators, against which a wider range of options can be considered. Wider options include potential partnerships with the private sector, and private sector providers are being encouraged to propose innovative solutions. These might involve establishing training establishments on completely new sites. The selection, therefore, of a benchmark site does not imply that the MOD has taken a decision to continue training on that site.

The sites being examined for these benchmarks or Public Sector Comparators are RAF Cosford for aeronautical engineering training; the Defence School of Transport at Leconfield for logistic training; Defence Intelligence and Security Centre at Chicksands for security, intelligence, language and photography training; the Royal School of Signals at Blandford for communications and information systems training; RAF Halton for joint personnel administration and police training and HMS Sultan for electro-mechanical engineering training. There will be implications for other sites at which elements of this training are carried out, but because work is at an early stage these cannot be quantified.

In parallel with the work on the Defence Training Review, the Royal Navy has been conducting a comprehensive review of the remainder of its training estate. It is now proposed to concentrate naval shore training over the next 10 years at the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth, HMS Raleigh in the Plymouth area, and HMS Collingwood in Gosport. This will permit

the delivery of more cost-effective training and improve operational capability. It will include the creation of an Integrated Maritime Warfare School at HMS Collingwood, which will deliver all maritime warfare training in a single site. As part of this programme, HMS Dryad in the Portsmouth area will become surplus to requirements and close by no later than 2011, although vigorous efforts will be made to advance this date to maximise the operational and financial benefits, and it is intended that substantial elements of the establishment will progressively transfer to HMS Collingwood over the next few years. Changes are also planned at HMS Excellent in Portsmouth, which has been announced as the future site for key elements of the Royal Navy's Fleet Headquarters.

Detailed proposals for all the above measures will be subject to normal consultative procedures at the appropriate time.

Trident

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the latest estimate is of the cost of the Trident acquisition programme; and if he will make a statement. [5987]

Mr. Hoon: The current estimate of the total acquisition cost of the Trident programme, with payments already made expressed at the prices and exchange rates actually incurred and future spend at the current financial year exchange rate (the hybrid estimate), is now £9,764 million. Leaving aside the effects of price inflation and exchange rate variation (+£7 million), there has been a real cost increase of £12 million. Expenditure on the Trident acquisition programme to 30 September 2000 represented some 98 per cent. of the total estimate. If all expenditure, past and projected, is brought up to this current year's economic conditions (the non-hybrid estimate) the estimate is £13,662 million.

The programme continues to show an overall reduction in real terms on its original 1982 estimate. This reduction, including the savings resulting from the decision to process missiles at the United States facility at Kings Bay, Georgia, now stands at over £3.9 billion at current prices.

The proportion of the estimate for work undertaken in the United Kingdom is around 70 per cent.

Our four in-service Vanguard class submarines are successfully maintaining continuous at-sea deterrence. HMS Vengeance entered service earlier this year.

Carrier Fighter

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress with the CVF (aircraft carrier) assessment phase contracts; and if he will make a statement. [5134]

Mr. Hoon: Negotiations continue with both candidate prime contractors on the basis of the work they have done so far and the proposals they have submitted for the next stage of CVF Assessment. It remains our intention to contract for the next stage of Assessment as soon as agreement can be reached with the prime contractors.

Bowman

Mr. David: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the Bowman project; and if he will make a statement. [5986]

Mr. Hoon: The Bowman project will provide the armed forces with a modern, highly capable tactical combat radio communications system to replace Clansman which has been in service since the mid-1970s. It will provide secure, reliable communications to our land forces and selected elements of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. The system will also implement a tactical internet and provide automatic position location, navigation and reporting.

Last summer, in the light of major problems with the programme, the competition for the Bowman combat radio was re-launched. Following careful analysis of the bids submitted by Thales, TRW and CDC, I have decided that CDC, a subsidiary of General Dynamics already operating in the UK, should be selected as the preferred supplier of this system.

Our priority has been to deliver a successful solution that fills the capability gap at the earliest opportunity. CDC has offered a solution that fully meets the military requirement and represents the best value for money. I am confident that it will meet our demanding timetable for getting this vital equipment into service with the armed forces. It is based on the development of a proven system, and includes best of class radios and a very efficient approach to fielding and support. Its bid is the clear winner of the competition.

The Ministry of Defence and CDC will now work together on the programme to bring Bowman into service. We aim to be in a position to let the contract in late summer this year, in support of an In-Service Date in early 2004. The contract is valued at around £1.8 billion. It will cover both the supply of the Bowman system and the first five years of support up to the year 2009.

CDC's solution will provide employment opportunities in the UK in a broad range of system areas, including design, development, manufacture and project management. Ninety per cent. of the work content of the CDC bid will be UK-based—the highest proportion of any of the three bids. Around 1,600 jobs will be secured across the UK, including 400 new high-technology and support posts at the company's headquarters, which CDC plan to establish in south Wales. The company has also earmarked south Wales for a new Army Communications Technology research and development centre, which will be staffed by around 65 leading scientists. Other regions will benefit too. We expect sub-contract work to secure over 100 jobs in Scotland, over 300 jobs in south-west England, and around 75 jobs in the south-east centred on Hastings. Major UK sub-contractors include Alvis and GKN-Westlands.

This month will also see the first deliveries, ahead of schedule, of the Personal Role Radios, a new capability which was separated from the main Bowman requirement in 1999 in order to ensure early delivery to the front line. These radios will provide short range communications for dismounted infantry, and will transform their operations.

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment he has made of the impact on procurement policy, with particular reference to the willingness of each of the competitors to accept future UK defence prime contracts, if *(a)* CDC, *(b)* TRW and *(c)* Thales were awarded the Bowman contract; and if he will make a statement; [5135]

(2) what consultations he has had with the Canadian Government to verify the performance of CDC in respect of the IRIS programme; and if he will make a statement. [5133]

Mr. Hoon: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assurances he has received from TRW about its performance in respect of US digitisation programmes; and if he will make a statement; [5129]

(2) what consultations he has had with the US Government to verify the performance of TRW in respect of digitisation programmes for the US armed forces; and if he will make a statement; [5132]

(3) what estimate he was made of the impact on the value of UK exports of Bowman if *(a)* CDC, *(b)* TRW or *(c)* Thales were awarded the Bowman contract; and if he will make a statement; [5128]

(4) what assurances he has received from CDC about its performance in respect of the Canadian IRIS programme; and if he will make a statement. [5131]

Mr. Hoon: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

European Refugee Fund

Mr. Michael Jabez Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which organisations successfully bid for funding under the European refugee fund for voluntary repatriation measures in 2000–01. [6026]

Angela Eagle: The International Organisation for Migration, with Refugee Action as an implementing partner, successfully bid for funding of three separate projects under this measure. All three projects are co-funded by the Home Office. They are:

Voluntary Assisted Return Programme 2000:

The project is open to any persons, subject to the European refugee fund criteria, who wish to return to their country of origin but do not have the means to do so. The programme aims, within a 12-month period, to organise a dignified and orderly return service to facilitate the return of 1,200 persons to their home destination. Information and assistance are made available, in the home country, to all returning persons. This project commenced in September 2000 and is therefore funded retrospectively.

Somalia Project:

This project aims to facilitate the sustainable return and reintegration of 100 Somali nationals currently living in the United Kingdom who have applied for asylum and now wish to go back to Somalia. The project will be concentrating on the regions of Somalia—predominantly Somaliland and Punt Land—where there is peace and conditions are conducive for the safe and orderly return and reintegration of Somali nationals.

Voluntary Assisted Return Programme (VARP) 2001:

This project, which will begin in September 2001, aims to continue the work already established by the earlier project (VARP 2000). The target is a further 1,200 voluntary returns. The same criteria will apply and it is intended that any identified improvements following evaluation of the VARP 2000 project will be incorporated into the programme.

Asylum Seekers

Mrs. Fitzsimons: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the asylum support adjudicators will publish their annual report and accounts for 2000–01. [6027]

Angela Eagle: The asylum support adjudicators annual report and accounts for 2000–01 will be published on Wednesday 25 July. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have arrived in *(a)* the county of Suffolk, excluding Felixstowe and *(b)* the Port of Felixstowe since 1 January. [4119]

Angela Eagle: Information on the number of asylum applications made in the county of Suffolk is unavailable. Asylum applications data are not available at regional level except by port of application. The requested information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost by examination of individual case records.

The number of asylum applications made at the Port of Felixstowe in the period of 1 January 2001 to 30 June 2001 was 30 (excluding dependants). This information was taken from manual counts of asylum applications taken at port, which do not reconcile with the provisional monthly asylum statistics published on http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his policy is on the shackling of asylum detainees attending hospitals for medical treatment. [5382]

Angela Eagle: Immigration detainees may be handcuffed, if this is assessed in a particular case to be necessary for reasons of security and control, while being escorted from their place of detention to another location. This could include attendance at a medical appointment. Handcuffs would in all cases be used for the minimum period necessary for the purposes of security and control and, in the context of medical appointments, would not be applied during any medical examination.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the backlog of asylum appeals was on *(a)* 30 May and *(b)* 30 May 1997; and if he will make a statement. [2940]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* Provisional data indicate that on 30 May 2001 there were approximately 52,000 asylum appeals lodged with the Immigration and Nationality Directorate which has not reached the end of the appeals process.

Data from the manual records kept in 1997 indicate that on 30 May 1997 the comparable figure was approximately 26,000.

Between 1997 and 2001 there was a 244 per cent. increase in decision making, from 38,895 initial decisions in 1996–97 to 133,695 in 2000–01. Over the same period the number of appeals within the process increased by 100 per cent.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what date he expects *(a)* to have completed his assessment of the fieldwork on the asylum vouchers review and *(b)* to make an announcement of his conclusions from the review; and if he will make a statement. [5115]

Angela Eagle: The review of the operation of the asylum voucher scheme remains on-going. We have not set a specific date for completion of our consideration of the evidence from the review, but we will not be making any announcements before the summer.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to ensure that asylum seekers who have been victims of torture are not detained in prisons; and if he will make a statement. [5116]

Angela Eagle: The detention under Immigration Act powers of any individual, whether an asylum seeker or not, has to be justified on the basis of the particular circumstances of the individual concerned and there is a general presumption in favour of granting temporary admission or temporary release. In any case where detention is considered necessary a range of factors must be taken into account before the detention is authorised.

One of these factors is whether the individual concerned has a history of torture. Evidence of such a history would weigh heavily against detention and, in any case where there is independent evidence of torture, the person concerned would not normally be considered suitable for detention.

Where information on a possible history of torture comes to light after a person has been detained this information would be taken into account in deciding whether detention of that person should continue.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he intends to implement Part III of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 relating to routine hearings to review the detention of asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement; [5119]

(2) what the timetable is for bringing into force Part III of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 relating to routine hearings to review the detention of asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement. [5206]

Angela Eagle: The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 does not specify a date by which part III is required to be implemented. While it was not proposed to implement part III before October 2001, the actual implementation date is currently under review and a final decision has yet to be taken.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase the regional structure of the National Asylum Support Service; and if he will make a statement. [5207]

Angela Eagle: The structure of National Asylum Support Service (NASS) is kept under review. Any decision to increase the number of NASS staff in the regions much take into account the broader requirements of Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) as a whole.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if guidance notes accompanying statement of evidence forms are distributed to asylum seekers in their own language; how many translated guidance notes have been published, and in what languages; and if he will make a statement. [5205]

Angela Eagle: The guidance notes that accompany the statement of evidence form (SEF) have been translated into 33 main languages spoken by asylum applicants. Other languages may be added if a need is identified. When a SEF is issued to an asylum applicant, it is accompanied by a copy of the explanatory notes in English and a language which the applicant can understand.

The explanatory notes have been translated into the following languages:

Amharic
Arabic
Albanian
Bengali
Chinese
Croat
Czech
Dari
Farsi
French
Gujerati
Hindi
Kurmanji
Lithuanian
Lingala
Ndebele
Nepali
Pashtu
Polish
Portuguese
Punjabi
Romanian
Russian
Serbian
Shona
Sorani
Spanish
Somali
Swahili
Tamil
Turkish
Ukrainian
Urdu.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are located in Southend; and how many have been sent to Southend from other areas. [2309]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 5 July 2001]:* The information requested is not available.

Southend is not currently a cluster area used by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and so asylum seekers are not dispersed there by NASS. Information on the location of asylum seekers receiving voucher-only support from NASS is collated only by region, not by town.

Statistics for asylum seekers dispersed by local authorities are not held centrally.

Animal Procedures

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the Animal Procedures Committee annual report for 2000. [6028]

Angela Eagle: I have today published the committee's annual report for 2000, and laid it before Parliament pursuant to section 20(5) of the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. I am pleased to note that the committee has continued to make progress on its extensive programme of work.

Ms Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the figures relating to scientific procedures performed on living animals in Great Britain in 2000, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. [6030]

Angela Eagle: The information requested will be published in full as a Command Paper on 26 July 2001.

The Command Paper will contain a great deal of detailed statistical data. I can meanwhile report the following key facts:

the number of procedures started in 2000 was just over 2.71 million, an increase of 58,000 (2.2 per cent.) on 1999;

66 per cent. were for fundamental biological research and applied human and veterinary medicine, and 17 per cent. for toxicological/safety testing (mostly for pharmaceutical evaluation purposes);

82 per cent. of the procedures involved use of rats, mice and other rodents, and fish and birds were used in 14 per cent. of the remainder;

dogs, cats, horses and non-human primates, accorded special protection under the 1986 Act, were collectively used in less than 1 per cent. of the procedures;

the number of procedures involving the use of genetically modified animals, mostly mice, rose by 70,000 (14 per cent.) to 582,000 in 2000;

the total number of animals used for the first time in 2000 was 2.64 million, an increase of almost 74,000 (2.9 per cent.) on 1999.

Voluntary and Community Organisations

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish a report on central Government funding of voluntary and community organisations. [6029]

Angela Eagle: I am today announcing the publication of the latest research into central Government funding of voluntary and community organisations. It reveals that total Government funding for the year 1999–2000 was £2.2 billion—a rise in real terms of 5.4 per cent. over the last two years. A copy of the report "Central Government Funding of Voluntary and Community Organisations 1982–83 to 1999–2000" has been placed in the Library.

The amount spent by each Department in 1998–99 and 1999–2000 was as follows:

£

Departments	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	346,400	368,265
Cabinet Office	2,473,761	2,473,761
Crown Prosecution Service	5,000	0
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	219,286,178	247,449,533
Ministry of Defence	15,638,725	15,099,220
Department for Education and Employment	96,055,271	167,393,594
Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions	950,353,834	1,042,711,540
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	7,707,459	9,645,839
Department of Health	59,992,313	60,273,422
Home Office	73,210,511	79,790,487
Inland Revenue	0	30,000
Department for International Development	181,577,000	195,269,000
Lord Chancellor's Department	22,497,467	3,285,565
Department of Social Security	14,535,775	13,508,767
Department of Trade and Industry	17,328,000	16,106,000
Northern Ireland Executive	[1]—	[1]—
Scottish Executive	282,129,574	289,888,456
National Assembly for Wales	110,107,441	95,104,573

[1] Not available

Prisons

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will confirm the final 2001–02 key performance indicator targets for average cost per uncrowded prison place and average cost per prisoner. [6031]

Beverley Hughes: The final targets for 2001–02 are:

To ensure that the average cost per uncrowded prison place does not exceed £36,323

To ensure that the average cost per prisoner does not exceed £37,509.

Dr. Naysmith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the performance of Her Majesty's prison services in 2000–01. [6032]

Beverley Hughes: The annual report and accounts for the Prison Service for 2000–01 has been laid before the House today. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Criminal Records Bureau

Dr. Desmond Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Criminal Records Bureau will publish its annual report and accounts for 2000–01. [6033]

Mr. Denham: The Criminal Records Bureau annual report and accounts have been published today and I am pleased to say that copies have been placed in the Library.

Immigration Appeals Authority

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further right of appeal on human rights grounds is available to those who had appeals pending before the Immigration Appeals Authority, or where an in time appeal could have been made, on 2 October 2000. [6034]

Mr. Blunkett: In another place, on 20 March 2001, *Official Report, House of Lords,* columns 153-54W my noble Friend, Lord Bassam, in reply to a question from Lord Lester of Herne Hill, clarified the position of asylum seekers who wished to make a human rights claim under

section 65 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. He confirmed that people appealing against immigration decisions made before 2 October 2000 cannot benefit from this appeal right which is not retrospective. But they could make a separate human rights claim and would have the opportunity to appeal except in those instances where the human rights issue had already been considered by the appellate authority or the courts, or there had been findings of fact at an earlier appeal which mean the human rights claim is bound to fail.

However, it has been decided that the exception should not apply to people who had an appeal pending or could have lodged appeals in time to the immigration appeals authority on 2 October 2000. If they make a human rights claim and it is rejected they will be able to make an allegation and we will then give them an opportunity to appeal to the immigration appeals authority.

Oakington Detention Centre

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applicants have had their claims processed at Oakington detention centre since 20 March 2000; what was the outcome of each claim; how many of those refused asylum subsequently appealed; what were the outcomes of the appeals; how many appellants failed to attend the appeal hearing; how many were held in other detention centres pending determination on an appeal; and how many were removed from the United Kingdom. [3307]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* The following information is based on provisional Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) data. Up to 30 June 2001, there have so far been 6,182 principal applicants who have had their asylum claim decided at Oakington.

The outcome of those decisions was as follows:

Outcome	*Number*
Granted	33
Refused but granted exceptional leave to enter or remain	13
Asylum refused	6,136
Total decided	6,182

There have so far been 5,425 appeals lodged. Only appellants who are detained or whose claim was certified as manifestly unfounded on their merits are subject to fast-track appeal arrangements. Of those sent to the IAA, and so far determined, the outcome was as follows:

Outcome of appeals	*Number*
Allowed	121
Conceded	6
Withdrawn or abandoned	489
Dismissed	2,389
Total	3,005

Information on the number of appellants who failed to attend the appeal hearing is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. 884 appellants have been detained pending the determination of their appeal. 1,233 principal applicants who had their claim decided at Oakington, plus 275 dependants, have so far been removed from the United Kingdom.

James Ashley

Mrs. Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish *(a)* the Wilding report and *(b)* the Hoddinot report into the death of James Ashley. [3622]

Mr. Denham: Those reports are the property of Sussex Police Authority and the Chief Constable. I met my hon. Friend and members of the Ashley family on 4 July. At the meeting I said that we would use our best endeavours to encourage the Police Authority to publish as much as possible, bearing in mind that the report contains confidential information that will need to be subject to considered legal advice, and the need to ensure there is no adverse impact on other proceedings.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what dates his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if he will make a statement. [4814]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report,* column 165W.

Sexual Offences Review

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to implement the recommendations of the Sexual Offender Review Group; and if he will make a statement. [4888]

Beverley Hughes: I have arranged that the report of the review of Part One of the Sex Offenders Act 1997 will be published for consultation during the week beginning 30 July. I will place a copy of the report in the Library.

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he plans to publish the Government's response to the Sexual Offences Review; [5381]

(2) if he will publish a list of those who have responded to the consultation on the Sexual Offences Review; and how many responses he has received to the consultation. [5378]

Beverley Hughes: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Mr. Hawkins) on 27 June 2001, *Official Report,* column 99W. We received responses from a wide range of organisations and individuals. A detailed breakdown is not possible without incurring disproportionate cost, as some of those who responded did not want their identity disclosed.

As soon as we have considered all the responses in detail in relation to the 62 recommendations contained in Volume 1 of "Setting the Boundaries" we will be making an announcement of our conclusions.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4900]

Mr. Blunkett: It is not normal practice of Government to publish the daily ministerial duty roster. This Department will ensure that it has sufficient cover through the summer recess in line with the requirements of the Ministerial Code.

National Black Police Association/Superintendent Dizaei

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if surveillance of Dr. Dizaei included telephone conversations on private and public telecommunication systems in connection with his position as adviser to the National Black Police Association; [1921]

(2) how many of the phone intercepts of Dr. Dizaei carried out between September 1999 and October 2000 were of private conversations unrelated to Dr. Dizaei's work as a police officer; [1922]

(3) if phone interceptions were carried out and transcribed while *(a)* Dr. Dizaei was giving advice to black officers taking proceedings against the Metropolitan police service and *(b)* Dr. Dizaei was discussing such cases with the lawyers involved. [1923]

Mr. Denham: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the practice in relation to calls made by Superintendent Dizaei (prior to 2 October 2000, when Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 came into force) was that all calls on the Metropolitan police service telephone network were recorded. Those which related to his role as National Black Police Association Legal Adviser were not transcribed and not passed to the team that is investigating his conduct.

Of the calls recorded during the period between September 1999 and October 2000, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that 899 calls appear to be unrelated to Superintendent Dizaei's duties as a police officer.

In relation to interception of communications, which comes under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, and its predecessor, the Interception of Communications Act 1985, it has been the policy of successive Governments to neither confirm nor deny whether interception has taken place in any specific case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis *(a)* the accounts of the National Black Police Association were disclosed to the Metropolitan Police and *(b)* his Department agreed with the Metropolitan Police Service not to allow the National Black Police Association to examine its own accounts. [1924]

Mr. Denham: For the purposes of its investigation into Superintendent Ali Dizaei, the Metropolitan Police asked to examine Home Office documents recording payments of public funds to the National Black Police Association. The Metropolitan Police asked Home Office officials not to disclose the documents to the National Black Police Association. Having examined the documents more fully, however, the Metropolitan Police withdrew its request. The National Black Police Association has since had access to the documents.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has followed the formal complaint made by the National Black Police Association against the Deputy Commissioner Ian Blair, DAC Hayman and Superintendent Norman on 13 May over their conduct in investigating Dr. Dizaei. [1926]

Mr. Denham: The chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) informs me that the Authority is dealing with the allegations against Mr. Blair and Mr. Hayman in accordance with Regulation 7 of the Police (Conduct) (Senior Officers) Regulations 1999. A specialist adviser, who has sought clarification of the misconduct alleged by the National Black Police Association (NBPA), is tasked to report back to a sub-committee of the MPA on all three officers, as soon as possible, following the completion of his inquiries. The sub-committee will then consider what action should be taken under the Regulations.

The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis is the appropriate disciplinary authority for the allegation against Superintendent Norman. The Commissioner informs me that he will also await the specialist adviser's report before considering what action should be taken under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 1999.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on who is accountable for the Metropolitan Police service investigations into Dr Ali Dizaei and Chief Inspector Leroy Logan MBE. [4351]

Mr. Denham: Under the Police Act 1996, the Metropolitan Police are under the direction and control of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, which includes the handling of disciplinary investigations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost of the investigation into Dr. Dizaei has been to date including *(a)* salaries of police officers and support staff, *(b)* cost of other individuals involved, *(c)* use of technical equipment, *(d)* cost of facilities and administration and *(e)* expenses including overtime and travelling. [1925]

Mr. Denham: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that to quantify these costs could be done only at disproportionate cost. It should be noted, however, that the majority of these costs are 'opportunity costs' (that is work carried out in the normal course of an officer's duties), and not additionally incurred. The Commissioner also informs me that the annual budgetary allocation to the Internal Investigations Command of the MPS is £16,646,564.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers are working on the investigation of Dr. Dizaei. [1927]

Mr. Denham: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the number of officers engaged in this investigation has varied between eight and 29 at any one time.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many statements relating to the investigation of Dr. Dizaei have been taken to date and what proportion of those statements, excluding those from police staff, were taken from the visible ethnic minorities. [1928]

Mr. Denham: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me 803 statements have been taken from 305 different individuals. 33 per cent. of people providing statements are not connected with the Police Service. 53 per cent. of those people are from visible ethnic minorities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many superintendents within the Metropolitan Police in the last five years have received surveillance at the level of that carried out in the investigation of Superintendent Dizaei. [1929]

Mr. Denham: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that since the inauguration of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Anti-corruption Squad in January 1998, other officers of Superintending rank have been subject to similar surveillance to that carried out in the investigation of Superintendent Dizaei. It is the policy of the MPS Directorate of Professional Standards not to discuss specific numbers of investigations.

Young Offenders

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what average length of time is spent by young people held in custody on remand before their case comes before court and is finalised. [2846]

Beverley Hughes: The average time juveniles spend on remand in custody is 65 days for those held in Prison Service accommodation and an estimate 1 114 days for those held in local authority secure units.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juvenile offenders are currently held in *(a)* young offender institutions and *(b)* elsewhere within the Prison Estate; and if he will make a statement. [2110]

Beverley Hughes: Provisional information shows that on 31 May 2001 there were 2,365 juveniles held in young offender institutions in England and Wales. There were a further 13 juveniles held elsewhere within the prison estate.

Asylum and Immigration

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants who have held ELR status and who have applied for ILR have been refused in each of the last three years. [4746]

Angela Eagle: The available information is given in the table.

Table 1: Refusals of an application for indefinite leave to remain[1] in the United Kingdom to persons previously granted exceptional leave to remain, 1998–2000

Year	*Total refusals*
1998	40
1999	10
2000	30

[1] Excludes dependants of principal applicants and the outcome of appeals. Data rounded to the nearest 10.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what orders have been laid under section 84(4)(d) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. [4990]

Angela Eagle: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to him on 2 July 2001, *Official Report,* column 60W.

SI 2001 No. 1403 exempts from the regulatory scheme administered by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner certain educational institutions and public health bodies. SI 2001 No. 1393 provides temporary exemption from the scheme (until 31 January 2002) to voluntary bodies which, by 30 April 2001, formally committed themselves to apply for the Community Legal Services Quality Mark; and to employers who give immigration advice to work permit holders.

Family Visitor Visa

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the effect of fees on the number of family visitor visa appeals. [4747]

Angela Eagle: An inter-departmental review of the operation of the family visitor appeal scheme is being conducted. One of the review team's tasks is to assess the impact of the fees, and independent research is being commissioned to investigate this. The team's report will be available early next year.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many family visitor visa appeals have been funded by the Legal Services Commission in the last 12 months. [4593]

Ms Rosie Winterton: I have been asked to reply.

The Legal Services Commission is unable to produce this information. Responsibility for recording the number of cases funded by the Legal Services Commission is devolved to suppliers under contracts. They are only required to record and report the total number of asylum cases and the total number of immigration cases. Family visitor appeals are included within the number of immigration cases and cannot be identified separately.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department will introduce a separate application form for family visitor visa applications which draws attention to the fact that any refusal will be subject to a right of appeal. [4748]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans at present to introduce a separate application form for family visitor visa applications. However, a revised version of the existing visa application form is being prepared which includes an expanded section for visitors. This will allow applicants to

indicate their intention to visit a family member. The accompanying information leaflet outlines the appeal right for this category of visitor.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent estimate he has made of the numbers of successful family visitor visa appeals *(a)* at oral hearings and *(b)* via paper only. [4750]

Ms Rosie Winterton: I have been asked to reply.

From October 2000 to June 2001, inclusive adjudicators at the Immigration Appellate Authorities decided:

(a) 406 oral appeals, 279 of which were successful; and

(b) 910 paper appeals, 323 of which were successful; with another 37 being successful on a further appeal to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

Drugs

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of people aged 16 to 24 years reported that they had used illegal drugs during the *(a)* past year and *(b)* past month in (i) 1999, (ii) 2000 and (iii) 2001. [5226]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: The British Crime Survey (BCS) provides data on the levels of self-reported drug use among a representative sample of the general population in England and Wales. The information requested is not available for the years requested.

The table provides the relevant data for 1996 and 1998. Data were not collected in 1999 since the BCS has been conducted every two years. From 2000 onwards, however, the BCS will be done every year. Data for 2000 will be published in autumn 2001. Data collection for 2001 is not yet complete.

Percentages of respondents aged 16 to 24 years reporting use of illegal drugs in the last year and last month, in England and Wales

	1996	*1998*
Last year	29	29
Last month	18	19

Sources:

BCS 1996 (weighted data)

Drug Misuse Declared in 1998: results from the British Crime Survey, Home Office Research Study 197 (http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hors197.pfd)

PFI/PPP

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* PFI and *(b)* PPP contracts have been agreed by his Department over the last five years; how many have been satisfactorily completed; and in how many has compensation been (i) paid and (ii) claimed for performance failure. [4596]

Mr. Blunkett: The Public Finance Initiative (PFI) and Public Private Partnership (PPP) contracts agreed in the last five years, based on available information, are as follows:

	Number
(a) Number of PFI contracts agreed in last five years	21
(b) Number of PPP contracts[1] agreed in last five years	1
(c) Number satisfactorily completed	[2]0
(i) Number where compensation paid for performance failure	11
(ii) Number where compensation claimed for performance failure	12

[1] Excludes PFI contracts shown above

[2] All contracts are still running

The level of compensation on one claim is still being negotiated.

Charity Commission

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the policy of the Charity Commission in respect of an application to establish a new charity which replicates the scope and remit of an existing charity. [4927]

Angela Eagle: The Charity Commission is required by section 3(2) of the Charities Act 1993 to register any organisation which is established exclusively for charitable purposes and is not exempt or excepted from registration.

Channel Tunnel (Security)

Mr. Howard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many illegal immigrants have been apprehended at the Channel Tunnel terminal at Cheriton this year; and how many of them have applied for asylum. [5280]

Angela Eagle: Provisional figures indicate that, from 1 January 2001 to midnight on 14 July, 3,538 clandestine entrants have been detected at the Cheriton Terminal. The overwhelming majority claimed asylum in the United Kingdom. Action is in hand to implement Civil Penalties in respect of the Eurotunnel shuttles following a period of consultation. A consultation document including a draft code of practice, regulations and a Regulatory Impact Assessment was handed to Eurotunnel on 18 July. A copy of the document will be on the Home Office website at www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk from 20 July.

Mr. Howard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in completing the security arrangements at the Coquelles terminal of the Channel Tunnel. [5291]

Angela Eagle: The work on the inner security cordon around the platforms and freight allocation areas on the Coquelles site is not yet complete. The main fencing is in place but work remains to be done to complete protection on the over-bridges leading to the platforms and to secure some access points for road and rail. Eurotunnel also propose an extension to the inner cordon to protect the rail entrance route to the platforms.

Action is in hand to implement civil penalties in respect of the Eurotunnel shuttles following a period of consultation. Officials met Eurotunnel on 18 July and outlined a number of improvements that needed urgent action.

Criminal Justice and Court Services Act

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which provisions of the Criminal

Justice and Court Services Act 2000 are yet to come into force; what the planned timetable is for their introduction; what orders remain to be brought forward relating to the Act; and if he will make a statement. [5107]

Mr. Keith Bradley: Provisions of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 which have not yet been commenced are: sections 46 and 51, which are concerned with exclusion orders and requirements; section 53 which is concerned with breach of community orders; section 59 which is concerned with remand centres; section 61 which is concerned with the sentencing of offenders aged 18–21, and section 71 which is concerned with information held by the Police Information Technology Organisation for the purposes of part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988. It is hoped to bring section 71 into effect shortly. The exclusion provisions are to be piloted and the other sections will be commenced when possible.

In respect of the powers to make orders under the Act I shall write to the hon. Member.

Criminal Court Orders

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to change the names of criminal court orders. [5209]

Mr. Keith Bradley: The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 changed the names of Community Service Orders, Probation Orders and Combination Orders to Community Punishment Orders, Community Rehabilitation Orders and Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Orders. These changes have already taken effect.

The Halliday Report on the Sentencing Framework includes proposals to create new sentences which, in due course, may have implications for the names of existing orders. These proposals are currently the subject of a consultation exercise.

The Government have no other plans to change the names of orders imposed by the criminal courts.

Fine Defaulters

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people *(a)* were imprisoned and *(b)* received a non-custodial sentence for fine default in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; how many fine defaults followed non-payment of a television licence fee; what was the average length of prison sentence in each year for fine default; and if he will make a statement. [5114]

Mr. Keith Bradley: Prison receptions data from the Prison statistics database do not include non-custodial sentences for defendants who have defaulted on payment of fines. Details of prison receptions for fine default and average days served are shown in Table A for males and females. Prison receptions for fine default following non-payment of a television licence fee are shown in Table B.

Table A: Receptions of fine defaulters by year, and average time served by days and sex for prisons in England and Wales

Year	Number of receptions	Average time served/days[1] Males	Females
1991	18,973	8.1	6.8
1992	19,826	7.0	6.8
1993	22,403	7.5	6.0
1994	22,469	7.3	5.0
1995	20,157	7.0	5.0
1996	8,555	7.0	5.0
1997	6,336	7.0	5.0
1998	5,374	7.0	5.0
1999	3,727	7.0	5.0
2000[2]	2,476	7.0	5.0

[1] Excluding those remaining in custody for fine default on completion of a custodial sentence

[2] Provisional data

Table B: Fine Defaulters that have used a TV without a licence in prisons in England and Wales, by year

Year	Number of fine defaulters received[1]
1991	394
1992	568
1993	825
1994	730
1995	728
1996	327
1997	232
1998	145
1999	80
2000[2]	33

[1] Includes those aged 17 up to 1992

[2] Provisional data

A Home Office Occasional Paper, "New Measures for Fine Defaulters, Persistent Petty Offenders and Others: The Report of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 Pilots", by Robin Elliott and Jennifer Airs was published in 2000. The report looks in detail at fine default in Norwich and Manchester, including imprisonment, non-custodial sentences and type of offence.

A copy is in the Library or can be accessed on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics website at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/occ-fine.pdf.

Reoffending

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average recorded reoffending rate was following *(a)* a community rehabilitation order with conditions, *(b)* a community rehabilitation order without conditions, *(c)* a community rehabilitation order with a condition of attendance at an accredited programme, *(d)* a community punishment order and *(e)* a community punishment and rehabilitation order on the most recent date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement. [5208]

Beverley Hughes: Reoffending data for community penalty commencements are not collected. However data on reconviction following the commencement of various community penalties are collected. The latest available data are for commencements in the first quarter of 1997, and are shown in the table. It is not possible to identify

separately offenders with a condition of attendance at an accredited programme from those offenders with any conditions specified.

Percentage of offenders reconvicted for a standard list offence within two years of commencing a community penalty in the first quarter of 1997

Order type	*Percentage*
Community Rehabilitation Order with conditions	58
Community Rehabilitation Order without conditions	68
Community Punishment Order	48
Combination Punishment and Rehabilitation Order	59

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which provisions of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 are yet to come into force; what the planned timetable is for their introduction; what orders remain to be brought forward relating to the Act; and if he will make a statement. [5111]

Mr. Blunkett: Part I Chapter II (acquisition and disclosure of communications data) and Part III (investigation of electronic data protected by encryption etc.) of the Act have yet to be implemented. We plan to bring these provisions into force by the end of this year. Orders under section 12 (maintenance of interception capability) and section 13 (Technical Advisory Board) of the Act will be laid before Parliament following the current period of public consultation on the section 12 order.

Terrorism Act

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which provisions of the Terrorism Act 2000 are yet to come into force; what the planned timetable is for their introduction; what orders remain to be brought forward relating to the Act; and if he will make a statement. [5112]

Mr. Blunkett: The only provision in the Terrorism Act 2000 not brought into force on or before 19 February 2001 by any of the three commencement orders signed by my predecessor is section 100 in Part VII of the Act. This concerns the making of a code of practice for silent video recordings in Northern Ireland of those detained under the Act. Section 100 has not been brought into force because an order under paragraph 3 of schedule 8 to the Act has been made introducing video recording with sound in Northern Ireland with effect from 19 February. No order has been made prescribing the kind of information to be provided by passenger carriers about passengers, crew and vehicles travelling in the common travel area (paragraph 17 (4) of Schedule 7). Discussions continue about how the power to collect information is to be used and the kind of information to be collected. No order will be laid before the House without prior formal consultation with carriers.

Probation Service

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his estimate is of the additional Probation Service staff that need to be recruited in order to deliver the accredited programme strategy and the recommendations contained in "Making Punishments Work"; and if he will make a statement. [5214]

Beverley Hughes: We estimate that approximately 4,500 additional probation staff will be needed by 2003–04 in order to deliver accredited programmes under the What Works initiative. We have yet to take decisions on the implementation of "Making Punishments Work", but preliminary estimates are that some 4,800 extra probation staff would be required if it were implemented in full.

Passports

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the backlog of unprocessed passport applications was at the end of each month since 1 January. [4940]

Angela Eagle: The backlog of unprocessed passport applications for each month was as follow.:

Month	*Backlog*
January	154,048
February	184,704
March	150,503
April	179,729
May	237,719
June	175,148

The increased backlog at the end of May is largely the result of normal seasonal demand, which peaks during May. Despite this backlog the average turnround time for straightforward, properly completed applications remained low at just over five days.

May 2001 intake was 701,144, an increase of 7.5 per cent. over 2000. Much of this increase can be traced to the end of the postal dispute which artificially inflated May intake when compared to previous years.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is providing the Passport Service's out-sourced call service mentioned in paragraph 2.11 of the Services Corporate and Business Plan 2001–2006. [4945]

Angela Eagle: Call centre services for United Kingdom Passport Service have been provided by MM Group since January 2000.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what legislative changes he is planning to allow the Passport Service greater access to other databases. [4961]

Angela Eagle: No legislation is currently planned for the Passport Service.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the incidence of internal fraud within the Passport Service. [4950]

Angela Eagle: Detection and prevention of fraud remains a top priority for the United Kingdom Passport Service (UKPS). Any suspected internal fraud or attempted fraud is investigated promptly and thoroughly and is followed up by legal and/or disciplinary action where appropriate. This is carried out with the full

co-operation of the police. Such cases are rare. A log of suspected and actual cases is maintained and is subject to regular review by the Agencies Management.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the original budgeted estimate was for the cost of moving the headquarters and London Regional Office of the UK Passport Agency; what the current estimated outturn is; and if he will make a statement. [4963]

Angela Eagle: The original budgeted estimate was £11.5 million. The current estimated outturn is £14.0 million.

It should be noted that the functionality of the operation has been raised significantly to enable the introduction of a Tiered Application Service. The number of customer counters has been increased and an enhanced appointment and queue management system added. The level of security has also been improved for the added security of both customers and staff.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what work he has commissioned into *(a)* the incidence of passport fraud and *(b)* possible new measures to combat such fraud. [4944]

Angela Eagle: A specialist Fraud and Enforcement Unit has been set up within the Passport Service.

Improved analysis of levels of passport fraud is being implemented and access to private and public sector databases is being considered to address particular fraud issues.

The United Kingdom Passport Service will continue to play a full and active role in inter-departmental efforts to combat fraudulent activities across Government.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to recover the deficit which the Passport Service is set to incur in the financial year 2001–02. [4953]

Angela Eagle: The objective of the Passport Service, when setting fees, is to break even after contribution to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for non-fee bearing consular services. Fee levels should be set to ensure that the Passport Service breaks even in any given year. Where this is not possible it is necessary for the Passport Service to enter into discussions with Her Majesty's Treasury to agree that recovery will take place over a longer period.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his estimate is of the percentage increase in the revenue of the Passport Service between 2001–02 and 2002–03; what proportion of that forecast increase is attributable to an assumed increase in fees; and if he will make a statement. [4955]

Angela Eagle: The forecast for income from the Passport Service is £135.4 million in 2001–02 and £156.8 million in 2002–03, an increase of just under 16 per cent. It is important to note that this increase does not simply reflect a potential general fee increase but also an increase in revenue as a result of the planned introduction of Tiered Application Services, for which applicants would choose to pay a fee premium to guarantee faster delivery times. It is intended to introduce these services during the final quarter of 2001–02 and this has been assumed in forecast revenue assumptions.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports were scrapped prior to issue in *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01. [4951]

Angela Eagle: The number of passports scrapped before issue in each year was as follows:

Year	*Number of passports scrapped prior to issue*
1997–98	140,323
1998–99	138,937
1999–2000	121,481
2000–01	107,296

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to recover the costs of the emergency measures introduced by the Passport Service in 1999. [4954]

Angela Eagle: In 2001–02 the United Kingdom Passport Service Accounts show a surplus of £4.9 million, which will recover some past deficits. The costs of the 1999 emergency measures are to be recovered through an efficiency programme.

The programme of efficiency measures will commence following the cutover of all offices to the new passport issuing service, (PASS). As a result of delays to the completion of PASS rollout to minimise risk, this programme has not yet started. It is planned to complete the rollout later this year and to introduce an efficiency programme in 2002–03.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* new passports and *(b)* renewals there have been in each month since 1 January. [4939]

Angela Eagle: The split of passport applications received by the Passport Service for each month is as follows:

Month/Service type	*Number*
January	
New Adult Applications	92,774
Adult Renewals	265,534
Child Applications	108,618
Amendments/extensions to existing passports	37,279
February	
New Adult Applications	111,273
Adult Renewals	273,271
Child Applications	139,140
Amendments/extensions to existing passports	38,129
March	
New Adult Applications	107,218
Adult Renewals	237,221
Child Applications	146,320
Amendments/extensions to existing passports	39,641
April	
New Adult Applications	109,229
Adult Renewals	193,114
Child Applications	184,417
Amendments/extensions to existing passports	41,595
May	
New Adult Applications	152,724
Adult Renewals	289,492

Month/Service type	*Number*
Child Applications	194,421
Amendments/extensions to existing passports	55,958
June	
New Adult Applications	137,328
Adult Renewals	252,116
Child Applications	164,503
Amendments/extensions to existing passports	51,873

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average processing time was for *(a)* a new passport application and *(b)* a renewal in each month of 2001 to date. [4946]

Angela Eagle: It is not possible separately to identify the average processing times of new passport applications and renewals. The average processing times provided relate to all straightforward, properly completed applications issued by the Passport Service during the month.

Month	*Average processing time (days)*
January	3.31
February	4.46
March	4.67
April	4.66
May	5.12
June	5.61

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which *(a)* private sector and *(b)* public sector databases the Passport Service is seeking access. [4962]

Angela Eagle: The United Kingdom Passport Service is:

(a) considering a trial starting this Autumn that will involve the use of a financial sector database; and

(b) considering the scope for data matching procedures with the National Insurance Contributions Office and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Correspondence

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to letters from the hon. Member for Woking dated 30 April and 4 and 6 July, ref. V1006539, re Mrs. Verney, formerly Egorova. [4918]

Angela Eagle: I wrote to the hon. Member on 19 July. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

Social Action Initiatives

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that Christian and church-based social action initiatives are treated equitably in the allocation of Government funding. [5098]

Angela Eagle: I can assure the hon. Member that all applications for Government funding are treated in a fair and objective manner. The Government fully recognise the important role that all faith groups can make to addressing social needs. Codes of Good Practice under the Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector stress the potential of faith organisations to contribute to social inclusion and that this is distinct from the promotion of religion. The consultation document recently issued by my Department in partnership with the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions puts forward proposals aimed at achieving a more integrated and accessible approach to Government funding of all community groups. More generally, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also recently announced a review of the ways the Government interface with faith communities.

Prisons (Rehabilitation)

Dr. Palmer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to improve the record of prisons as institutions of effective rehabilitation. [633]

Beverley Hughes *[pursuant to the reply, 2 July 2001, c. 53W]:* This said the Prison Service would be investing an additional £30 million in 2002–03 from the Spending Review 2000. This should have read £50 million.

TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

Autogas

Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what guidance the Government have issued on the safety of converting vehicles to use autogas. [4523]

Mr. Jamieson: The guidance on the safety of converting vehicles to use autogas is contained within UK legislation. The Motor Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 1998 (Statutory Instrument 1998 No. 2884) provides the technical standards for the use of compressed natural gas and Regulation 94 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (Statutory Instrument 1986 No. 1078) provides the technical standards for the use of liquefied petroleum gas.

Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what guidelines have been issued to licensing authorities about the use of private hire vehicles which use autogas. [4522]

Ms Keeble: The licensing of private hire vehicles is a matter for local licensing authorities (district/borough councils, unitary authorities or Transport for London). They will decide which vehicles, including the types of fuel used, are suitable for licensing according to local conditions and circumstances. We support local policies which encourage the licensing of vehicles which use cleaner fuels.

Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what steps the Government are taking to encourage the use of autogas in motor vehicles. [4521]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government are encouraging the market for autogas (liquefied petroleum gas or LPG) in a number of ways. For example, as part of the response to the Green Fuels Challenge the Chancellor announced in Budget 2001 a cut in duty of 6p/kilogramme on LPG to

maintain the current differential with conventional fuels, and a commitment not to increase the duty in real terms until at least 2004.

The Powershift programme, which is funded by the DTLR, has a budget of £30 million over the next three years—with £9.91 million for this financial year which will provide grants towards the purchase of around 10,000 clean fuel vehicles, many of which will use LPG. The Powershift programme has been successful in stimulating the development of a LPG infrastructure: there are now over 790 LPG refuelling stations in the UK.

The new vehicle excise duty and company car taxation regimes also provide concessions for vehicles using LPG.

Transport Funding

Mr. Joyce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what share of national income is projected to be taken up by public investment in transport in 2011–12 and what change this represents, in real terms, from the level in 1991–92. [5110]

Mr. Jamieson: A projection of UK public capital investment in transport in 2011–12 as a share of national income is not available.

UK public capital investment as a share of GDP is projected to be 0.62 per cent. by 2010–11. The equivalent figure for 1991–92 was 0.85 per cent.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how much total UK transport capital expenditure is projected to rise in real terms by 2011 as a share of GDP. [5109]

Mr. Jamieson: UK capital investment in transport by the public and private sectors as a share of GDP is projected to rise from 0.91 per cent. in 2001–02 to 0.98 per cent. in 2010–11.

"The Future of Aviation"

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he intends to make public the responses to the consultation document, "The Future of Aviation". [5425]

Mr. Spellar: We are preparing a summary of the responses, and when it has been completed intend to make it available on the Department's website, and to deposit paper copies of the summary in the House Libraries and the Vote Office. We expect that this will be during the summer recess.

All responses to the consultation document, other than those from respondents who have requested confidentiality, can be viewed, by appointment, in the Department's Library at Ashdown House, Victoria street, London.

Waste-burning Incinerators

Dr. Richard Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the planning authorities that have refused applications to build waste-burning incinerators in urban areas in the last three years. [4520]

Ms Keeble: This information is not held centrally. Local planning authorities decide planning applications in the first instance. Only in those instances where the applicant appeals against the refusal of planning permission will the matter come before my right hon. Friend.

English Regions

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received on the inclusion of those parts of Cleveland south of the River Tees in *(a)* a Yorkshire *(b)* a northern and *(c)* a north-eastern region. [5082]

Dr. Whitehead: We have no record of any formal representations for the inclusion of Cleveland, south of the River Tees, in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, the old northern region or the north-east region.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what criteria are applied in defining the Government's standard regions for England. [5101]

Dr. Whitehead: The 'standard English regions' emerged from local government reorganisation in 1974 and resulted in the creation of eight regions which were used by a large number of Government Departments (though not all) for planning purposes, and became the standard regions for statistical purposes. These boundaries often continue to be termed standard regions.

In 1994, the creation of the Government Offices (GOs) resulted in a new delineation of regions within England, (now generally referred to as GO boundaries). These reflected the boundaries of the then Regional Boards and the regional organisations of the (then) Departments of Transport and Environment. The GO regions are also of a more equally distributed population size than the standard regions.

The existing GO boundaries have now become increasingly well-established, reflecting the Government's commitment, in the "Modernising Government" White Paper, that, where possible, all Government bodies should align with GO boundaries.

As my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister announced on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 80W, the Government intend to publish a White Paper on regional governance in England. This will set out the Government's thinking on a range of issues, including regional boundaries.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what considerations he has given to the creation of a Wessex *(a)* region and *(b)* regional assembly. [5080]

Dr. Whitehead: As my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister announced on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 80W, the Government intend to publish a White Paper on regional governance in England. This will set out the Government's thinking on taking forward plans for elected regional assemblies, including the issue of regional boundaries.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received about including Cumberland and Westmorland in regions based on *(a)* Newcastle and *(b)* Manchester. [5081]

Dr. Whitehead: We have no record of any formal representations for the inclusion of Cumbria in the north-west and north-east regions.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received on the inclusion of north Lincolnshire and north-east Lincolnshire in *(a)* a Yorkshire region and *(b)* an east midlands region. [5083]

Dr. Whitehead: We have no record of any formal representations for the inclusion of north and north-east Lincolnshire in the Yorkshire and Humber and east midlands regions.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the Government purposes for which, at 31 May 1997, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were included with *(a)* Dorset and Wiltshire, *(b)* Sussex and Surrey and *(c)* Berkshire, with or without other counties in each case. [5099]

Dr. Whitehead: As at 31 May 1997, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were part of the South West and Wessex Regional Health Authority, which also included the counties of Dorset and Wiltshire. This changed in April 1999, when Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were aligned with the South East Regional Health Authority. On 31 May 1997, the Environment Agency's south and west region, based largely on the GO south-west region, included a small part of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. That remains the case. For all other Government purposes, as far as we can ascertain, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were, on 31 May 1997, included in the GO south-east region with the counties of Kent, Surrey, East and West Sussex, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what requests he has received that Cornwall should not be included in a region which includes Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire. [5078]

Dr. Whitehead: On 11 July I met the hon. Members for St. Ives (Andrew George), North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), and Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor), to discuss their views on an elected Cornish assembly. I have also had a number of other representations on this matter.

Ferry Subsidies

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how much public money was spent on ferry subsidies in each of the last three years. [3335]

Mr. Jamieson: No ferry services in England and Wales are subsidised by Government. The devolved Administrations subsidise some ferry services in Scotland and Northern Ireland, for which they are, respectively, accountable to the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Some local authorities in Scotland also subsidise local ferry services.

Local Government Funding

Tony Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when it is intended that the proposed changes to the general funding formula for local government will take effect. [4582]

Dr. Whitehead: I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Farm Diversification

Ms Atherton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when rate relief for new farm diversification enterprises will be available. [5970]

Mr. Raynsford: The Rating (Former Agricultural Premises and Rural Shops) Act 2001, which received Royal Assent on 11 May will be brought into effect in England on 15 August. From this date all new small scale non-agricultural businesses on farms with rateable values of up to £6,000, whether or not operated by the farmer, will receive up to 5 years' mandatory 50 per cent. rate relief. Also from this date most small village food shops will qualify for 50 per cent. mandatory rate relief under the existing village shop rate relief scheme.

The new relief will lower the start-up costs for small non-agricultural businesses located on what had been agricultural land and buildings. This will enable farmers to diversify either directly by starting new businesses themselves, or indirectly, through the sale or leasing of former agricultural premises.

By extending the existing village shop rate relief to most other food shops, vital support will be given to more village businesses that provide essential services to the community.

The introduction of these reliefs fulfils Government commitments made in the Action Plan for Farming, the Local Government Finance Green Paper and the Rural White Paper.

Planning Inspectorate Annual Report

Mr. Pound: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he expects to publish the Planning Inspectorate's annual report and accounts for 2000–01. [5980]

Ms Keeble: The Planning Inspectorate's annual report and accounts for 2000–01 are published today. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

I am very pleased to report that the inspectorate has had another successful year, against a background of rising workloads, coupled with tighter targets for handling appeals. It has met all but one of the timeliness targets set for its work in England and Wales. The high standard of service to local authorities on development plan inquiries has been maintained with targets being exceeded. This has helped to create a greater certainty for all involved in the planning process as more of England and Wales is covered by up to date development plans.

Financially, the inspectorate has continued to seek greater efficiency in working practices, with major investment in business systems and an ongoing commitment to electronic service delivery. Once again expenditure has been contained very closely within budget, reflecting achievement of demanding Treasury efficiency targets. The agreement of a second successive three-year funding deal with DTLR has also introduced greater certainty into the business planning process, enabling a more strategic approach to the challenging years ahead.

Customer surveys continue to show that the inspectorate's decisions are widely respected. In spite of rising workloads, the quality and efficiency targets were achieved.

Regional Air Services

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what is the current status of work on the regional air services studies; and when he proposes to publish the regional consultation documents based upon them. [6176]

Mr. Spellar: Work on the six original regional air service studies proposed in the 1998 Transport White Paper was completed last year. Since then a second phase of work has been under way to co-ordinate these part 1 studies and audit them for consistency. This has involved reviewing air traffic forecasts for each airport under a range of national scenarios, examining catchments and route development in more detail, carrying out a more in-depth appraisal of options and integrating this work with the findings from a range of other UK-wide strategic studies. This part 2 work, known as the RASCO study, is nearing completion, but the emerging findings have highlighted a number of key strategic issues on which further work is needed. This is necessary to ensure that the regional air service consultation documents, which we hope to publish around the turn of the year, will provide a full and robust basis for public consultation.

Two part 3 studies, one covering the midlands of England and the other the lowlands of Scotland, have therefore been commissioned to examine important long-term runway capacity. This work is programmed for completion before the end of the year and will be published shortly thereafter, along with the part 1 and 2 studies to help inform the regional air service consultation process.

E-Government Local Authority Pathfinders

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to provide funding for the 25 e-government local authority pathfinders in 2001–02. [6179]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government have made available £25 million of funding in 2001–02 to help achieve their target of ensuring that 100 per cent. of local authority services are capable of electronic delivery by 2005.

I have today laid before the House a Special Grant Report setting out my intention to provide some £24 million of this funding in grant to 25 local e-government pathfinders. This will support a co-ordinated programme of experiment, innovation and shared learning. At the same time, up to a further £1.7 million of funding is being made available to support the local government on-line project, which will disseminate best practice information from the pathfinders to all local authorities.

The Government originally proposed to make available the funding to pathfinder authorities in the form of supplementary credit approvals. However, following representations from pathfinders, we are now seeking the agreement of the House to provide the funding in the form of a special grant.

London Underground

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many work days were lost due to stress-induced illness in London Underground staff broken down by *(a)* station staff, *(b)* train drivers, *(c)* managerial staff and *(d)* signal/points operators in each financial year since 1994–95 for each line of the London Underground. [5002]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground, which informs me that it records staff absences and the reason for the absence if possible. Absence due to stress-induced illness could be declared as several different conditions. In addition, information on staff who have left the company is archived and not easily retrievable. Therefore a reply to this question could be obtained only at excessive cost.

London Underground is currently specifying a much improved enterprise resource planning IT system which should, once installed, be able to produce such information with much greater ease.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many driver working hours are needed to run the current level of trains on London Underground each week day, broken down by line. [5005]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground, which has provided the following information which shows the total train operator hours required on any one week day to operate the current scheduled service:

Underground line	*Driver hours needed each weekday*
Bakerloo	811 hours 19 minutes
Central and Waterloo and City	1,692 hours 27 minutes
Circle and Hammersmith and City	943 hours 34 minutes
District	1,879 hours 22 minutes
East London	183 hours 17 minutes
Jubilee	1,181 hours 05 minutes
Metropolitan	1,094 hours 23 minutes
Northern	1,930 hours 56 minutes
Piccadilly	2,026 hours 14 minutes
Victoria	904 hours 20 minutes

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many London Underground trains were delayed more than 10 minutes in each year since 1994–95 broken down by line. [5012]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground. It measures train delays of 15 minutes or more, rather than 10 minutes—in line with

the Customer Charter. London Underground work to 13 our-week periods in a year, and performance information is gathered on this basis. The following table shows London Underground's figures for the average number of trains delayed for 15 minutes or more in a period for the years requested:

	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	1998–99	1999–2000	2000–01
Bakerloo	22	25	14	17	20	25	23
Central	50	37	42	55	43	37	38
Waterloo and City	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
District	28	29	23	19	21	24	32
Jubilee	18	9	7	8	32	34	16
East London	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
Metropolitan	39	35	22	22	18	27	31
Circle and Hammersmith	16	17	8	15	15	16	22
Northern	30	33	23	26	24	23	17
Piccadilly	21	19	15	19	18	18	21
Victoria	13	8	8	14	10	11	7
Total	237	212	162	195	201	215	219

1. Waterloo and City included with Central to 1999–2000
2. East London closed 1995–96 to 1997–98; included with Jubilee 1994–95 and 1998/99 to 1999–2000

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the companies used by London Underground Limited to *(a)* install, *(b)* maintain and *(c)* replace London Underground signals, line by line, in the last five years. [5011]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground, which has provided the following information on companies used as prime contractors for signalling in the last five years:

Line	Install	Maintain	Replace
Jubilee	WSL	LUL/Infraco[1]	LUL/Infraco[1]
Northern	LUL/Infraco/Kvaerner	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco
Piccadilly	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco
Bakerloo	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco
Central	WSL/LUL	LUL/Infraco[1]	LUL/Infraco[1]
Victoria	LUL/Infraco[2]	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco
Waterloo and City	LUL/Infraco[2]	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco
District	LUL/Infraco[2]	LUL/Infraco and AMEC for Wimbledon branch	LUL/Infraco and AMEC for Wimbledon branch
Metropolitan	LUL/Infraco[2]	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco
Hammersmith and City	LUL/Infraco[2]	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco
Circle	LUL/Infraco[2]	LUL/Infraco	LUL/Infraco
East London	LUL/Infraco and Bombardier	LUL/Infraco[3]	LUL/Infraco[3]

[1] Second line maintenance support provided by WSL
[2] Only minor works
[3] Second line maintenance support provided by Marconi
Notes:
WSL = Westinghouse Signals Ltd. (now known as Westinghouse Rail Systems Ltd.)
AMEC = AMEC Rail Ltd. (subcontracted to Balfour Beatty BBRM)

In providing this information, London Underground have assumed that "replace" means like-for-like renewals. Where external companies are named, these are the prime contractors and no details of their subcontractors are given. LUL/Infracos also receive front-line support for some signalling control systems from:

Line	
Central Line	WSL
Jubilee Line	Alcatel and Marconi
East London Line	Marconi

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what is the average length of time London Underground staff stayed working for London Underground, broken down by *(a)* station staff, *(b)* train drivers, *(c)* managerial staff and *(d)* signals and points operators, for each line of the London Underground in each of the last five years. [5001]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground, which has informed me that it does not hold data in a format which allows the question to be answered in precisely the form asked. However, it has been able to provide information on the average length of service of all those employees who left the company over each of the last five years. It has also provided information on the average number of years' service of staff currently still employed by London Underground.

Years

	Station staff	Train operators	Managers	Signal operators
1996	8.7	15.8	13	17.1
1997	7.8	13.6	21.7	15.1
1998	7.9	16.6	16.6	14.4
1999	6.5	16.2	8.9	12.9
2000	7.4	16.6	11.2	25.6
Still employed	9.3	13	17.1	17.2

This information cannot be broken down by line without incurring disproportionate cost.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many trains ran per hour in *(a)* peak time and *(b)* other times in each year since 1994–95 broken down by line. [5009]

Mr. Jamieson: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) if he will make a statement on performance figures for the shadow running by the infraco companies in preparation for the partial privatisation of London Underground; [5015]

(2) if he will list the performance targets set out for the shadow running by the infraco companies in preparation for the partial privatisation of London Underground. [5016]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government do not set specific targets for the performance of the individual infrastructure companies. Their performance is, however, reflected in the targets set for London Underground itself.

The table shows the performance targets that have been set for London Underground Ltd. in 2001–02, together with the corresponding actual performance at the end of March 2001:

	Actual performance at end March 2001	*Targeted performance by end March 2002*
Capacity[1]	63.8	65.6
Reliability[2]	3.69	3.63
Customer satisfaction measures:[3]		
Train service	75	75
Information	76	77
Customer safety and security	80	80
Staff helpfulness and availability	68	69
Cleanliness	67	67

[1] Train kms run in millions

[2] Unweighted excess journey time in minutes

[3] Average scores out of 100

The Government will set stretching, longer-term performance targets for the London Underground as part of our proposals for a 21st century tube.

In addition to these performance targets, London Underground Ltd. has also been set the following specific investment targets for 2001–02:

Total investment expenditure of at least £410 million.

Specific investment to be completed:

19.5 km of track renewals

five station upgrades

five escalators replaced

15 escalators refurbished or repaired.

A number of other works on escalators, rolling stock, signalling, stations and track will also be started, progressed or completed during the year.

The Government do not set specific safety related targets. London Underground operates services under the terms of the railways safety case approved by the Health and Safety Executive. The executive now has a double lock on safety. Before the tube modernisation plans can proceed, the executive must accept, firstly, London Underground's safety plans and, secondly, its revised safety plans to reflect the role of the private sector bidders.

The Government do not provide grant to London Transport for achieving individual targets, nor does London Underground Ltd. record actual expenditure on this basis. By the end of March 2002, a total of £2.781 billion of grant will have been provided to London Transport since April 1997, of which £2.399 billion will have been internally allocated to London Underground. The remainder has been utilised to provide other transport services, such as bus and river services, and Croydon Tramlink, before responsibility for these was transferred to Transport for London in July 2000.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what proportion of the first year of public-private partnership funding of London Underground will be spent on *(a)* stations, *(b)* escalators, *(c)* signals and points and *(d)* track improvements. [5007]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government's plans for the London Underground will deliver £13 billion of investment over the first 15 years, giving London the 21st century underground that it deserves. The contracts to deliver this investment remain under negotiation. However, London Underground estimate that in the first year of the contracts, approximately 50 per cent. of investment spending will be on train systems including rolling stock and signalling. A further 25 per cent. of investment expenditure will be on infrastructure, including track and civil assets. The remaining 25 per cent. will be on stations, delivering the improvements that passengers consider important: making sure the lifts and escalators work; installing CCTV to improve passenger security; tackling congestion at the busiest stations; providing step-free access; and improving the quality and cleanliness of stations.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many violent incidents against London Underground staff by passengers there were in each financial year since 1994–95 broken down by each line of the London Underground. [5003]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground, which has provided the following information:

Year	*Physical assaults*	*Threats and abuse*	*Total*
1994–95	419	233	652
1995–96	455	278	733
1996–97	399	236	635
1997–98	451	257	708
1998–99	460	286	746
1999–2000	518	427	945
2000–01	576	539	1,115

The figures show the total number of assaults and threats of assault against London Underground staff by non-staff which have been reported internally. London Underground inform us that to provide a breakdown on a line-by-line basis would incur disproportionate costs as the data are not readily kept in this format.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many trains per hour in *(a)* peak time and *(b)* other times Westinghouse Signals were contracted to provide on the Jubilee Line of London Underground. [5010]

Mr. Jamieson: London Underground provides train services on the Jubilee Line. Westinghouse Signals do not provide trains but were contracted to provide signalling infrastructure enabling trains to be run.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many London Underground trains were delayed due to passenger illness in each month since 1994–95 broken down by line. [5006]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground. It operates to 13 four-week periods in a financial year and gathers its performance data to these timescales. It has provided the information in the tables as shown on train delays of over two minutes due to passenger illness, split by line and by period. London Underground does not hold data in this format prior to Period 7 (broadly September) in 1999. To collate previous information would incur disproportionate cost.

	1999–2000						
	P7	*P8*	*P9*	*P10*	*P11*	*P12*	*P13*
Bakerloo	3	1	5	2	—	1	—
Central	12	16	15	5	12	7	15
Circle	1	2	1	—	—	2	1
District	4	7	8	6	6	4	6
East London	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hammersmith and City	2	—	1	1	1	1	1
Jubilee	5	—	3	2	3	8	3
Metropolitan	2	4	—	—	2	2	3
Northern	11	5	5	4	16	12	10
Piccadilly	3	9	5	7	6	6	2
Victoria	3	6	4	2	8	3	4
Waterloo and City	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	46	50	47	29	54	46	45

	2000–01											
	P1	*P2*	*P3*	*P4*	*P5*	*P6*	*P7*	*P8*	*P9*	*P10*	*P11*	*P12*	*P13*
Bakerloo	—	1	1	1	—	4	2	1	5	—	3	2	1
Central	10	7	7	14	12	6	1	6	15	2	12	11	8
Circle	2	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	3	2
District	4	2	4	6	7	3	1	3	5	1	3	4	7
East London	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
Hammersmith and City	1	2	—	1	1	1	1	2	1	—	—	—	1
Jubilee	6	1	7	10	4	1	6	2	2	5	5	9	4
Metropolitan	—	1	2	1	2	1	—	—	1	2	1	2	2
Northern	8	9	7	10	11	6	2	10	—	2	8	8	7
Piccadilly	6	4	5	3	12	9	11	10	5	10	11	10	5
Victoria	3	5	2	3	2	3	3	5	3	5	4	2	2
Waterloo and City	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	41	33	37	50	52	34	27	39	40	27	47	52	39

	2001–02		
	P1	*P2*	*P3*
Bakerloo	2	1	—
Central	17	6	12
Circle	1	3	1
District	5	6	3
East London	—	—	1
Hammersmith and City	—	—	3
Jubilee	2	6	3
Metropolitan	2	1	—
Northern	10	8	5
Piccadilly	6	6	5
Victoria	5	2	1
Waterloo and City	—	—	—
Total	50	39	34

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many customers waited more than 10 minutes to purchase tickets for London Underground journeys broken down by station in each year since 1994–95. [5013]

Mr. Jamieson: This is an operational matter for London Underground, which informs me that it does not gather information on ticket office performance in the format requested. It measures "the percentage of customers in a ticket queue for three minutes or more". This information is available by line, but it is not possible to break it down for the 253 stations operated by London Underground. The table sets out the average percentage of customers in a ticket queue for three minutes or more for each of the years requested.

	1994–95	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Bakerloo	1.2	1.1	2.7	3.9	4.6	6.2	5.8
Central	2.0	2.0	3.3	4.5	4.9	6.2	6.0
District	2.9	4.6	7.4	6.9	6.3	6.7	7.9
Jubilee	1.9	1.5	3.1	4.8	4.6	4.9	7.1
East London	—	—	—	—	—	5.3	1.8
Metropolitan	1.1	0.5	1.8	3.4	5.5	7.0	8.5

	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	1998–99	1999–2000	2000–01
Circle and Hammersmith	2.9	3.0	3.3	5.2	7.0	7.2	9.1
Northern	2.1	2.2	3.4	4.8	5.6	6.8	7.1
Piccadilly	2.6	3.3	3.7	4.7	7.3	8.0	8.7
Victoria	4.4	3.0	5.1	8.9	9.7	11.6	13.6
Total	2.3	2.6	4.0	5.2	6.1	7.1	7.9

[1] East London line formerly managed jointly with the Jubilee line and not separately surveyed before 1999–2000.

It should be noted that over this period as a whole the pressures on the Underground network have risen substantially, with some 200 million extra passenger journeys undertaken last year compared to 1994–95.

Various measures are being taken as part of the Prestige PFI scheme to improve ticketing services. New multifare ticket machines have been installed across the network. These machines take credit and debit cards and are expected to help speed up ticket purchase time significantly. New ticket office machines and accounting systems are being installed which will help ticket office staff process transactions more swiftly. And by September 2001 50 new Queuebuster machines will be in place at key stations, selling a variety of tickets including weekly travelcards.

Metro Systems

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he compiles comparisons between the performances of the metro systems of major international cities. [5094]

Ms Keeble: My Department does not compile data that would enable comparisons to be made on a consistent basis between the performance of either major underground systems or integrated light rail systems in major cities. However, the data and research which my Department has examined or commissioned have shown that light rail schemes and associated integrated transport policies can play a significant role in improving the attractiveness and quality of public transport and increasing its usage.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many people were sleeping rough in England in *(a)* April, *(b)* May and *(c)* June. [5228]

Ms Keeble: The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions is currently collating statistics from independent counts that took place across England over the spring and will publish these figures in due course.

TREASURY

Competitiveness

10. **Tim Loughton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact on manufacturing competitiveness of changes to the tax burden in the UK and other OECD countries in recent years. [3331]

11. **Mr. George Osborne:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent assessment he has made of the impact of taxation on the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector; and if he will make a statement. [R] [3332]

Mr. Andrew Smith: The Government recognise the difficulties that manufacturers are experiencing because of the slowdown in the world economy and the weakness of the euro. No country can ever insulate itself from world economic events. The Government's primary economic task is to create the right conditions of macro-economic stability within which all businesses, including manufacturers, can develop their potential; the Government keep all taxes under review and the changes to the tax system are considered as part of the normal Budget process, taking into account implications for the UK's international competitiveness.

14. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent assessment he has made of the UK's comparative position in international competitiveness. [3336]

Mr. Boateng: Since 1997 the Government have established the lowest inflation in the EU and highest employment of almost any country in the OECD. We have started a programme of structural reform to strengthen competition and promote enterprise, innovation and skills.

And we will do more—starting with the reforms we have already announced to make our competition regime truly world-class.

21. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of levels of taxation on the competitiveness of the UK. [3344]

Dawn Primarolo: The Government keep all taxes under review, and changes to the tax system are considered as part of the normal Budget process.

EU Structural Funds

12. **Andrew George:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement on the progress of the delivery of European Union aid to the United Kingdom's Objective 1 regions; [3333]

(2) what assessment he has made of the progress achieved by *(a)* Government and *(b)* the four UK Objective 1 regions in delivering the Objective 1 programmes within the pre-agreed timetable. [5299]

Mr. Andrew Smith: All the UK's four Objective 1 regions are making good progress on their programmes. We are only 10 months into a seven-year programme, and already over 14 per cent. of the total grant available has been approved for projects. In Cornwall, projects to the value of £54 million grant have been approved—nearly

17 per cent. of the programme's total allocation. In addition, projects with a grant value of also around £54 million—a further 17.6 per cent. of the programme's total allocation—are under appraisal.

Andrew George: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what public match-funds have so far been used to support projects for which European Structural Funds have been offered in each of the four UK Objective 1 regions broken down by *(a)* public funds and *(b)* Government Department and by (i) amount offered and (ii) spent so far in each of the four Objective 1 regions; [5302]

(2) what targets have been agreed with the European Commission for *(a)* financial commitments to projects and *(b)* receipt of money by projects to which financial commitments have been made in each of the four UK Objective 1 regions for European financial years ending 2001 to 2006; [5301]

(3) how much of the money offered under *(a)* ERDF, *(b)* EAGGF, *(c)* ESF and *(d)* other European structural funds in each of the four UK Objective 1 regions has been paid out broken down by project, by (i) the total amount so far, (ii) proportion of total EU budget under that fund for the region's Objective 1 programme period and (iii) proportion of money so far offered; [5303]

(4) what grant offers have been made by *(a)* number of projects and *(b)* amount of money (sterling) for (i) ERDF, (ii) EAGGF, (iii) ESF and (iv) other structural funds in each of the four UK Objective 1 regions so far. [5298]

Alan Johnson: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not held centrally. My Department is in contact with the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (for the three English Objective 1 programmes) and the National Assembly for Wales (for the West Wales and the Valleys programme), which are the organisations responsible for implementation of the programmes, and I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Climate Change Levy

15. **Mr. Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the reduction in global carbon emissions resulting from the climate change levy. [3337]

Mr. Boateng: The climate change levy package will deliver emissions savings of an estimated 5 million tonnes of carbon by 2010.

Debt Relief

16. **Ms Christine Russell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on recent progress in relieving the burden of debt in the world's poorest countries. [3338]

Mr. Gordon Brown: The HIPC debt relief initiative is currently delivering debt relief of $53 billion to 23 of the World's poorest countries. This will see their debts fall to below the developing country average. The UK's 100 per cent. policy means that countries that reach a decision point receive relief on 100 per cent. of their outstanding debts to the UK. In addition, all payments from countries yet to receive debt relief—for example due to conflict—are being held in trust to be returned when the money will go to the poorest, and not on conflict. The UK has called for other countries to follow its lead and demonstrate they too have no financial interest in these historic debts.

28. **Mrs. Betty Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the UK's contribution to international efforts to relieve the debt burden of the world's most indebted countries. [3351]

Mr. Boateng: The HIPC debt relief initiative is currently delivering debt relief of $53 billion to 23 of the World's poorest countries. This will see their debts fall to below the developing country average. The UK's 100 per cent. policy means that countries that reach a decision point receive relief on 100 per cent. of their outstanding debts to the UK. In addition, all payments from countries yet to receive debt relief—for example due to conflict—are being held in trust to be returned when the money will go to the poorest, and not on conflict. The UK has called for other countries to follow its lead and demonstrate they too have no financial interest in these historic debts.

Working Families Tax Credit

17. **Linda Perham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the Working Families Tax Credit in London. [3340]

Dawn Primarolo: The Working Families Tax Credit is a success in making work pay for families on low to middle incomes in London.

At February this year the WFTC was helping 92,000 families in London to the extent of £400 million per year. This is 50 per cent. more families and double the cash help than was the case with its predecessor Family Credit.

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what monitoring his Department undertakes of the impact of the Working Families Tax Credit on work incentives for second earners in recipient households; and if he will make a statement. [4454]

Dawn Primarolo: The Government have put in place a comprehensive programme to monitor and evaluate the Working Families Tax Credit. The Working Families Tax Credit is part of a wider package of measures designed to make work pay and thereby help to provide employment opportunity for all. These measures also include the introduction of the National Minimum Wage, the 10p starting rate of tax, and changes to employee and employer National Insurance Contributions. Independent estimates, which are consistent with those produced by the Treasury, suggest that these measures will lead to an increase in the labour supply of second earners.

Children's Bond

18. **Mr. Prosser:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families will benefit from the proposed children's bond. [3341]

Ruth Kelly: In late April the Government announced a consultation on two new proposals to encourage saving and the build up of assets, the Child Trust Fund and the Saving Gateway. The Child Trust Fund would benefit each of the 700,000 or more children born every year. In addition to an endowment paid in by the Government,

the scheme would allow parents, grandparents, friends and children themselves to make additional contributions, so providing families with a safe and secure account to save towards their children's future. The Child Trust Fund would provide all young people beginning their adult life with the advantage that owning financial assets brings.

Credit Unions

19. **Mr. Gareth R. Thomas:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further action he is taking to develop the credit union sector. [3342]

Ruth Kelly: The Government support credit unions' ethos of self-help and thrift, and believe that by offering savings and affordable loans, particularly to the less well-off, they can make a valuable contribution in the area of increasing access to financial services. That is why the Government have been involved with a number of initiatives to help the sector grow, but ultimately every credit union's future rests in the hands of the members and the dedicated volunteers who run them.

Unemployment

20. **Jane Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his proposals on reducing unemployment. [3343]

Ruth Kelly: In order to achieve the Government's goal of employment opportunity for all we will be extending the principles behind the New Deal for Young People to a much wider group who face problems in finding work.

By building upon the success of the New Deal for Young People, which has placed almost 300,000 18 to 24-year-olds into work, we now aim to tackle unemployment among three of the most disadvantaged groups: the long-term unemployed, through the improved New Deal 25 plus; lone parents, through the enhanced programme of choices available through the New Deal for Lone Parents; and disabled people through the nationally extended New Deal for Disabled People.

26. **Siobhain McDonagh:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of recent measures designed to reduce youth and long-term unemployment. [3349]

Ruth Kelly: Through the New Deal for Young People we have helped nearly 300,000 young unemployed people find jobs, and in addition over 70,000 long-term unemployed people have been helped to move from welfare into work through the New Deal for Long-Term Unemployed.

Independent evaluation of the New Deal for Young People has shown that over 200,000 young people left unemployment earlier than they would have done without the programme, with 60,000 entering into employment.

The New Deal helps the young and long-term unemployed to secure jobs as the most effective way of enhancing their incomes, increasing their skills and securing their future economic independence.

Lone Parents

22. **Mr. Ross:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how his plans for public investment will affect measures to help lone parents into work. [3345]

Mr. Boateng: The Government have set a target for 70 per cent. of lone parents to be in work by the end of the decade. Improving the employment prospects of lone parents is a key priority, and the employment rate of lone parents has risen from 44 per cent in 1997 to over 50 per cent. in late 2000.

The New Deal for Lone Parents is being expanded to offer more choices for lone parents considering full or part-time work or training. The Working Families Tax Credit has greatly improved work incentives for lone parents, especially the credit for child care. The National Child Care Strategy aims to provide high quality affordable child care places for 1.6 million children by 2004, to enable parents to move into work.

Pensions

23. **Bob Spink:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his planned expenditure on pensions will be in the forthcoming year. [3346]

Mr. Andrew Smith: For 2001–02 forecast spending in the UK on the basic state pension is £37.3 billion.

Interest Rates

24. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England regarding the level of interest rates; and if he will make a statement. [3347]

Ruth Kelly: The Chancellor and the Governor meet regularly to discuss a wide range of issues. The level of interest rates is a matter for the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England.

Barnett Formula

25. **Mr. Simon Thomas:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the Barnett formula. [3348]

Mr. Andrew Smith: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to my right hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East and Washington, West (Joyce Quin), *Official Report, column 425.*

Vehicle Fuel Taxation

27. **Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to change levels of taxation on vehicle fuel. [3350]

Mr. Boateng: Taxation on fuel is reviewed on a Budget-by-Budget basis. In making his judgment, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer takes into account all relevant economic and social objectives as well as the UK's environmental commitments.

However, we have already announced that Budget 2002 will introduce a lower rate of excise duty for biodiesel, at 20 pence per litre below the prevailing rate for ultra-low sulphur diesel. In addition, we will provide duty reductions or exemptions for pilot projects covering the more environmentally friendly fuels, methanol, bioethanol and biogas and hydrogen.

Bank of England (Banking Facilities)

29. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Bank of England will extend banking facilities to companies and organisations other than Huntingdon Life Sciences in circumstances where facilities from commercial banks are not forthcoming. [3352]

Ruth Kelly: The Bank of England offers banking facilities to the Government and the financial sector. It does not offer facilities to private sector customers outside the financial sector. Given the exceptional circumstances surrounding Huntingdon Life Sciences, it was decided that the Department of Trade and Industry would provide banking facilities to HLS through DTI accounts held at the bank. HLS is not a customer of the bank.

Tax Burden

30. **Mr. Collins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of net taxes and social security contributions as a percentage of GDP in *(a)* 1996–97 and *(b)* 2000–01. [3353]

34. **Mr. Goodman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the change in the tax burden during the last Parliament. [3358]

Mr. Andrew Smith: Estimates of net taxes and social security contributions as a percentage of GDP are contained in tables C10 and C23 of the 2001 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

United States Slowdown

31. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact of the slowdown in the US economy on UK exports and employment. [3354]

Ruth Kelly: Prospects for the US economy and the potential implications for the UK economy are discussed in the Economy chapter of the 2001 "Financial Statement and Budget Report", paragraph B44 and Box B3.

Cleaner Road Fuels

32. **Mr. Plaskitt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what fiscal measures he is taking to promote the use of cleaner road fuels. [3356]

Mr. Boateng: The Government have shown that they are keen to stimulate the development of viable alternative fuels that offer environmental benefits over current conventional fuels and they launched their Green Fuel Challenge in November last year. In the March Budget, we reduced the duty on road fuel gases by the equivalent of a further 3 pence per litre and announced that duty on these gases will not be increased in real terms until 2004 at the earliest. We also announced that duty on biodiesel would be cut in Budget 2002, to 20 pence per litre below the then ULSD duty rate. We also legislated in the last Finance Bill to provide for duty reductions or exemptions for pilot projects covering more environmentally friendly fuels.

Furthermore, over the last year duty differentials in favour of ultra-low sulphur petrol (ULSP) have achieved almost complete conversion of the UK unleaded petrol market to ULSP, in the same way that earlier duty incentives had achieved conversion of the UK diesel market to ultra-low sulphur diesel (ULSD).

Sex Discrimination

33. **Fiona Mactaggart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures aimed at removing disadvantage to women he has introduced since 1997. [3357]

Ruth Kelly: The Government have introduced a series of measures to strengthen the labour market position of women and to help them combine work and family commitments. These include the National Minimum Wage, reforms to income tax and National Insurance Contributions, the Working Families Tax Credit, the New Deal, the National Childcare Strategy and improvements to paid maternity leave and the rights of part-time workers.

Global Health Fund

35. **Judy Mallaber:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he is holding with his G8 counterparts on establishing the Global Trust Fund for Health. [3359]

Ruth Kelly: The UK Government's support for a new Global Health Fund was announced by the Chancellor and Secretary of State for International Development at the Westminster Conference "International Action Against Child Poverty—Meeting the 2015 Targets" on 26 February, and followed up by both Ministers through meetings at the IMF/World bank and at the UN with the Secretary-General and others. In addition, the Chancellor has discussed the Global Health Fund and other international development issues with other G7 Finance Ministers, at their meetings in Washington on 28 April and on 7 July in Rome.

Government Spending

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the sustainability of the existing planned rate of increase in Government spending over the next five years. [3334]

Mr. Gordon Brown: The Government's spending plans are set out in Table C11 of the 2001 Financial Statement and Budget Report. Table C2 of the Report shows that the projected path for the public finances is sustainable and is fully consistent with the Government's strict fiscal rules, the golden rule and the sustainable investment rule, throughout the next five years. The surplus on current budget remains positive throughout the forecast period. Public sector net debt has fallen by 12 percentage points since 1996–97 and is projected to fall further to 30 per cent. or lower, well below 40 per cent.

Tobacco/Alcohol Smuggling

Mr. Forth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to tackle tobacco and alcohol smuggling. [3325]

Mr. Boateng: Last year the Government published the "Tackling Tobacco Smuggling" strategy and announced an additional investment of £209 million to fund almost 1,000 new Customs officers and a national network of the latest X-ray scanners. This strategy is designed to put tobacco smuggling into decline within three years.

The Government are determined to crack down on all forms of fraud, including cross-channel smuggling of alcohol. We aim to reduce revenue loss from all cross-channel smuggling by 10 per cent. year on year. To achieve this, 170 of the additional Customs officers have been specifically deployed at the channel ports to target both alcohol and tobacco smuggling.

The strategy is at an early stage but it is already beginning to show results. In the first nine months of 2000–01, Customs have seized 1.4 billion cigarettes in the UK, helped overseas enforcement agencies seize nearly 700 million cigarettes en route to the UK and broken up 38 major organised criminal gangs.

World Bank

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the Government's policy is on purchasing from firms and individuals listed by the World bank as ineligible for World bank financed contracts for violating the fraud and corruption provisions of the World bank Procurement Guidelines or the Consultants Guidelines; and if he will make a statement. [4455]

Mr. Andrew Smith: The Government's procurement policy is that all Government procurement of goods and services is to be based on value for money, having due regard to propriety and regularity. It is for the individual Department to consider how best to meet this requirement in each case. The purchaser can exclude companies which have been convicted of an offence or are guilty of grave misconduct in the course of their business. In reaching decisions on exclusion, the purchaser will look, for example, at the nature and severity of the activity or offence and any remedial action taken. Verifiable and relevant information from external sources, including the World bank, can be taken into account in reaching decisions on exclusion.

Independent Insurance

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if the FSA discussed with a director of the Independent Insurance Company the sale of shares to Independent's staff as a means to raise capital finance; [4487]

(2) what plans he has to establish an *(a)* internal and *(b)* external inquiry into the role of the FSA in respect of the collapse of the Independent Insurance Company. [4486]

Ruth Kelly: Discussions between the FSA and the directors of the companies it regulates are confidential between the parties concerned.

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Treasury has (1) to initiate an inquiry into the role of the FSA in regulating Independent Insurance; [5293]

(2) to initiate an inquiry into the role of the FSA in regulating Independent Insurance. [5285]

Ruth Kelly: The current priority is the Serious Fraud Office investigation. That must be got right before we determine what other reviews may be necessary.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if the information on Independent Insurance provided to the FSA by the French Commission de Contrôle des Assurances had already been supplied to the FSA; [4482]

(2) what discussions the FSA had with the French Commission de Controle des Assurances regarding the activities of the Independent Insurance Group plc's subsidiaries; [4485]

(3) what matters the FSA discussed with the French Commission de Contrôle des Assurances when they visited their offices in Paris in May; [4488]

(4) what concerns the French Commission de Contrôle des Assurances has raised with the FSA regarding the Independent Insurance Group since January; [4489]

(5) what information the FSA made available to the French Commission de Contrôle des Assurances in response to French concerns about the Independent Insurance Group; [4484]

(6) when the French Commission de Contrôle des Assurances first raised with the FSA their concerns about the Independent Insurance Group; and what response the FSA made. [4483]

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, prior to Independent Insurance going into liquidation *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the FSA was informed of the large losses incurred by the company's French branch. [5284]

Ruth Kelly: The French regulator, the Commission de Contrôle des Assurances (CCA), first wrote to the FSA expressing their concerns about the French insurance subsidiary of the Independent Insurance Group on 11 January 2001. This company was a sister company of the UK-supervised insurer, representing about 5 per cent of group premium income, and was subject to French supervision. The FSA, following discussions with the UK company, and having received copies of the company's own detailed responses to the French authorities, replied to the CCA in March 2001. In that letter, the FSA noted its understanding that the group had provided additional financing to the French subsidiary. The FSA subsequently had a number of further contacts with the CCA including a visit to their offices in Paris, provided financial information about the financial position of the UK company, and kept the CCA informed of events in the period leading to the company's closure.

Financial Services Authority

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals have held the position of director of enforcement within the Financial Services Authority since 1 January 2000; for what periods they held office; and for what periods no postholder was in place. [4503]

Ruth Kelly: The post of director of enforcement in the FSA is currently vacant. The previous director of enforcement held the position throughout the period from 1 January 2000 to 4 June 2001. While a new appointment is being made, the responsibilities of the post are shared between relevant FSA Managing Directors and Enforcement Heads of Department.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to ensure that the Financial Services Authority make public *(a)* the operating restrictions,

(b) the fines and *(c)* the other sanctions which it applies to the companies it regulates. [4492]

Ruth Kelly: The Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 gives the FSA a wide range of powers over the firms it regulates, including the power to restrict their business and to impose financial penalties and other disciplinary sanctions, subject to proper procedural safeguards. The FSA has published details of how it will exercise these powers, and has set out its policy on publishing the sanctions which it has imposed, in its Enforcement Manual.

Assets Sales

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his estimate of proceeds from the sale of fixed assets contained in table C15 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 2001; what estimate he has made of the outstanding stock of assets in the public sector; and if he will make a statement. [4456]

Mr. Andrew Smith: Updated information about proceeds of asset sales is contained in table 3.8 of Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2001–02. The estimated outturn for asset sales in 2000–01 is £4,552 million.

The National Asset Register, which is being published today, will set out comprehensive information about the outstanding stock of assets in the public sector.

Single Currency

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the euro:sterling exchange rate on exports to the European Union since 1997; and what his policy is on the exchange rate. [4633]

Ruth Kelly: In the three months to April 2001 exports of goods to the European Union were 25 per cent. higher than in the same period in 1997.

Stability-orientated policies based on low inflation and sound public finances will deliver a stable and competitive exchange rate over the medium term.

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assumptions his Department will make on the level and evolution of the exchange rate for the purposes of the *(a)* preliminary technical work on the assessment of the five economic tests on the euro and *(b)* assessment of the economic tests. [4639]

Ruth Kelly: The Government have said that the Treasury will complete an assessment of the Five Tests within the start of this Parliament. Before any assessment is started, we must, of course, continue to do the necessary preliminary work for our analysis—technical work that is necessary to allow us to undertake the assessment within two years.

Public Services

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his planned level of spending on public services will be over the next three years. [3322]

Mr. Andrew Smith: The Government's forward plans for public spending up to 2003–04 are set out in the 2000 Spending Review, "Prudent for a Purpose: building opportunity and security for all", published in July 2000 as Command Paper 4807. The 2002 Spending Review, which will conclude in the summer of 2002, will roll forward existing spending plans and set budgets and outcome targets for Departments up to 2005–06.

Landlords

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of landlords who benefit from the Rent a Room scheme; and if he will make a statement. [4453]

Dawn Primarolo: The number of landlords who benefit from the Rent a Room scheme is not known because many of those landlords do not have to complete a self-assessment tax return. For the purposes of estimating the costs of the scheme, published in Table 1.5 of Inland Revenue Statistics, the Revenue tentatively estimates that around 150,000 landlords may benefit.

Self-assessment (Internet)

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individual taxpayers who file self-assessment tax returns have registered for the Inland Revenue service for filing tax returns on the internet in each month since the service became available; and if he will make a statement. [4457]

Dawn Primarolo: Since the registration service became available on 3 April 2000, 146,397 individual taxpayers who file self-assessment tax returns have registered for the Inland Revenue service for filing tax returns over the internet. The number of registrations in each month were:

Month	*Registrations*	*Cumulative total*
April 2000	32,937	32,937
May 2000	14,877	47,814
June 2000	10,677	58,491
July 2000	11,703	70,194
August 2000	11,700	81,894
September 2000	16,557	98,451
October 2000	2,736	101,187
November 2000	1,697	102,884
December 2000	2,902	105,786
January 2001	14,162	119,948
February 2001	595	120,543
March 2001	522	121,065
April 2001	13,485	134,550
May 2001	5,208	139,758
June 2001	4,021	143,779
July 2001 to 16 July 2001	2,618	146,397

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of *(a)* the fixed cost and *(b)* the marginal cost of providing self-assessment tax returns on the internet; and if he will make a statement. [4458]

Dawn Primarolo: The estimated cost of implementing the internet service for self-assessment for years one and two is just under £10 million. The ongoing support cost, including maintenance, help desk support and ongoing improvements to the system is around £3 million per annum.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the policy is of HM Customs and Excise in relation to targeted investigations of major cannabis trafficking into the UK; and if he will make a statement. [4733]

Mr. Boateng: HM Customs and Excise's task, with partners at home and abroad, is to reduce the availability of all prohibited drugs in the UK.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton can expect a reply to his letter dated 12 June to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury with regard to Mrs. Denise Southworth. [4502]

Mr. Boateng: I have already done so.

National Statistics Annual Report

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the National Statistics annual report for 2000–01 to be published. [6185]

Ruth Kelly: The National Statistics annual report for 2000–01, which provides a comprehensive report on the opening year of National Statistics, is being published today. The report has been laid before Parliament and copies are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

National Statistics was launched on 7 June 2000, with the overall aim of providing an up-to-date, comprehensive and meaningful description of the UK economy and society. It provides a focus for the work of the Government Statistical Services (GSS), the major provider of official statistics in the UK, with a renewed emphasis on quality, independence and coherence of outputs, to deliver a trusted statistical service for users.

Framework Document for National Savings

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will publish a revised Framework Document for National Savings. [6347]

Ruth Kelly: I have today arranged for copies of National Savings' revised Framework Document to be published and for copies to be placed in the Library. A copy has also been placed on the agency's website.

It is part of the usual arrangements for Next Steps Agencies to review their operations and revise their Framework Document every three to five years. Following the completion of a review of National Savings, which was announced in July 2000, changes have been made to the agency's objectives and governance arrangements. The revised Framework document reflects these changes and sets out the relationship between National Savings, the Treasury and the Minister responsible for the delivery of its service.

ECOFIN Council

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the outcome was of the ECOFIN Council held in Brussels on 10 July; what the Government's voting record was at the Council; and if he will make a statement. [6348]

Mr. Gordon Brown: The Economic Secretary to the Treasury and I attended the meeting of the Economic and Finance Council of Ministers.

The Presidency set out its work programme and stressed the importance it attached to economic policy co-ordination, the introduction of euro notes and coins, and structural reform.

I made a strong appeal for the EU to be outward-looking and reformist: the priority must be to step up the momentum of structural economic reform in product, capital and labour markets rather than, for example, tax harmonisation or a new eurotax. I called for progress in areas such as R&D spending, community patent, and launching a new trade round. I also called on the EU to maximise the impact of its development programmes, and emphasised the importance of the Global Health Fund.

The Council discussed taking forward the mandates from the Gothenburg European Council. The Chair of the Economic Policy Committee set out how the EPC and other committees would take on relevant aspects of the work regarding pension reform and sustainable development.

ECOFIN endorsed the Economic and Financial Committee's report and revised Code of Conduct on the assessment of Stability and Convergence Programmes.

The Commission presented its Communication on future tax policy. No conclusions were drawn, but I stated that ECOFIN's priorities should be completing the Tax Package involving exchange of information on savings income and reaching an appropriate long-term solution to VAT on e-commerce; and made it clear that fair tax competition should be encouraged.

ECOFIN adopted a timetable for the Tax Package.

No votes were taken in the course of the meeting.

Excise Fraud

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Government are taking to tackle excise fraud. [6184]

Dawn Primarolo: Since 1997 the Government have taken firm action to tackle excise fraud. In June 2000, the Government commissioned an investigation into excise duty collection in HM Customs and Excise. The investigation was conducted by Mr. John Roques, former senior partner of Deloitte Touche. His report and the Government's response to it have today been laid before Parliament (as Cm 5239).

I understand that the Comptroller and Auditor General is also publishing a report on the same issue today.

National Asset Register

Barbara Follett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to update the National Asset Register. [6186]

Mr. Andrew Smith: An updated and improved National Asset Register has today been laid before Parliament, providing for the first time a comprehensive list and valuation of all assets owned by central Government Departments, their executive agencies and

sponsored bodies and the devolved Administrations. Copies of the register are available in the Vote Office and the Libraries of both Houses; it can also be accessed on the internet at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk.

The total value of the assets listed in the register was £274 billion at the end of 1999–2000. The register is a useful tool in the management of these public assets and details changes in asset holdings since 1997. It shows that in 1999–2000 alone £1.3 billion worth of surplus assets were disposed of, unlocking resources that can be used more productively elsewhere.

Money Laundering

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the seven banks referred to by the Managing Director of the Financial Services Authority on 8 March in connection with weaknesses in money laundering prevention are fully compliant. [5296]

Ruth Kelly: The exercise of powers under the Banking Act 1987 is a matter for the FSA.

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the results of discussions between the Financial Services Authority, the law enforcement agencies and the banks following money laundering allegations in the case of the Abacha family. [5295]

Ruth Kelly: The discussions are a matter for the parties concerned. It is not the policy of the Government to comment on possible on-going investigations.

Equitable Life

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ensure that the FSA produces an interim report on Equitable Life by 20 July. [4999]

Ruth Kelly: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Mr. Brown) on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 663W.

Healthy Life Expectancy

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the healthy life expectancy at age 65 years for *(a)* men and *(b)* women in (i) England and (ii) Great Britain. [5217]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Frank Field, dated 19 July 2001:

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your question concerning healthy life expectancy at age 65 years for (a) men and (b) women in (i) England and (ii) Great Britain.

The latest available figures are given in the table. Figures presented use the General Household Survey (GHS) question on self-reported general health, to show the further years in good or fairly good health that a person aged 65 could expect to live.

Healthy life expectancy in years[1] at age 65, 1997[2]

	Males	*Females*
England	11.9	13.3
Great Britain	11.7	13.2

[1] Healthy life expectancy combines mortality and morbidity into a single index.
[2] Figures for 1997 are based on 1996–98 mortality data and 1996 and 1998 data from the GHS. The figures for Great Britain and the methodology used to calculate them were published in the ONS journal, "Health Statistics Quarterly 07", August 2000.

Teenage Mothers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the conception rate was for under 18-year-olds per thousand women aged 15 to 17 in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999 and *(c)* 2000. [5235]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Frank Field, dated 19 July 2001:

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your recent question concerning the conception rate for under 18 year olds per thousand aged 15–17 in (a) 1998, (b) 1999 and (c) 2000. (5235)

The conception rate for under 18 year olds in England and Wales was 47.0 per thousand women aged 15–17 in 1998 and provisional figures for 1999 were 45.0 per thousand women aged 15–17.

Data for 2000 are not yet available.

Registrar General (Census)

Mr. John Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Minister of Health's powers to control and direct the Registrar General in the performance of his duties under the Census Act 1920 were rescinded; who now holds those powers; and what amendments have been made to section 2(2) of the Act to reflect the change of ministerial control. [4994]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. John Taylor, dated 19 July 2001:

As National Statistician and Registrar General for England and Wales, I have been asked to reply to your recent question on when the Minister of Health's powers to control and direct the Registrar General in the performance of his duties under the Census Act 1920 were rescinded, as well as who now holds those powers and what amendments were made to section 2(2) of the Act to reflect the change in ministerial control (4994).

The functions of the Minister for Health in respect of his powers under the provisions of the Census Act 1920 were transferred to the Secretary of State for Social Services in 1968 by the Secretary of State for Social Services Order (Statutory Instrument 1968/1699). An amendment to the wording of the section 2(2) of the Census Act 1920 was made accordingly, replacing 'Minister for Health' with 'Secretary of State'.

These functions were subsequently transferred to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1996 when the Office for Population Censuses and Surveys was merged with the Central Statistical Office to form the Office for National Statistics. This merger was implemented under the Transfer of Functions (Registration and Statistics) Order (Statutory Instrument 1996/273), which was made on 14 February

1996 and came into force on 1 April 1996. No amendment to the Census Act itself was necessary to reflect this change in ministerial control.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Sustainable Agriculture

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on her policy relating to supporting a sustainable agricultural economy. [4641]

Mr. Morley: Sustainable rural development is one of the key objectives of my new Department. We will be preparing a sustainable development strategy that will look both at the promotion of sustainable food chains within the United Kingdom and promoting sustainability within the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. This will involve the transfer of resources from market support measures—so-called first pillar policies—to the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy as the key mechanism for delivering environmental, economic and social policy goals in rural areas and for facilitating restructuring of the agricultural industry.

We have already said that we will be setting up an Independent Commission to advise on how we can assist the development of a sustainable, competitive and diverse farming and food sector within a thriving rural economy which advances environmental health and animal welfare goals. An announcement on this will be made shortly.

Foot and Mouth

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) how many jobs have been lost in Cumbria in the *(a)* agricultural sector and *(b)* tourist industry as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak; [2552]

(2) how many rural businesses have closed since the start of the foot and mouth outbreak. [2571]

Alun Michael: The Department does not have statistics on job losses in the agricultural sector in Cumbria resulting from foot and mouth disease. We are, however, planning to organise a telephone survey of a sample of farmers who have been directly or indirectly affected by foot and mouth disease. It is proposed that questions relating to the employment effects of the outbreak will be included in this survey.

It is too early to make a full assessment of the number of jobs lost as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak, and for many businesses the worst impacts are likely to occur over the autumn and winter period. However, the Insolvency Service has identified that about 33 businesses have cited foot and mouth disease as the reason for closure since 12 April and anticipate that this figure will rise. Evidence on labour market impact in most of the areas which are seriously affected suggests that foot and mouth disease has slowed the rate at which unemployment is falling, through an effect on both job losses and recruitment. Local survey evidence suggests that the tourism industry in the worst affected areas has suffered a large loss of trade in the past four months, which is likely to have resulted in a fall in the number of seasonal employees in these areas, besides any business failures and permanent jobs lost.

The Government have introduced a range of measures to help businesses cope with the impact of foot and mouth disease and will continue to assess the scope for further action through the Rural Task Force, chaired by myself.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps were taken to ensure that farmers were aware *(a)* of the law surrounding slaughter of animals as a result of foot and mouth disease control and *(b)* of their rights relating to property prior to the slaughter of their animals; and if she will make a statement. [45]

Mr. Morley: The Animal Health Act 1981 provides the powers to require the slaughter of any animals affected with foot and mouth disease, or suspected of being infected. It also sets the rate of compensation. The Department took a number of steps to inform farmers of the policies being pursued to eradicate foot and mouth, including letters, the provision of information via the internet and the establishment of a helpline. Veterinary staff and other DEFRA staff in disease control centres throughout the country are available to provide any explanation required by the owner of an infected premises. Owners of infected premises will have the range of movement and other restrictions explained to them.

Farmers are also made aware of their rights regarding procedures for disputed valuations. Of course, up to the point where the animals are slaughtered, responsibility for the care and welfare of the animals rests with their owner.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the proposed 20-day standstill period on the movement of sheep and cattle. [4426]

Mr. Morley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 12 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 627–28W.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how long foot and mouth vaccination lasts after administration to livestock. [2553]

Mr. Morley: With conventional foot and mouth disease vaccines which meet international criteria of safety and potency and following the routine, two-dose primary course of vaccination, there should be no likelihood of vaccinated animals becoming clinically infected with a closely related strain within the same virus serotype for approximately 12 months. This is dependent on vaccination being part of an overall control programme, which includes movement restrictions.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will publish the protocols and guidance notes for the disinfection of milking parlours following foot and mouth disease. [2768]

Mr. Morley: Detailed guidance is currently being drafted in respect of cleansing and the disinfection of milking parlours. It will be distributed widely among all interested parties and a copy will be placed in the Libraries of the House. Information is available on the website in respect of disinfectants and their use generally in cleaning farms following an outbreak of FMD.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on what date it is estimated that the last milking parlour on currently infected premises will be disinfected and reinstated ready for use. [2769]

Mr. Morley: Central records of infected premises do not specify whether they have a milking parlour. However, even if this information were available, it would not be possible to predict a date given the many variables involved in the process of disinfecting and reinstating premises infected by foot and mouth.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations have been made to the Government by other countries who have suffered a foot and mouth outbreak. [2566]

Mr. Morley: The Government have received a number of representations from Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay both via official and diplomatic channels. All of these countries have recently suffered outbreaks of foot and mouth and the representations primarily concerned the UK's position on imports of meat from those countries.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if she will publish the protocols or guidance for the removal of ash from a foot and mouth disease burn site; [2755]

(2) what plans she has to dispose of ash from pyre sites in *(a)* Cumbria and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom; and if she will publish the precautions to be taken in such circumstances. [3443]

Mr. Morley: Ash from pyres will normally be buried on site in those cases where the Environment Agency has issued a Groundwater Authorisation that permits this. Where this cannot be done it will be disposed of in licensed landfill sites. A copy of the protocols governing the removal and disposal of ash has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Copies of this document are available from the DEFRA Foot and Mouth Disease Joint Co-ordination Centre, 1a Page St., London SW1P 4PQ (Tel.: 0845 0504141); it will also be published on the DEFRA website as soon as possible.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made that vaccinated animals can act as virus carriers of foot and mouth disease. [2578]

Mr. Morley: I am guided on this matter by the expert veterinary and scientific advice received, which is that once vaccinated animals are fully protected they should not develop clinical foot and mouth disease. However, the virus can replicate even in animals immune against the development of clinical disease, if they are exposed to infection. A proportion of such animals can become persistently infected while never developing clinical disease. These are so-called "carriers". Virus replication in carrier animals is confined to the oro-pharynx (throat) and occurs only in ruminants (cattle, sheep and goats). Pigs do not become carriers.

Expert scientific advice is that spread from vaccinated carrier animals is an extremely rare event; the amount of virus excreted is many orders of magnitude less than that expected by animals during the acute phase of disease or during the sub-clinical incubation period. To minimise the risks further, movement restrictions would be applied to all vaccinated animals for 12 months. Any risk of spread of foot and mouth disease from vaccinated carrier animals is considered to be extremely remote. However, it can be one reason to prohibit the export of animals and animal products from countries which practise vaccination to those which do not and which are free of the disease.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment the Government have made of the risk of infection of foot and mouth via the wild animal population, with particular reference to deer, hedgehogs and rats. [2556]

Mr. Morley: Our current veterinary risk assessment concludes that infected deer could transmit foot and mouth disease to susceptible livestock during the clinical stages of the disease. However the risk of wild deer playing any significant part in the spread of the disease is assessed as very low and feral deer are unlikely to represent a longer term risk. During the current outbreak over 60 deer have been examined for foot and mouth disease with negative results, and we have no evidence of deer playing any part in the spread of disease.

Hedgehogs are susceptible to foot and mouth disease but do not appear to have played any part in the spread of the disease. Rats are not susceptible to foot and mouth disease but may have a role in spreading the disease indirectly. For this reason an intensive programme of rodent control is carried out on infected premises.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the use of real-time video in undertaking veterinary surveillance of animal herds to detect clinical signs of foot and mouth. [3558]

Mr. Morley: No formal assessment has been made but experience has shown that the disease, especially in sheep, may be difficult to detect even by close physical examination by a veterinary inspector. Real-time video is therefore not considered to be a practical proposition.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farmers in *(a)* Cumbria and *(b)* England entered their sheep for the welfare disposal scheme when it was fixed at £45 per head; and how many were (i) not collected and (ii) pending collection when the price was dropped to £30 per head. [3557]

Mr. Morley: The Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme (LWDS) was introduced to provide a means of resolving serious animal welfare problems arising directly from the FMD movement restrictions. Payments made under the scheme are to alleviate welfare problems, and are not a form of compensation. The payment rates were changed on 30 April in the light of evidence that applicants were using the scheme as an alternative market, despite the introduction of various schemes to allow livestock movements from 23 April.

As LWDS has progressed, an average of 30 per cent. of animals put forward for the scheme are withdrawn by applicants at the point of slaughter as more opportunities to move livestock have become available. Accurate figures of animals "non collected" or "pending collection" from specific counties are not available. A comprehensive breakdown by category of animal of livestock notified under the scheme is not available for the first few weeks of LWDS.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farmers' animals have received *(a)* pre-22 March stock valuations and *(b)* standard valuations; and how many animals were involved in each case. [3425]

Mr. Morley: The information is not yet available in the form requested. The Department is currently preparing a database of detailed information on livestock valuations and I will write to the right hon. Member when I am able to provide more information.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farms within a 10-mile radius of Heddon-on-the-Wall have been infected with foot and mouth disease. [3245]

Mr. Morley: Twenty two farms within a 10-mile radius of Heddon-on-the-Wall have been infected with foot and mouth disease.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what statutory powers governed the *(a)* use of vaccination as an eradication policy and *(b)* other vaccination options considered by her Department in respect of foot and mouth disease. [3231]

Mr. Morley: Vaccination against foot and mouth disease is covered by the provisions of Council Directive 85/511/EEC, which requires member states to prohibit vaccination. This has been implemented through the Foot-and-Mouth Disease (Control of Vaccination) (England) Regulations 2001.

However, the Directive also provides for limited recourse to emergency vaccination, in accordance with plans which must be authorised by the European Commission, working through the European Union's Standing Veterinary Committee. Any Commission Decision to permit vaccination would be implemented in the UK by Regulations made under the European Communities Act 1972.

During the early stage of the current outbreak, two Commission Decisions were adopted which permitted vaccination in parts of the UK in limited circumstances. In the event, these were not put into effect. The use of vaccination against foot and mouth disease is under continuous review, in the light of changing circumstances and knowledge about the disease outbreak.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment the Government have made of the incidence of delays in payment of livestock compensation to farmers whose animals have been slaughtered in the foot and mouth crisis; and if she will pay interest from the date of stock loss. [2175]

Mr. Morley: I recognise that there have been delays in payment of compensation to some farmers whose animals have been slaughtered in the foot and mouth outbreak, and that at the peak period of April and May these delays could be extensive. However, delays are reducing and new claims should be paid within three weeks of the receipt of correct documents. Ministers are considering whether the payment of interest on delayed compensation payments would be justified. Standard valuations were introduced on 22 March which could help to reduce the time taken between diagnosis of disease and payment of compensation. However, this facility has only been used by a minority of farmers.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reasons a 24 hour slaughter policy was not in place in the initial confirmed cases of foot and mouth disease. [2186]

Mr. Morley: Veterinary instructions in place before the start of the outbreak required that animals in which disease was confirmed should be slaughtered with all practical speed and that those animals showing clinical signs should be slaughtered immediately on confirmation. The 24-hour policy was introduced as part of an on-going review of the Government's control policies and provided veterinary staff with a more precise target.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what changes were made to the foot and mouth contingency plan as a result of the updating exercises conducted in November and December 2000. [787]

Mr. Morley: The Great Britain contingency plan was reviewed and updated in July 2000. No further updates were carried out in November or December.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farms whose stock was slaughtered out because they were categorised as (i) direct contacts, (ii) contiguous cull, (iii) slaughter on suspicion and (iv) voluntary cull. [788]

Mr. Morley: Our policy, based on legal advice, is to publish on the DEFRA website details of infected premises as this is essential public information in the fight against foot and mouth disease. For reasons of data protection and confidentiality, we are not releasing information on other affected premises, other than to organisations that require it for the purpose of safeguarding public health and for co-ordination of the rural recovery programmes. Data may otherwise be released with the written consent of the individual concerned.

Aggregated statistical information, broken down into the above categories, is available on the website.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on what basis 10 km was decided on as the distance from an infected premises for the ban on animal movement. [4049]

Mr. Morley: EU legislation requires member states to declare an Infected Area at a minimum of a 10 km radius around an Infected Premises (IP), taking account of natural boundaries and any epidemiological factors such as the dispersal of virus by windborne spread. This is based on scientific and veterinary advice and experience in dealing with disease.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what action the Government are taking to lift the blanket closures of footpaths and bridleways imposed by local authorities under the Foot and Mouth Disease Order 1983; and if she will make a statement. [6183]

Alun Michael: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 21 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 166, that she had asked me to look urgently at revoking remaining blanket closures of rights of way imposed by local authorities in England. Letters were sent to local authorities the next day explaining the Government's proposals in more detail and inviting them to make representations if they considered they could justify retaining blanket closures beyond 20 July.

I have now considered carefully the representations received. I have agreed that blanket closures may remain in place for the time being in Cumbria and in parts of Devon, Lancashire, Durham, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. I have also allowed Somerset to retain partial blanket closure until 27 July, and agreed with north Yorkshire their proposals for temporarily retaining closures in parts of the county. In granting these exemptions we have recognised the logistical difficulties which revocation would pose for a few authorities, particularly those hardest hit by foot and mouth disease.

With the exception of the authorities mentioned above, all remaining closures under article 35B will be lifted from midnight on Friday 20 July. At midnight the following Friday, 27 July, any remaining closures under article 35A (which allowed authorities to close individual paths outside Infected Areas without ministerial consent) will be revoked.

These actions will ensure that public rights of way are closed only where this is justified. The Department's guidance and veterinary risk assessment issued on 23 May makes it clear that, except within 3 km Protection Zones around infected premises, paths may safely be re-opened. We expect authorities to continue to re-open paths where this can be done safely, in line with the guidance. We shall review the position no later than early September.

Lifting blanket closures does not mean that all paths will be open. Local authorities retain power to close individual paths, though outside Infected Areas this requires the Department's consent. All such closures must be signed at entrances to the path. Authorities should use their power to close paths selectively, in the areas affected by revocation and elsewhere, only where justified on disease control grounds in line with the Department's guidance. Where paths within Protection Zones are affected by the lifting of a blanket closure, authorities should arrange for their selective re-closure where appropriate.

People using paths should take sensible precautions to reduce even further any risk of spreading the disease. These are set out in the codes for path users accompanying the guidance to local authorities of 23 May. Authorities should publicise these precautions, particularly the need to stay off farmland if people have recently handled farm animals and to avoid going near, touching or feeding livestock.

The Government's decision to open footpaths to walkers is entirely consistent with our strong advice to farmers to observe tight bio-security and reflects very different risks. The risks of footpath users transmitting the disease are tiny, particularly when compared with those posed by farmers and others who handle livestock.

Foot and mouth disease remains a serious problem in a few areas and we continue to do all that is necessary to contain and eradicate it. But in most of England there is no case for wholesale closures. Keeping footpaths closed hurts the rural economy and prevents people enjoying the countryside. We have received strong representations in favour of our approach from those engaged in tourism and other rural businesses—including farmers who have diversified their activities—because of the extent to which their income has been devastated by the consequences of the outbreak. Revoking unnecessary closures now means the vast majority of our countryside will be open for the summer holidays and people will know where they can walk, cycle or ride.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 4 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 189–90W, how many foreign vets, from which countries, have assisted the UK during the foot and mouth epidemic; and how many left the UK before receiving payment. [791]

Mr. Morley *[pursuant to the reply, 4 July 2001, c. 189–90W]:* I am sorry that there was an error in the list of foreign vets and in which country they are from. Spain was included in error on the list of foreign Government vets.

The rest of the answer remains correct.

Foreign veterinary assistance has been provided in two ways. Governments have loaned state veterinarians to the Department. Terms and conditions were agreed with the relevant authorities in each country prior to the vets travelling to GB. Their salaries continue to be paid by the authorities in their own country.

Other foreign vets have also been appointed as Temporary Veterinary Inspectors (TVIs). TVIs are paid a daily rate, which is claimed retrospectively. The necessary details to allow payment of moneys due is requested at the time of appointment. Information concerning the timing of payments to individuals in relation to their date of departure from GB is not recorded.

To date 463 state veterinarians from the following countries have provided assistance during the foot and mouth disease outbreak:

Australia
Bulgaria
Canada
Cuba
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Sweden
Switzerland
USA.

The number of foreign TVI's appointed is currently 375 and they come from one the following countries

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Canada
Czech Republic
Denmark
Egypt
France
Germany
Greece
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Namibia
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Portugal
South Africa
Spain
Sweden
Zimbabwe.

Horticulture

Hugh Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to grant an exemption to horticulturalists from the licensing scheme for trickle irrigation. [4540]

Mr. Morley: We have no plans to exempt horticulturalists from the abstraction licensing system. The draft Water Bill published last November proposed that trickle irrigation be brought into the licensing system. The system will be revised by a Water Bill when parliamentary time permits.

However, it was proposed in the draft Water Bill that the standard threshold above which an abstraction licence is required should be raised to 20 cubic metres per day. The draft Bill also proposed that the Environment Agency should have the power to set different thresholds in specified areas. So horticulturalists will be exempt if they abstract less than the relevant threshold amount in any area.

GMOs

Mr. Breed: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will publish the results of testing of *(a)* seed, *(b)* food and *(c)* feed that the Government and its agencies have carried out to identify the presence of approved or unapproved GMOs in the last 12 months. [3754]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Department will shortly publish a summary of the activities carried out over the last year by our GM inspectorate at the Central Science Laboratory (CSL), which will include information on audits of seed imports that the CSL has undertaken on our behalf. This will be placed on the Department's website http://www.defra.gov.uk/.

The testing of food and feed to ensure compliance with relevant legislation is the responsibility of local authorities. Relevant information reporting the test results is not kept centrally.

Flooding (Robertsbridge)

Mr. Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the impact of the inability of water to escape from the upriver side of the Robertsbridge bypass on the repeated flooding of parts of the village; what account the Environment Agency has taken of evidence from the fire brigade of the differential levels of flooding on either side of the bypass; and if she will take steps to enlarge the culverts under the bypass before the autumn. [3857]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Operational responsibility for flood defence rests with local operating authorities, such as the Environment Agency, and other bodies, such as the Highway's Agency insofar as highways are concerned. I understand that the Environment Agency has undertaken a pre-feasibility study of the flooding problems at Robertsbridge, including hydraulic modelling and investigation of suggestions that the bypass may have an impact. The Environment Agency's current view is that the bypass does not impede floodwaters and that there is no need to enlarge the culverts under the bypass.

Emergency Planning

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of contingency arrangements to deal with future incidents of *(a)* flooding, *(b)* epidemics in farm animals, *(c)* contamination of food for human or animal consumption, *(d)* interruptions of water supplies and *(e)* other emergencies; and if she will place copies of the relevant contingency plans in the Library. [4372]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Department has contingency arrangements for response to emergencies affecting its policy responsibilities. These are subject to annual review and report to Ministers. After an emergency or exercise, a lessons learned review is carried out and revisions implemented to arrangements where required. It has not been the practice to make individual plans public because of the inclusion of personal telephone numbers. However we have an overarching plan which sets out the principal requirements for departmental emergency response plans. This is currently being expanded to incorporate the responsibilities of the new Department and the lessons learned from recent emergencies. Once completed I will place a copy in the Library.

DEFRA no longer has responsibility for incidents concerning the contamination of food for human consumption; this is the remit of the Food Standards Agency.

Rural Recovery Fund (Worcestershire)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will extend the rural recovery fund to Worcestershire. [4135]

Alun Michael: In the second tranche of Business Recovery Fund allocations announced on 7 May an extra £3 million was allocated to Advantage West Midlands, bringing their total allocation to £5.5 million. This has enabled the Agency to help businesses in Worcestershire affected by the foot and mouth restrictions.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by her Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by her Department. [3512]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The full details that my right hon. Friend requests back to 1991 are available only at disproportionate cost. A list of major IT contracts valued at more than £500,000 (cumulatively) let and currently used by the Department is however shown in the table, together with supplementary information.

The Department makes best use of Framework Arrangements/Agreements with service providers and suppliers for the provision of IT goods and services, and has established strategic partnerships with several prime contractors. These ensure best value and cost-effectiveness for the Department.

To ensure probity and value for money, all procurements are also undertaken in compliance with EC public procurement rules, UK Government domestic procurement policy and best practice guidance, Government accounting rules and National Audit requirements.

Contractor	*Description*	*Type of contract*	*Start date*	*Contract term*	*Annual value*
Lason Information Management Ltd.	Data Capture Management Services	Service Provision Agreement	August 2000	8 weeks	696,070
Global Crossing	Wide Area Data Networking Services	Framework	May 2000	3 years	1,800,000
Compuware Ltd.	Uniface Software Licensing and Support	Support Agreement	April 2000	Renewed annually	346,625
International Computers Ltd.	IT Supply, Maintenance and Support Services	Framework	April 1999	3 years, with option to extend to 5 years	18,202,687
Sema Group UK Ltd.	Applications Development Services	Framework	April 1999	3 years, with option to extend to 5 years	15,415.740
Sherwood International Group Ltd.	Applications Development Services	Framework	April 1999	3 years, with option to extend to 5 years	12,030,130
SAS Software Ltd.	SAS Software Licences	Support Agreement	January 1999	Renewed annually	127,499
Vodafone Corporate Limited	Mobile Communication Services	Framework	1998	3 years	458,000
Computer Associates	Network Licences	Support Agreement	March 1998	Renewed annually	176,250
Oracle Corporation UK Ltd.	Consultancy and Education Services	Service Provision Agreement	Mary 1997	Renewed annually	1,500,000
Oracle Corporation UK Ltd.	Gold Software Support Service	Support Agreement	May 1997	Renewed annually	520,391
Fujitsu Siemens Computers Ltd.	Unidata Software Licensing and Support	Support Agreement	February 1997	5 years	480,583
PC World Business Direct	Computer Supplies/Products	Framework	1996	3 years, with the option to extend to 5 years	240,000
Orion Media Marketing Ltd.	Computer Supplies/Products	Framework	1996	3 years, with the option to extend to 5 years	233,000
Abacus Direct Marketing and Computer Services Ltd.	Processor Controlled Keying Services	Service Provision Agreement	July 1996	2 years, with the option to extend to 5 years	111,470
Siemens Communications Ltd.	Telephone Systems and Services	Framework	November 1993	Reviewed 6-monthly	626,506
British Telecommunications Plc. Ltd.	Leased Data Circuits	Framework	May 1990	Ongoing	1,000,000

Correspondence

Sir Brian Mawhinney: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the right hon. Member for North-West Cambridgeshire will receive a reply to his letter of 18 April, forwarded by the Prime Minister, on behalf of his constituent Mrs. White. [3567]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* I replied to the letter from the right hon. Member for North-West Cambridgeshire on 12 July 2001.

Fishing

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the total UK sea bass landings were for *(a)* the commercial fleet and *(b)* other catches in 2000. [4327]

Mr. Morley: Fisheries Departments' statistics record total landings of bass by the UK commercial fleet for 2000 as 407 tonnes. Data on other catches in 2000 drawn from the CEFAS fishermen's voluntary logbook scheme are currently being compiled and will be available at the end of August.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions she has had with fishing industry representatives; and what assessment she has made in respect of stock recovery programmes in waters fished by UK regional vessels. [4360]

Mr. Morley: I met representatives of the fishing industry immediately prior to the Fisheries Council on 18 June which discussed recovery plans. Industry representatives from the UK and other member states have attended a series of consultation meetings with the Commission as the stock recovery plans have been developed. The UK industry in particular has made a key contribution to this work. In view of the advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas, the United Kingdom is fully convinced of the need to develop recovery programmes for North sea cod, west of Scotland cod, and Irish sea cod as well as for northern hake.

Flag of Convenience Vessels

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the anticipated costs are of meeting the claims arising from the ruling over the Factortame case brought by owners of flag of convenience vessels. [4358]

Mr. Morley: Settlement has been reached with all the applicants involved in the Factortame litigation with the exception of two who are appealing against the rejection of their claims by the court. Under the terms of the settlement the total sum of damages paid is £55 million which includes some £26 million interest. The legal costs of the applicants, liability for which was accepted as part of the settlement agreements, are the subject of further legal proceedings and will not be assessed until these are completed. The claims submitted by the applicants totalled some £285 million before interest.

Organic Food

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent estimate she has made of the levels of organic food *(a)* production and *(b)* consumption in Great Britain; what targets she has for expansion of organic production in (i) 2005, (ii) 2010 and (iii) 2015; and if she will make a statement. [3989]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I have made no such estimates. However estimates prepared by the Soil Association (in their Organic Food and Farming Report 2000) indicate that the farm gate value of UK organic produce was around £67 million in 1999–2000 and that the retail value of all organic produce sold in the UK in the same period was just over £605 million.

We very much welcome the expansion of organic farming and we have done much to assist it. In particular, we have made substantial cash injections into the sector in aid for conversion to organic farming for which there is an ongoing commitment under the England Rural Development Programme. We do not favour setting arbitrary targets for the conversion of land to organic farming or for the producing of organic food.

Annual Reports

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will publish the 2000–01 Annual Report and Accounts for the Veterinary Laboratory Agency. [6048]

Margaret Beckett: The 2000–01 Annual Report and Accounts for the Veterinary Laboratory Agency were laid before Parliament today. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will publish the 2000–2001 Annual report and Accounts for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate [6046]

Margaret Beckett: The 2000–01 Annual Report and Accounts for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate were laid before Parliament today. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will publish the 2000–2001 Annual report and Accounts for the Intervention Board Executive Agency. [6047]

Margaret Beckett: The 2000–01 Annual Report and Accounts for the Intervention Board Executive Agency were laid before Parliament today. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will publish the 2000–01 annual report and accounts for the Central Science Laboratory. [6049]

Margaret Beckett: The 2000–01 annual report and accounts for the Central Science Laboratory were laid before Parliament today. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

BSE

James Purnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the findings of the review of the origin of BSE undertaken by Professor Horn will be available. [6045]

Margaret Beckett: Professor Horn has now completed his review and I have today placed a copy of his report in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Teacher Vacancies

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many teacher vacancies there were at *(a)* January 2001 and *(b)* January 2000 in each local education authority; and if she will place these figures in the Library; [4931]

(2) if she will place in the Library the teacher vacancies statistics for January 2001. [5371]

Mr. Timms: The information requested is contained in a table which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills why the number of vacancies for *(a)* mathematics and *(b)* information technology teachers changed between 1997 and 2000. [5370]

Mr. Timms: The additional funding of £350 per pupil in real terms that the Government provided for schools in England between 1997–98 and 2000–01 allowed more teaching posts to be created. Although the total number of teacher vacancies rose by 867 between January 1997 and January 2000, the number of full-time equivalent regular teachers also rose, by almost 5,500. Between January 2000 and January 2001, there was a further increase of over 5,500 in teacher numbers. Data on how many of these additional posts were in mathematics and information technology are not collected centrally.

Since January 2000, new Government funding for teacher training bursaries, Golden Hello incentives and the Graduate Teacher Programme have been introduced to encourage more new teachers into the profession, especially in secondary shortage subjects like mathematics and information technology.

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for what reason teacher vacancies as a percentage of teachers in post changed from 1997 to 2000 *(a)* in the south-east and *(b)* in London. [5376]

Mr. Timms: Between 1997–98 and 2001–01, funding per pupil rose in real terms by £550 in London and the south-east. These extra resources allowed more teaching posts to be funded. The number of teacher vacancies in London and the south-east rose by 480 between January 1997 and January 2000. In the same period, the number of full-time equivalent regular teachers employed in the region rose by 2,168.

Grant-maintained Schools (Surrey)

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what funding per pupil was provided to grant-maintained schools in Surrey in the year immediately prior to the end of grant-maintained status; and what funding per pupil those schools receive in the current financial year [2543]

Mr. Timms: In the financial year 1998–99, grant-maintained (GM) schools in Surrey received recurrent funding from the former Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) amounting on average to £1,810 per pupil in the case of primary schools and £2,410 per pupil in the case of secondary schools. For the financial year 2001–02, the most closely comparable figures currently available in respect of these schools are £2,060 per pupil and £2,660 per pupil respectively. All figures have been calculated to the nearest £10 on the basis of pupil numbers from the Annual Schools Census for January 1998 and January 2001.

The calculations for 1998–99 are based on financial information supplied to the Department by FAS. The figures include annual maintenance grant together with special purpose grants for development, nursery education, premises insurance, primary support and the purchase of books, but not other special purpose grants or capital grants. Most GM schools' annual maintenance grant included an element to compensate the schools for their inability to reclaim VAT: appropriate adjustments have been made to reflect this.

The calculations for 2001–02 are based on information from the budget statement published by the local education authority under section 52 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, supplemented and updated (in the case of specific grants) by information separately provided by the LEA. The figures include the schools' budget shares (including School Standards Grant and transitional funding); Standards Fund resources devolved to the schools (but excluding capital grants, and other grants relating to school security and the National Grid for Learning); and Infant Class Size grants devolved to schools otherwise than through their budget shares.

In 1998–99, under arrangements specific to the GM sector, the GM schools received formula capital allocations from FAS amounting on average to £46 per pupil (primary) and £31 per pupil (secondary). Under the NDS devolved formula capital arrangements which apply to all schools, the Surrey ex-GM schools' allocations for 2001–02 amount on average to £37 per pupil (primary) and £28 per pupil (secondary); all these figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

Blenheim School has been excluded from the calculations because its funding levels are significantly affected by the school's recent establishment. The calculations also exclude Nonsuch High School for Girls, which is situated in Surrey but maintained by the London Borough of Sutton.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on the change in incidence of special needs children with statements between 1997 and 2001 as a proportion of pupils on roll at all schools. [5372]

Mr. Timms: Since 1997 the percentage of children with statements of special educational need has increased from 2.9 per cent. in January 1997 to 3.1 per cent. in January 2001. This continues an increase from earlier years: for example, the proportion of statemented pupils was 2.6 per cent. in 1995. We believe that these increases reflect improved early identification measures, and improved procedures, in particular the introduction of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Needs in 1994.

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on the factors underlying the change in the incidence of special educational needs children without statement from 1997 to 2001 as a proportion of pupils at all schools. [5373]

Mr. Timms: Since 1997 the percentage of children with identified special educational needs without a statement has increased from 15.1 per cent. in January 1997 to 18.8 per cent. in January 2001. We believe that this increase reflects improved early identification measures, and improved procedures, in particular the introduction of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Needs in 1994.

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many appeals were heard by the Special Educational Needs Tribunal; and how many were successful in 1999–2000. [5377]

Mr. Timms: The number of appeals heard by the Special Educational Needs Tribunal in 1999–2000 was 1,196. Of these some 931 were successful, in whole or in part.

Further Education

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on trends in enrolment to further education. [3184]

John Healey *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* The number of students enrolled in FE colleges and on further education provision in other institutions in 1999–2000 was 4,274,000. This compares with a peak of 4,463,000 in 1996–97, when inappropriate franchising arrangements, some of which gave rise to provision of dubious worth, had caused the participation figures to increase sharply and unsustainably. We are committed to increasing real participation in further education and we are providing real terms increases in further education funding to achieve this.

Lecturers

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many further education lecturers have left the profession in each of the last 10 years. [2996]

John Healey *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* Full-time lecturers in the further education (FE) sector in England at March each year who were no longer employed as full-time in the FE sector one year later, in either England or Wales, in the financial years 1989–90 to 1998–99 (the last year for which records are available) are as follows:

Year	*Number of FE leavers*
1998–99	3,955
1997–98	7,115
1996–97	6,808
1995–96	5,953
1994–95	4,943
1993–94	5,243
1992–93[1]	5,081
1991–92[1]	4,525
1990–91[1]	5,088
1989–90[1]	4,810

[1] Excludes sixth-form colleges

[2] Full-time FE lecturers who became part-time FE lecturers are counted as leavers.

Source:
The DfES Database of Teacher Records. The most recent data available are for 31 March 1999.

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what information she has collated regarding vacancy rates in lecturer/senior lecturer grades over the last five years, in each university. [4572]

Margaret Hodge *[answer 18 July 2001]:* The information is not held centrally. Individual universities, as employers, are responsible for monitoring their own vacancies.

Schools (Investment)

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on her plans for public investment in schools. [3355]

Mr. Timms: Our proposals mean that the recurrent funding for schools in England will have risen by £9.5 billion between 1997–98 and 2003–04. On capital funding, in 2000–01 we invested over £2 billion in school buildings. This is three times the £693 million invested in 1996–97. In addition, we are investing £8.5 billion in our school buildings over the Spending Review period. We are determined to continue to improve schools through sustained investment and reform.

Individual Learning Accounts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the number of individual learning accounts *(a)* opened and *(b)* used by (i) gender, (ii) age and (iii) occupation. [4414]

John Healey *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The figures requested for England up to the period 29 June 2001 are set out in the following tables:

By gender	*Accounts open*	*Accounts used*
Female	709,728	310,480
Male	523,528	229,500
Unknown	3,786	2,171
Total	1,237,042	542,151

By age	*Accounts open*	*Accounts used*
19–30	371,594	151,895
31–40	367,395	159,362
41–50	261,886	116,387
51–60	158,532	74,115
60+	77,635	40,392
Total	1,237,042	542,151

By occupation	*Accounts open*	*Accounts used*
Housewife/homemaker	103,241	50,040
Manual/factory worker	67,318	30,112
Manager (own business less than 250 staff)	42,119	18,886
Office/retail worker	220,193	95,050
Senior manager/professional	120,279	49,920
Skilled worker/tradesperson	96,716	42,164

By occupation	Accounts open	Accounts used
Teaching/lecturer	52,330	21,672
Data not supplied	276,772	123,471
Other	258,074	110,836
Total	1,237,042	542,151

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many individual learning accounts have been opened under the national framework since June 2000. [4447]

John Healey *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* There have been 1,237,042 individual learning accounts opened under the national framework in England up to 29 June 2001.

Vandalism (Schools)

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to reduce the amount of vandalism to school premises committed out of school hours. [4451]

Mr. Timms: Schools are often most vulnerable to attack when they are closed, and acts of vandalism can have a seriously demoralising effect on schools, with the costs of removing graffiti or replacing broken windows being a drain on resources.

My Department makes specific funding available to local education authorities, through the Standards Fund, to support school security improvements at maintained schools in their areas. This amounts to £22 million per year. The aim of the grant, which was introduced in 1997–98, is not only to make schools safer environments for staff and pupils, which must be the main priority, but also to help reduce the incidence and associated costs of crime in schools. Local education authorities have reported significant reductions in vandalism where schools have had improvements funded from the grant.

We have also produced guidance on reducing crime in schools, such as the booklet "Improving School Security", and the video "Can You See What They See?" A school security website has been established.

PFI/PPP

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* PFI and *(b)* PPP contracts have been agreed by her Department in the last five years; how many have been satisfactorily completed; and in how many has compensation been (i) paid and (ii) claimed for performance failure. [4603]

Mr. Timms: In the last five years, a total of 56 schools PFI projects have been approved by this Department. Of these, 31 have so far signed contracts. The remaining 25 projects are working towards contract signature following approval by DfES and the Treasury chaired Project Review Group.

In addition, 12 PPP projects, which were developed with support from New Deal for Schools funding, have reached contract signature.

Local authorities are generally responsible for monitoring the performance of schools PFI and PPP contracts.

Education (Bedfordshire)

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment has been made of the requirement for new *(a)* lower, *(b)* middle and *(c)* upper schools in the South-West Bedfordshire constituency to take account of anticipated house building in the area until 2011. [4717]

Mr. Timms: The Government believe that decisions concerning the organisation and supply of school places are best taken locally—by the main partners in the provision of education who have knowledge of local needs. It is the responsibility of local education authorities (LEAs) to ensure that there are sufficient school places within their area.

Should a district council propose new housing developments we would expect the LEA's School Organisation Plan (SOP) to reflect any projected increases in the pupil population. All LEAs are required to produce a SOP, which sets out how they propose to deal with deficits and surpluses of school provision over a rolling 5-year period. The SOP sets the context for proposals to change school organisation in the area, and may include proposals to establish new schools or enlarge existing ones.

If, as a result of housing developments, the LEA identifies a need for additional school places, we would consider any future capital bids from Bedfordshire that meet the published criteria for support.

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children in South-West Bedfordshire have school meals provided by the local authority. [4718]

Mr. Timms: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Number and percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, January 2000

	Number of pupils	Percentage of pupils
South-West Bedfordshire Parliamentary Constituency		
Maintained nursery and primary schools	813	11.4
Maintained secondary schools	855	9.1
England		
Maintained nursery and primary schools	821,521	18.3
Maintained secondary schools	523,630	16.5

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the class sizes for *(a)* lower, *(b)* middle and *(c)* upper schools were in Bedfordshire on 1 May; and what they are projected to be on 1 May 2002. [4720]

Mr. Timms: The available information is shown in the following table.

Average class sizes in Bedfordshire LEA, January 2001[1]

Schools	*Average class size*
Middle deemed Secondary schools	26.2
Comprehensive Upper schools	19.4

[1] Provisional

Plain English

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to ensure that all documents that school governing bodies are required to consider are written in plain English. [4774]

Mr. Timms: All documents sent to governing bodies by the DfES, and the former DfEE, either bear the 'Crystal Mark' awarded by the Plain English Commission, or are produced to communication standards based on plain English principles. The Department has no direct control over the many communications for school governors prepared by local education authorities but has urged them to adopt the same principles and to keep such communications to a minimum.

GCSEs

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of 16-year-olds had at least one GCSE at grade A*-G in 2000. [4800]

Mr. Timms: The proportion of 16-year-olds that achieved at least one GCSE at grade A*-G in England in 2000 was 94.4 per cent.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of young people left local authority care with one or more GCSE at grade A* to G for the year for which she has the most recent data. [5239]

Jacqui Smith: I have been asked to reply.

The most recent data were published by the Department of Health on 26 October 2000. These show that 29 per cent. of young people leaving local authority care at age 16 or more during year ending 31 March 2000 achieved at least one GCSE at grade A* to G.

School Absences

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of school half days were missed in the year 2000 through unauthorised absence. [4807]

Mr. Timms: 0.7 per cent. of half days were missed in English schools in 1999–2000 as a result of unauthorised absence. Pupil absence data for England are collected by school year, and are published during the following autumn term by DfES in the National Pupil Absence Tables and in School Performance Tables. Figures for the school year 2000–01 are therefore not available yet.

Teachers' Code of Conduct

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will take into account the concerns of teachers about the proposed clause 5 of the professional code of conduct of teachers, drafted by the General Teaching Council, on the grounds of religious conscience. [4920]

Mr. Timms: The professional code of practice is a matter for the General Teaching Council (GTC). Paragraph 5 relates to the way teachers support children in their care, by providing an environment of tolerance and respect that allows all children to flourish irrespective of their home circumstances. Children come from diverse backgrounds and it is important that teachers protect them from antisocial behaviour such as name calling or bullying. The GTC has published its current draft widely, sending it to all registered teachers and their responses, including those relating to paragraph 5, will be considered by the GTC's Council in due course.

School Exclusion

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what guidance has been issued on the circumstances in which it is appropriate for a local education authority exclusion officer to overrule a school over a decision to exclude. [4930]

Mr. Timms: A local education exclusion officer has no powers to overrule an exclusion, whatever the circumstances. The officer's role is to give advice on the appropriateness of the exclusion. The LEA can make a statement to the school's Discipline Committee considering whether or not to uphold an exclusion, for example about how other schools in the authority have responded to similar incidents.

Nursery Places

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what her timetable is for extending free nursery places to all three-year-olds in *(a)* Staffordshire and *(b)* England. [4983]

Mr. Timms: Our commitment is to provide every three-year-old, whose parents want one, with a free nursery education place by September 2004. In March 2001, around 55 per cent. of three-year-olds in England had access to a free part-time nursery education place. We are currently on target to provide 66 per cent. of all three-year-olds with a free place by March 2002.

Staffordshire local education authority estimates that around 35 per cent. of three-year-olds have access to a free nursery education place in their area. The access to free nursery education is influenced by the level of provision that the local authority makes available in its own area, as well as the places funded directly by Government. The allocation made by Government, through the Nursery Education Grant, is made on the basis of social disadvantage.

Childcare (Warrington, North)

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many day care places in nurseries have been created in Warrington, North since 1997. [4992]

Mr. Timms: Early Years Development and Child Care Partnerships have only provided details of the new child care places that have opened by constituency since April 1999. Between April 1999 and March 2001 Warrington Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership has reported the creation of 188 daycare places' in the constituency of Warrington, North.

' This figure includes daycare places created in day nurseries, pre-schools and playgroups. It is not possible to break down the figures to show those in nurseries only.

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many out-of-school hours childcare places have been created in Warrington, North since 1997; and how many of those places are in wards which are among the most deprived 20 per cent. of wards in England as measured by the Official Index of Deprivation. [4993]

Mr. Timms: Early Years Development and Child Care Partnerships have provided details only of the new child care places that have opened by constituency since April 1999. Between April 1999 and March 2001 Warrington Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership has reported the creation of 337 new out of school hours places' in Warrington, North.

Data on child care places are grouped at local education authority and constituency level. We are not able to break the data down to ward level.

' Data includes places created in out of school clubs and holiday schemes.

School Transport

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what discussions she has had with religious organisations about the implications for church schools of new funding arrangements for school transport of pupils over the age of 16 years. [4996]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: There have been no changes to the national funding arrangements for post-16 transport. My officials have not, therefore, had discussions with religious organisations. I understand that Northumberland LEA is considering changes to the support that it provides for transport locally and is consulting on these changes. It is for each LEA to determine the level of support that it makes in relation to local needs, and to have regard to parents' religious preferences.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what guidance she has issued to education authorities and to learning and skills councils on future funding arrangements for transport to school for pupils aged over 16 years; how many education authorities propose to discontinue free transport on post-16 pupils; and if she will make a statement. [4997]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: There have been no changes to the national funding arrangements for post-16 transport and no guidance has been issued. We do not have figures on the numbers of LEAs who propose to discontinue the provision of free transport for post-16 pupils. We are awaiting the outcome of a study into post-16 transport arrangements in September 2001 and will consider any recommendations and issue our response thereafter.

Early Years Provision

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what requirements she has placed on *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* pre-school settings for the preparation of and application for kitemark schemes. [5084]

Mr. Timms: A range of quality assurance mechanisms is being used successfully by local authorities to raise standards. These include: Investors in People, Charter Mark and the Excellence Model. Some local authorities have also developed their own models. The revised LEA Code of Practice, which came into effect in February 2001, contains a non-statutory Annexe setting out the standards that local authorities should adhere to in their communications with schools.

In March, Government announced "Investors in Children" a national quality-rating scheme for child care and early years education, as proposed in the Green Paper "Schools Building on Success". Early Years Development and Child Care Partnerships are working to meet a new national target to ensure that at least 40 per cent. of early years and child care providers have been accredited by a quality assurance scheme by 2004.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will publish, for each local education authority, in respect of *(a)* three year olds and *(b)* four year olds (i) the number resident in each local education authority, (ii) the number for whom places are available in pre-school settings, (iii) the number for whom places are available in schools, (iv) the number of places for which Government funding is provided, (v) category (iv) as a percentage of (i), (vi) category (iv) as a percentage of (ii) and (iii) and (vii) the number of residents whom the local EYCDP identifies as in need of provision. [5085]

Mr. Timms: The information requested can be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Bullying

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the criteria for the inclusion of organisations in her Department's anti-bullying website, "Don't Suffer in Silence". [5122]

Mr. Timms: In installing links from our website to other websites of interest to bullied pupils we have considered the usefulness of the other sites to users, whether there is any controversial or inappropriate material, and whether the sites appear to support our policy on bullying.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when her officials plan to meet representatives of the charity Bullying Online. [5123]

Mr. Timms: My officials are ready to meet the representatives of Bullying Online at any time. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State made this clear in a letter to the Director of the charity on 5 July.

Trainee Teachers (Tests)

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, pursuant to her answer of 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 403W, how many students who obtained QTS status last summer have *(a)* failed the skills tests in numeracy and literacy and *(b)* applied for an extension in order to retake the tests that they have failed. [5357]

Mr. Timms: 231 of last year's newly qualified teachers have failed so far to pass the computerised numeracy skills test. They are not required to take the literacy test. We do not yet know how many have applied for an extension to their induction period to retake the test.

Chief Inspector of Schools

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what arrangements are being made to recruit the next HM Chief Inspector of Schools in England. [5610]

Estelle Morris: I am grateful to Mike Tomlinson for agreeing to extend his one-year appointment as HM Chief Inspector for five months. This extension, until 30 April 2002, was confirmed yesterday by Order in Council. Recruitment for the post will be run in accordance with the guidelines of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments following advertisement in the national press in September.

SCOTLAND

Foot and Mouth

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will publish the protocols and guidance notes for the disinfection of milking parlours in Scotland following foot and mouth disease. [2767]

Mrs. Liddell: Detailed guidance is currently being drafted by DEFRA in respect of cleansing and the disinfection of milking parlours. It will be distributed widely among interested parties and a copy will be placed in the Libraries of the House. Information is available on the DEFRA and Scottish Executive websites in respect of disinfectants and their use generally in cleaning farms following an outbreak of FMD.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when she last travelled on the London Underground in the course of her official duties. [3685]

Mrs. Liddell: I use the most efficient and cost-effective mode of transport and travel on the underground as and when appropriate.

Motoring Fines

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much the Treasury received from motoring fines in Scotland in each of the last five years. [3883]

Mrs. Liddell *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Scottish Homes

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much public funding Scottish Homes has received each year since 1989. [4033]

Mr. Foulkes: The table sets out the grant-in-aid allocations made to Scottish Homes each year between 1989 and 1999. On 1 July 1999 this became a devolved matter for the Scottish Parliament.

£ million

Financial year	*Public funding*
1989–90	229.146
1990–91	266.445
1991–92	450.746
1992–93	566.897
1993–94	320.212
1994–95	324.742
1995–96	294.921
1996–97	281.190
1997–98	314.986
1998–99	340.591

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many performance audits Scottish Homes has conducted each year since 1989. [4035]

Mr. Foulkes: The table shows how many performance audit inspections Scottish Homes conducted each year between 1989 and 1999. Figures from 1989 to 1993 are based on estimates only. On 1 July 1999 this became a devolved matter for the Scottish Parliament.

Year	*Number of performance audits conducted*
1989–90	'45
1990–91	'45
1991–92	'45
1992–93	'45
1993–94	53
1994–95	46
1995–96	67
1996–97	82
1997–98	101
1998–99	90

' Estimates

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many statutory inquiries Scottish Homes has conducted each year since 1989. [4034]

Mr. Foulkes: The table sets out the number of statutory inquiries Scottish Homes instructed each year between 1989 and 1999. On 1 July 1999, this became a devolved matter for the Scottish Parliament.

Year	*Inquiries*
1989–90	1
1990–91	0
1991–92	1
1992–93	2
1993–94	1
1994–95	0
1995–96	0
1996–97	0
1997–98	2
1998–99	0

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4899]

Mrs. Liddell: A Minister will be on duty throughout the summer break, in line with the requirements of the current Ministerial Code.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Bereavement Payment

Ms Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if entitlement to bereavement payment in relation to persons abroad remains the same as that for widow's payment. [6037]

Malcolm Wicks: Yes. We shall shortly lay regulations (The Welfare Reform and Pensions (Persons Abroad: Benefits for Widows and Widowers) (Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2001) amending the 1975 Persons Abroad regulations that restore the long established arrangements in the Widows Benefit scheme. These changes come into effect from 20 August 2001. Until then the few cases arising where the current Bereavement Benefit rules are not as we intended them to be from the outset in April this year will be dealt with in line with our original intention and the expenditure will be met by an extra-statutory arrangement.

Annual Reports

Paul Goggins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when the Employment Service annual report and accounts for 2000–01 will be laid before Parliament. [6038]

Mr. Darling: I have today laid before the House the Employment Service's annual report and accounts for 2000–2001 which gives full details of the Agency's performance and expenditure for that year.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he will publish the 2000–01 annual report and accounts for each of his agencies. [6039]

Mr. Darling: The 2000–2001 annual reports and accounts for the Benefits Agency (HC153), Child Support Agency (HC87), The Appeals Service (HC156) and War Pensions Agency (HC57) have been laid before Parliament today.

Social Security Fraud Act

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he will publish for public consultation the draft Code of Practice governing the information gathering powers in the Social Security Fraud Act 2001. [6040]

Malcolm Wicks: The Social Security Fraud Act contains new powers for the Department and local authorities to obtain information from the private sector and some public sector organisations, to combat benefit fraud.

The Act makes provision for a statutory Code of Practice to govern the use of these powers. A draft Code was made available in the last Parliament and we now propose to conduct a formal public consultation exercise.

Copies of the Code will be sent to a wide range of interested parties, and it will be placed on the Department's website. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, and are available from the Vote Office. Respondents will have three months to respond.

Occupational Pensions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans there are to ensure that occupational pension schemes have independent chairmen. [4620]

Mr. McCartney: The Government are currently working on changes to the Pensions Act 1995 that will ensure that more members will have the opportunity to become trustees of their occupational pension scheme. We expect to introduce regulations during this parliamentary Session.

We have no plans to require the trustee boards of occupational pension schemes to have independent chairmen.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans there are to ensure that members of an occupational pension fund benefit from it in proportion to their contributions. [4621]

Mr. McCartney: The factors determining the benefits received by a member of an occupational pension fund differ depending on the type of scheme and the particular scheme rules.

The Trustees of an occupational pension scheme must use the scheme's assets to provide benefits for members in accordance with the scheme rules.

Non-state Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much was contributed to non-state pensions in *(a)* 1999 and *(b)* 2000 adjusted in each case to 1997 price terms. [5222]

Mr. McCartney: The information requested is in the table.

The amount contributed to non-state pensions in each of the following years

Year	*£ billion*
1999	65
2000	69

Notes:

1. Figures are in 1997 prices, rounded to the nearest billion
2. Figures represent the contributions of employers and employees to self-administered pension funds and the pensions business of insurance companies

Source:

MQ5 publication from the Office for National Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of working age *(a)* men and *(b)* women were contributing to a non-state pension in (i) 1999–2000 and (ii) 2000–01. [5224]

Mr. McCartney: The information is not available in the format requested. Such information as is available is in the table.

These figures are not directly comparable with the figures for preceding years due to a change in methodology of the Family Resources Survey.

Proportion of working age people contributing to a non-state pension in 1999–2000

	Percentage
Male	63
Female	54
All	59

Notes:
1. Non-state pension refers to either an occupational or personal pension
2. Working age refers to all those aged between 20 and the state retirement age who are in work
3. The information is not available for the years 2000–01
Source:
The Family Resources Survey

English House Condition Survey

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of people aged 60 years or over live in a home that falls below the standard of decency set out in the English House Condition Survey. [5216]

Malcolm Wicks: The latest information can be found in "Opportunity for All, One Year on: making a difference" (Cm 4865). Copies of this report have been placed in the Library.

Household Incomes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what percentage of children have lived in households with incomes *(a)* below 60 per cent. and *(b)* below 70 per cent. of median household incomes, before housing costs, in at least three out of the last four years; [4803]

(2) what percentage of children were living in households with income below *(a)* 40 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, *(b)* 40 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(c)* 50 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, *(d)* 50 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(e)* 60 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, *(f)* 60 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(g)* 50 per cent. of the median before housing costs, *(h)* 50 per cent. of the median after housing costs, *(i)* 60 per cent. of the median before housing costs, *(j)* 60 per cent. of the median after housing costs, *(k)* 70 per cent. of the median before housing costs and *(l)* 70 per cent. of the median after housing costs, with the mean and median incomes fixed at 1996–97 levels in real terms; [4805]

(3) what percentage of pensioners in 1999–2000 were living in households with incomes below *(a)* 40 per cent. of mean household income before, *(b)* 50 per cent. of mean household income before, *(c)* 60 per cent. of mean household income before, *(d)* 40 per cent. of mean household income after, *(e)* 50 per cent. of mean household income after, *(f)* 60 per cent. of mean household income after, *(g)* 50 per cent. of median household income before, *(h)* 60 per cent. of median household income before, *(i)* 70 per cent. of median household income before, *(j)* 50 per cent. of median household income after, *(k)* 60 per cent. of median household income after and *(l)* 70 per cent. of median household income after housing costs; [5219]

(4) what percentage of pensioners have had incomes *(a)* below 60 per cent. and *(b)* below 70 per cent. of median household incomes, in at least three out of the last four years; [5221]

(5) what percentage of working age adults lived in households with incomes *(a)* below 60 per cent. and *(b)* below 70 per cent. of the median household income in at least three out of the last four years; [5227]

(6) what percentage of pensioners in 1999–2000 were living in households with incomes below *(a)* 40 per cent. of mean household income before housing costs, (ii) 50 per cent. of mean household income before housing costs, (iii) 60 per cent. of mean household income before housing costs, (iv) 40 per cent. of mean household income after housing costs, (v) 50 per cent. of mean household income after housing costs, (vi) 60 per cent. of mean household income after housing costs, (vii) 50 per cent. of median household income before housing costs, (viii) 60 per cent. of median household income before housing costs, (ix) 70 per cent. of median household income before housing costs, (x) 50 per cent. of median household income after housing costs, (xi) 60 per cent. of median household income after housing costs and (xii) 70 per cent. of median household income after housing costs in each case taking mean and median household income to be 1996–97 values held constant in real terms; [5229]

(7) what percentage of working age adults lived in households with an income below 40 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, (b) 50 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, *(c)* 60 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, *(d)* 40 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(e)* 50 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(f)* 60 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(g)* 50 per cent, of the median before housing costs, *(h)* 60 per cent. of the median before housing costs, *(i)* 70 per cent. of the median before housing costs, *(j)* 50 per cent. of the median after housing costs, *(k)* 60 per cent. of the median after housing costs and *(l)* 70 per cent. of the median after housing costs in each case using 1996–97 mean and median income held constant in real terms in 1999–2000; [5230]

(8) what percentage of working age adults lived in households with an income below *(a)* 40 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, *(b)* 50 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, *(c)* 60 per cent. of the mean before housing costs, *(d)* 40 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(e)* 50 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(f)* 60 per cent. of the mean after housing costs, *(g)* 50 per cent. of the median before housing costs, *(h)* 60 per cent. of the median before housing costs, *(i)* 70 per cent. of the median before housing costs, *(j)* 50 per cent. of the median after housing costs, *(k)* 60 per cent. of the median after housing costs and *(l)* 70 per cent. of the median after housing costs in 1999–2000. [5231]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is contained in the Households Below Average Income 1994–95 to 1999–2000 report. Pages 59, 75 and 88 show the specific results for children, working age adults and pensioners respectively. Copies of the publication have been placed in the Library.

Disability and Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what work *(a)* is being and *(b)* has been carried out by his Department to develop a method of

collecting information on (i) the number of people claiming incapacity benefit who are re-tested and (ii) the frequency with which they are re-tested; [5211]

(2) which disability organisations have been consulted by his Department about the development of a method to collect information on *(a)* the number of people claiming incapacity benefit who are re-tested and *(b)* the frequency with which they are re-tested. [5212]

Malcolm Wicks: We already monitor the number of re-tests carried out and are always looking at ways to improve this information.

As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 567, we will discuss with groups representing disabled people the precise administrative arrangements that will underpin the proposed changes to Incapacity Benefit.

Mr. Tony Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people on Incapacity Benefit have not been subject to a medical to assess capacity for work for *(a)* 10, *(b)* 15 and *(c)* 20 years; and what proportion this represents of total numbers of Incapacity Benefit recipients. [3465]

Malcolm Wicks: The majority of Incapacity Benefit recipients will have undergone a Personal Capability Assessment (known as the All Work Test before April 2000) to assess their capacity for work, which may have involved a medical examination. While data are kept on the number of medical examinations conducted, information is not available in the format requested.

The proposed changes to Incapacity Benefit will shift the emphasis from disability to ability. People will be provided with help and guidance to move from benefit to work where they are able and wish to do so.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of people awarded short-term Incapacity Benefit have subsequently been awarded the long-term rate for an indefinite period in each of the last three years. [3224]

Malcolm Wicks: The available information is in the table.

Percentage of people awarded Incapacity Benefit at the short-term rate who subsequently became entitled to benefit at the long-term rate

Year	
1 April 1996 to 31 March 1997	49
1 April 1997 to 31 March 1998	48
1 April 1998 to 31 March 1999	48

Notes:
1. Figures are based on a 1 per cent. sample of claims to benefit.
2. Entitlement to Incapacity Benefit was subject to the All Work Test during the period covered by this table (this was replaced by the Personal Capability Assessment from April 2000) unless the person was an exempt category. Long-term rate Incapacity Benefit is payable after 52 weeks of incapacity.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in receipt of *(a)* Incapacity Benefit, *(b)* Disability Living Allowance and *(c)* Severe Disability Allowance have had their benefit (i) cut and (ii) removed altogether following a Benefits Agency medical assessment in each of the last three years. [4346]

Malcolm Wicks: The available information is in the table.

There is no provision within the Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance schemes to award benefit at a reduced rate following a medical examination.

Number of cases where entitlement to Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) ceased following a personal capability assessment[1]

	Thousand
1 March 1999 to 29 February 2000	
IB	127.6
SDA	0.9
1 March 2000 to 28 February 2001	
IB	96.9
SDA	0.7

[1] All work test prior to April 2000

Notes:
1. National Insurance credits only cases are included in these figures
2. Data are not available for 1998–99
3. Analogous data are not available for Disability Living Allowance

Source:
5 per cent. sample (excluding a small number of clerically held cases)

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate, for each local authority, the total amount saved in benefit expenditure in the most recent year for which figures are available arising from anti-fraud initiatives; what this figure was as a percentage of the total expenditure on social security benefits administered by each local authority; and what his aggregate estimate is for Great Britain. [4062]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* We aim to ensure that all our anti-fraud initiatives are effective in combating fraud and error. It is not possible to quantify the precise savings arising from our anti-fraud initiatives. We can measure the amount of savings from fraud that we have discovered and estimate how much is saved by our preventive initiatives.

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many staff have been employed at the Benefits Fraud Investigations Services, on average, in each year since 1997; and how many positions are vacant. [2259]

Malcolm Wicks: We set out our strategy for tackling fraud and error in the paper—"A New Contract for Welfare: Safeguarding Social Security" (CM 4276)—published on 23 March 1999. The overall aim of the strategy is to have a benefit system which is secure from first claim to final payment. The implementation of this strategy means that an anti-fraud focus is integral to the work of the Department, not just those staff involved in detecting fraud that has already occurred.

The number of staff employed in BFIS since 1997 is shown in the table.

Average number of BFIS staff employed in each year

	Number
1996–97	5,000
1997–98	5,184
1998–99	5,183
1999–2000	4,968
2000–01	4,914

There were 313 vacant posts in BFIS at 9 July 2001. We are in competition with a number of agencies locally for staff with the right skills, however, the number of vacancies is expected to reduce over the next quarter due to promotion and recruitment exercises currently being undertaken.

Benefits Agency Medical Services

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the three Benefits Agency Medical Services contracts awarded to SEMA with particular reference to their impact on *(a)* management and investment in BAMS, *(b)* the delivery of service improvements to customers including speedier appointments and reduced waiting times, *(c)* the maintenance and improvement of quality of service and *(d)* the value for money offered to the taxpayer. [4404]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* All contracts awarded by the Department give due regard to value for money and quality of service. They are kept under continuous review to ensure that throughout the lifetime of the contract targets are met. The contracts awarded to SchlumbergerSema include targets on the length of the time taken to clear cases and reduce waiting times.

Winter Fuel Payment

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people received the year 2000 winter fuel payment; and what the total cost was. [4528]

Mr. McCartney: Over 11 million winter fuel payments were made last winter, 2000–01, at a cost of £1.7 billion.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when the age limit on women in receipt of retirement state pension and able to claim invalid care allowance was reduced to 60 years; for what reasons this change was made; and if he will make a statement. [4112]

Mr. McCartney: From the introduction of Invalid Care Allowance in 1976 until 1994 the age limit for claiming the benefit was "pensionable age", which was 65 for men and 60 for women. On 28 October 1994 the maximum age at which Invalid Care Allowance could be claimed was changed from "pensionable age" to "age 65" in order to provide equality of treatment for both men and women. A woman can, therefore, claim Invalid Care Allowance between the ages of 60 and 65 while receiving State Retirement Pension.

Retirement Pension and Invalid Care Allowance are both intended to help maintain income to avoid duplicate provision; however, the payment of the pension may extinguish or reduce the payment of the Invalid Care Allowance. On 3 October 2000 we announced that carers aged 65 and over would also be allowed to claim Invalid Care Allowance and this will be introduced as soon as possible.

Old Age Pension

Mr. Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many women received their first old age pension payment on the date of their 60th birthday in 2000; [3535]

(2) how many men received their first old age pension on the date of their 65th birthday in 2000. [3536]

Mr. McCartney: The information is not available in the format requested.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Ian Stillman

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the imprisonment of Ian Stillman; and if he will make a statement. [4101]

Mr. Bradshaw: As of 17 July the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had received 185 letters from Members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents. We have also received correspondence from the Stillman family, members of the public, non-governmental organisations, Church groups and others.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to secure the release of Ian Stillman; and if he will make a statement. [4100]

Mr. Bradshaw: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised the concerns about Mr. Stillman's welfare at a meeting on 26 June with the Indian High Commissioners and Prime Minister Vajpayee's Principal Secretary. The Indian High Commissioner asked for a written note highlighting our concerns and the Foreign Secretary duly wrote to the High Commissioner on 28 June.

We will continue to speak to the Indian authorities to ensure that his appeal is heard swiftly.

'Your Britain, Your Europe'

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent by his Department on producing documents in the 'Your Britain, Your Europe . . .', series. [4375]

Peter Hain: Ten different FCO leaflets published between November 1999 and June 2001 carry the 'Your Britain, Your Europe' logo: 'Your Britain, Your Europe' (17,000 copies); IGC: Reform for Enlargement (5,000 copies); 'The Future of Europe' (10,000 copies; 'Want to know more about Europe' (11,000 copies); 'What has the EU ever done for us' (8,000 copies); 'Regional Factsheets' (2,200 copies); 'The EU: What's in it for you?' (25,000 copies); 'The Treaty of Nice' (16,200 copies); 'The Stockholm European Council' (3,000 copies); 'The EU: International Crime and Courts' (5,000 copies). The total cost of these was £24,940.51. In addition, five quarterly newsletters were produced with a distribution of 10,000 copies each at a total cost of £18,568.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of the documents in the 'Your Britain, Your Europe . . .', series has been checked for compliance with COI rules on public information. [4376]

Peter Hain: The FCO is committed by its Public Service Agreement to promote a better understanding of Britain's EU membership. The guidelines on Government information work are laid down by the Cabinet Office and are available at: http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/central/1999/workgis/annex_a.htm. The FCO seeks to ensure that all its publications are fully consistent with these guidelines.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the Rural Development Plan referred to in his Department's document, 'Your Britain, Your Europe, Your Wales' is funded by the EU. [4323]

Peter Hain: Since devolution, issues concerning the Rural Development Plan in Wales are now the responsibility of the National Assembly for Wales. They provided the information referred to in the 'Your Britain, Your Europe, Your Wales' document.

EU-Israel Customs Co-operation Committee

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what items will be placed on the agenda of the EU-Israel Customs Co-operation Committee for 23 July. [3171]

Peter Hain: The EU/Israel Customs Co-operation Committee on 23–24 July will discuss a number of items of interest to the two parties. This discussion will include: questions relating to origin (including the implementation of Protocol 4 of the EU/Israel Association Agreement), extension and continuation of the EU/Israel customs dialogue, and mutual assistance between administrative authorities in customs matters.

Private Military Companies

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidance issued to British embassies requiring them to report contact with companies which may be judged to fall within the sector of mercenaries and private military companies; and on what date this guidance was issued. [3398]

Peter Hain: Interim guidance to British embassies requiring them to report contacts with companies that may be judged to fall into the private military or security sector was issued in July 1998. This guidance was revised in April 1999. Disclosure of the report could harm the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of this Department.

US Export Administration Act

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with the United States Administration in relation to the US Export Administration Act since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [3707]

Mr. MacShane: Since we came to office, there has been no contact between the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the United States Administration in relation to the US Export Administration Act.

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact of the US Export Administration Act in relation to the operation of UK law. [4277]

Mr. MacShane: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has made no assessment of the impact of the US Export Administration Act in relation to the operation of UK law.

Treaty of Rome

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a consolidated version of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the treaty of Nice. [4258]

Peter Hain *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Inter-Governmental Conference did not prepare a consolidated version of the treaty of Rome, and therefore it was not included in the Command Paper (Cm 5090) publishing the treaty of Nice. But we expect the Office for Official Publications of the European Union to publish a version of the consolidated treaties in due course. We will place this in the Libraries of both Houses as soon as it becomes available.

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by his Department or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date, the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3498]

Mr. MacShane *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The information is in the table.

Contract	*Original estimated cost (£ million)*	*Original estimated completion date*	*Actual cost (£ million)*	*Actual Completion*	*Remarks*
FTN Foreign Office Telecommunications Network	165	May 2010	—	—	PFI contract
Firecrest (external supply)	45	June 2001	—	—	Call-off framework agreement contract. Further one year extension just signed
Prism (procurement phase)	2.2	October 2001	—	—	Planning and procurement costs
Passports	1.2	May 2001	1.2	May 2001	Capital purchases
Dynamics	0.8	October 1999	0.8	August 2000	—
Consular Database	1.0	June 2006	—	—	—
Internet	6.4	July 2002	—	—	—
Fortress	1.6	March 1999	1.6	October 1999	—
FMAS Support	[1]1.3	—	—	—	Software support plus
Microsoft Enterprise Licences	5.6	March 2001	5.6	March 2001	—
NAI Licences	2.0	End 2001	—	—	—
Pay	1.4	March 2002	—	—	—
Aramis	[1]0.27	End 2003	—	—	Annual costs predicted to fall as equipment is withdrawn
Minerva	[1]0.2	March 2007	—	—	10 year PFI contract

[1] Per annum

It would require disproportionate expense to provide details of contracts preceding the last three years.

The information about suppliers cannot be supplied as it may be commercially confidential or have been supplied in confidence. There was insufficient time to seek the consent of the suppliers to its disclosure.

Conference against Racism

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who will represent the Government at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban. [5077]

Peter Hain: A final decision on UK representation at the World Conference Against Racism has not yet been taken.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Mr. Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy will be available. [5981]

Peter Hain: The foundation has continued its crucial work in building democracy overseas, through a variety of targeted programmes ranging from the fostering of good governance to the promotion of civil society. The demands have been great, and the foundation has had some notable successes. The highlight was their work in Serbia where, through a wide-ranging programme of work, they helped the Serbian people assert their democratic rights. Work elsewhere in the Balkans, Africa and central and eastern Europe has also continued to bear fruit. In 2000–01 the foundation received a grant-in-aid of £4,155,000 from the FCO. Copies of the annual report have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Hong Kong

Liz Blackman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will publish the next report to Parliament on Hong Kong and the Sino-British Joint Declaration. [5982]

Mr. MacShane: The ninth report in this series covering the period January to June 2001 was published today and copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House. A copy of the report is also available on the Foreign and

Commonwealth Office website (www.fco.gov.uk). The report includes a foreword by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. I commend the report to the House.

Yugoslavia

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made to EU sanctions in relation to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. [5983]

Peter Hain: In its conclusions of 22 January 2001, the EU General Affairs Council welcomed the free and fair conditions in which the legislative elections in Serbia in December 2000 had been held. Their outcome confirmed the determination of the people of Serbia to continue the consolidation of democracy in their country. It was decided that restrictive measures should therefore be confined to the former President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Slobodan Milosevic, his family, and persons indicated by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

On 26 February 2001, the list of those affected by the EU visa ban was amended from 600 to 13 to fall in line with this decision. On 19 June 2001, the EC adopted Council Regulation (EC) 1205/2001 reducing the number of persons subject to Council Regulation (EC) No. 2488/2000, maintaining a freeze of funds in relation to Mr. Milosevic and those persons associated with him, to the same list of persons.

UK implementing legislation will be amended to take account of EC Regulation 1205/2001.

Annual Reports

Mr. Hendrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report on Strategic Export Controls will be published. [5984]

Mr. Bradshaw: The 2000 annual report on Strategic Export Controls will be published at 10 am on 20 July. The report marks a further step forward in this Government's commitment to transparent and responsible controls on British strategic exports. It includes more detail on export licensing decisions and policy than in previous years, including data on surplus small arms destroyed by the Government and the number of small arms covered by standard individual export licences agreed in 2000. It will be available on the FCO website and through the Stationery Office.

Diplomatic Immunity (Offences)

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many serious offences were allegedly committed in 2000 by persons entitled to immunity by virtue of their employment by a diplomatic mission or an international organisation, and by their dependants. [5985]

Mr. MacShane: From a community of over 19,500 persons entitled to immunity, 17 serious offences, allegedly committed by such persons, were drawn to the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2000. "Serious offences" are defined in accordance with the 1985 White Paper on Diplomatic Immunities and Privilege—ie as offences that would, in certain circumstances, carry a penalty of 12 months' or more imprisonment.

China

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of China regarding the treatment of Falun Gong members and their families. [4858]

Mr. MacShane: We raise our concerns about the harsh treatment and detention of Falun Gong adherents with the Chinese authorities at every appropriate opportunity including the twice-yearly UK and EU human rights dialogues. We did so most recently during talks in July in Beijing between senior officials on human rights issues.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to review the policy of critical engagement with the Chinese Government. [4857]

Mr. MacShane: The Government's strategy of encouraging and supporting China's closer integration in the international system was endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Committee in its report of November 2000 (HC 574-I). We believe that the most effective way for helping to bring about long-term and positive change in China is through engagement. At the same time, we criticise China where necessary, including over its human rights record.

UN Register of Conventional Arms

Mr. Simon Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom submitted its 2000 return to the UN Register of Conventional Arms; and if copies of the return will be placed in the Library. [5358]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Government submitted the UK's return to the UN Register covering conventional arms transfers in calendar year 2000 on 11 July. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

World Service

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reason BBC World Service broadcasts are no longer available via short wave in North America; and what percentage of the North American land mass is now within broadcast range of the World Service. [5102]

Mr. MacShane: The BBC World Service has stopped short wave broadcasts to North America because audiences there listen mainly on FM and the internet. The impact on audience figures will be reviewed next year. The funding released will help extend the World Service's global reach through new services, including short wave where it is needed. World Service broadcasts are available to the whole of North America on the internet and on FM and medium wave through over 230 public radio stations.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Buildings (Maintenance)

Paul Flynn: To ask the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners, pursuant to his answer of 16 July 2001, *Official Report*,

column 17, on Church Buildings (Maintenance), how much has been invested in the maintenance of church buildings in each of the last five years; and what has been the percentage increase in real terms. [5891]

Mr. Bell: The repair and maintenance of the Church of England's 16,250 churches are the responsibility of individual parochial church councils.

A survey conducted for the Council for the Care of Churches estimated a total repair cost in 1998 of £123 million for such buildings. A study commissioned by the Churches Main Committee, based on a survey of a sample group of churches of all denominations in 1999, broadly supported a similar figure.

Comparable figures for earlier years cannot readily be given as the basis on which that information is collected has changed during the five-year period.

HEALTH

Annual Reports

Laura Moffatt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency will publish its annual report and accounts. [5979]

Ms Blears: The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency's annual report and accounts have been published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Salter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the 2000–01 annual report and accounts of the Medical Devices Agency. [6036]

Yvette Cooper: We have received the report and accounts of the Medical Devices Agency and copies have today been laid before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the requirements of sections 5(2) and 5(3) of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1921. Copies have also been placed in the Library.

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish the annual report and accounts of the NHS Pensions Agency. [6042]

Mr. Hutton: We have approved the report and accounts which have today been laid before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the requirements of section 5(2) and 5(3) of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1921.

Copies have been placed in the Library.

Breast Implants

Jon Cruddas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Government will respond to the Health Committee's report on the provision of information on the safety of breast implants, HC 308, Session 2000–01. [6041]

Mr. Hutton: The Government's response has been provided to the Committee today and copies are available in the Library.

Prostate/Testicular Cancer

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many men were diagnosed with *(a)* prostate and *(b)* testicular cancer in (i) 1971, (ii) 1980, (iii) 1990 and (iv) 2000. [4273]

Ruth Kelly: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Vernon Coaker, dated 18 July 2001:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your recent question concerning the number of men diagnosed with *(a)* prostate cancer and *(b)* testicular cancer in (i) 1971, (ii) 1980, (iii) 1990 and (iv) 2000.

The latest available figures on the number of registrations of prostate and testicular cancer in 1971, 1980, 1990 and 1997 (the most recent year for which data are available) in England are given in the table below.

Year of diagnosis	*Prostate*	*Testis*
1971	5,789	612
1980	8,440	826
1990	12,518	1,199
1997	18,201	1,411

Disability Equipment

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he has made in response to last year's Audit Commission report 'Fully Equipped' in respect of disability equipment available through the NHS. [4345]

Jacqui Smith: Leading up to and following the publication of the Audit Commission Report "Fully Equipped" the Government have taken the following steps:

We have made available £105 million to the National Health Service for community equipment services over the years 2001–02, 2002–03 and 2003–04. We also took account of the need for additional investment in the personal social services settlement for 2001–02 to 2003–04 to enable councils to contribute an appropriate share to the expansion and integration of these services.

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (NHS PASA) has commissioned a path-finding project looking at ways to modernise orthotic services in the NHS. We will be reviewing the findings in due course.

As outlined in Health Service Circular 2001–01 and Local Authority Circular (2001) 1, we made available £0.5 million in 2001–02 and £1.5 million and £2.0 million in 2002–03 and 2003–04 respectively to be invested in silicone cosmesis. The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency have undertaken a tendering exercise to make these products available on the NHS during August 2001.

During 2000, we continued the £14 million from 1999–2000 for funding invested in indoor/outdoor powered chairs and vouchers and made it recurrent. We also made some adjustments to encourage the effective operation of the service, ending the separation of the allocations for wheelchairs and for vouchers, enabling funds to be spent on either, according to users' wishes, with a voucher scheme being retained in all locations to provide choice. We hope that this greater freedom in the use of funds will help people's needs to be met as effectively as possible.

The Department's project "Modernising NHS hearing aid services" is evaluating leading-edge digital hearing aids for NHS patients, coupled with an evaluation of associated service delivery changes. Digital hearing aids require different service delivery models as they incorporate information technology based assessment and fitting procedures. £10.75 million will be available for the 20 NHS hearing aid departments involved in the project over the two years 2000–01 and 2001–02. If the project is successful by 2003–04 we will be investing an extra £25 million in NHS hearing aid services.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has commissioned into *(a)* waiting times and *(b)* the standard of provision of disability equipment services since the publication of the Audit Commission's report "Fully Equipped". [5230]

Jacqui Smith: Leading up to and following the publication of the Audit Commission report "Fully Equipped", the Department is undertaking a major piece of work as part of the NHS Plan in modernising community equipment services. The Department published guidance "Guide to Integrating Community Equipment", issued on 27 March.

The National Health Service Purchasing and Supply Agency have commissioned some work looking at ways to modernise orthotic services in the NHS. We will be reviewing the findings in due course.

The departmental project "Modernising NHS hearing aid services" is evaluating leading edge digital hearing aids for NHS patients, coupled with an evaluation of associated service delivery changes. Digital hearing aids require different service delivery models as they incorporate IT-based assessment and fitting procedures. £10.75 million will be available for the 20 NHS hearing aid departments involved in the project over the two years 2000–01 and 2001–02. If the project is successful by 2003–04 we will be investing an extra £25 million in NHS hearing aid services.

No research has been commissioned to date on prosthetic and wheelchair services.

Health Care (Costs)

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assumptions on the level of health care cost inflation his Department is using in respect of the financial years *(a)* 1998–99, *(b)* 1999–2000, *(c)* 2000–01, *(d)* 2001–02, *(e)* 2002–03 and *(f)* 2003–04. [4144]

Mr. Hutton: The level of health care cost inflation for the financial year 1998–99 was 4.0 per cent. and for 1999–2000 it was 4.5 per cent. The figures are taken from the National Health Service hospital and community health service (HCHS) pay and price inflation index. The latest year that data are available is 1999–2000.

Assumptions for future years will be made based on our inflation target and possible recommendations from the pay review bodies.

The HCHS pay and price inflation index provides an indication of inflation experienced within the NHS HCHS. It is compiled by combining pay and price inflation within the HCHS. It is a retrospective index in that it is developed from available data and therefore projections of future years are not available.

St. George's Hospital, Tooting

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many acute beds there are at St. George's Hospital, Tooting. [4530]

Mr. Hutton: In the financial year 1999–2000, St. George's Healthcare National Health Service Trust had 767 average daily number of acute beds in wards open overnight.

Figures are taken from the annual Körner return KH03—"Bed availability and occupancy" England 1999–2000.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding has been allocated for the present financial year to *(a)* St George's Hospital, Tooting, and *(b)* Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth health authority. [4879]

Mr. Hutton: Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth health authority's allocation for 2001–02 is £498.646 million. This represents an increase of £42.445 million or 9.3 per cent. over the allocation for the previous financial year.

Revenue funding is not allocated directly to national health service trusts. Trusts receive their income by way of service agreements with health authorities. However, St. George's NHS Trust has received capital allocations of £6.400 million in 2001–02. This includes £0.675 million for the Local Capital Modernisation Fund and £1.152 million for "action on" programmes for orthopaedics and ear, nose and throat.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated at St. George's hospital, Tooting, in 2000. [4880]

Mr. Hutton: The number of admissions to St George's National Health Service Trust in the year 1999–2000 was 66,121.

This information is extracted from the Hospital Episode Statistics system, which contains details of patients admitted to and treated in NHS hospitals in England. Some individuals may be treated more than once.

Chiropodists

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the role of chiropodists in the NHS, with particular reference to their screening for diabetes. [4281]

Jacqui Smith: We have published the Allied Health Professions Strategy, which highlights the role of chiropodists/podiatrists. Chiropodists are an integral part of the Government patient-focused policy programme, particularly in relation to older people and diabetes, which are part of the National Service Framework programme.

Chiropodists/podiatrists are valued members of the national health service work force; they play a key role in detecting indications of diabetes, eg foot ulcers. However, there are also screening methods which can pick up indications of diabetes or those at risk of developing it, before such signs become apparent.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on access to chiropody services in the *(a)* NHS and *(b)* independent sector. [4280]

Jacqui Smith: Information about patient contacts with the chiropody service in England is collected on Department of Health return KT23 and published each year. The latest publication "Chiropody services: summary information for 1999–2000, England" is in the Library. The Department does not collect data on the independent sector.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of proposals to regulate chiropodists in the non-state registered sector. [4868]

Mr. Hutton: The new Health Professions Council will determine arrangements for the admission to the register. The council will have a duty to consult and involve those likely to be affected by its proposals.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the representation of private chiropodists on the NPC, indicating if private chiropodists will be allowed to select their own representative. [4925]

Mr. Hutton: The new Health Professions Council has one professional member from each of the professions, including Chiropody, currently regulated by the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine. There is no specific provision for non-state registered chiropodists to be represented on the new council. However the new council will have a duty to consult and involve those likely to be affected by its proposals.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the competency tests proposed for private chiropodists; and for what reason those tests will not be applied to all chiropodists. [4926]

Mr. Hutton: The new council will be responsible for determining competency tests required for registration. The tests will apply to all professions including chiropodists. The new council will have a duty to consult and involve those likely to be affected about the standards of proficiency it requires for registration.

Prosthetic Services

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that national prosthetic services attracts the appropriate calibre of qualified personnel. [5330]

Jacqui Smith: All professional staff in prosthetic services are highly skilled graduates. The team is made up of multi-professional members including doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and, importantly, prosthetists. All the staff are graduates and have to be state registered.

Qualification for prosthetists are B.Sc. Honours; entry onto the courses is at Strathclyde and Salford Universities. Once students qualify, they are state registered by the Council of Professions Supplementary to Medicine (CPSM). Prosthetic service contracts negotiated by the National Health Service Purchasing and Supply Agency generally stipulate the minimum number of days a prosthetist will be allocated to continuing professional development. This is normally around one day per month.

Other staff groups including physiotherapists and occupational therapists are provided by the NHS for these services. All staff have a professional obligation to keep themselves up to date and maintain and develop their skills.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that the national prosthetic service is adequately funded. [5328]

Jacqui Smith: Prosthetic services are currently commissioned and funded by health authorities who base their resource allocation on local need.

The National Health Service Purchasing and Supply Agency, supported by the Department, has commenced work on the development of a commissioning guide for prosthetic services. This will provide a tool for commissioners to ensure that funding is utilised in the most effective way and highlight to them the most important factors required for a user focused service.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that patients requiring modern prosthetic limbs have access to a high quality, well fitting and comfortable choice. [5329]

Jacqui Smith: Patients who require artificial limb components have available to them through their national health service limb centre the widest possible range of limb componentry. The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency who negotiate the contract on behalf of the NHS source these products from manufacturers across Europe and North America. The NHS PASA contract has some 18,000 lines available to NHS rehabilitation centres. If any new products become available from contracted suppliers, the NHS PASA contract has the flexibility to add these throughout the contract term. There is an emphasis in contracts on continuing professional development to ensure that prosthetic staff are able to deliver the highest quality service to their patients.

New products such as gel liners/silicone liners, and techniques such as computer aided design and computer aided manufacture for fitting limbs are already being used by some trusts across the country to maximise comfort and fitting. Modernisation of this sort will be evaluated and where appropriate will expand to all centres.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that the quality of prosthetic services available to patients in the UK are of at least an equal standard to those available in *(a)* the rest of Europe and *(b)* in North America. [5364]

Jacqui Smith: Prosthetic services have moved from providing a "limb fitting service" to an "amputee rehabilitation service". Disablement service centres (DSCs) now treat users in a more holistic manner. This has resulted in the development of a whole package of care and has given more involvement to occupational therapists, physiotherapists and counsellors in the service. The United Kingdom is at the forefront of this multi-professional approach.

Many DSCs prescribe state of the art components. The UK was the first country in the world to develop and

adopt an intelligent prosthesis. Another important feature of the UK service is that product prescription is impartial, based on clinical need, whereas in some countries commercial considerations are taken into account.

The delivery of prosthetic services around the world is far more fragmented than in the UK. For example England delivers prosthetic services from 33 DSCs which means that the service benefits from the concentration of expertise and economies of scale.

The UK prosthetic service is well structured, provides good value for money and delivers a coherent service.

A recent Government development is the introduction of silicon cosmesis, as outlined in HSC2001/01 and LAC (2001)1. We have made available £0.5 million in 2001–02 and £1.5 million and £2.0 million in 2002–03 and 2003–04 respectively to be invested in silicone cosmesis. The National Health Service Purchasing and Supply Agency have undertaken a tendering exercise to make these products available on the NHS during August 2001. This was announced by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton), in March 2001.

Private Finance Initiative

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the PFI contracts entered into since 1997, indicating *(a)* the value of the PFI, *(b)* the name of the successful contractor, *(c)* those PFIs which have benefited from refinancing arrangements, *(d)* the value of the benefit accrued to the company concerned and *(e)* the extent of the clawback. [4534]

Mr. Hutton: There follows a list of major private finance initiatives contracts which have been signed since May 1997; the capital value of the contract; and the names of the leading contractors and facilities management firms who make up the successful consortia. To date none of the PFI schemes listed have been refinanced.

Scheme	*Capital value (£ million)*	*Consortia*
Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust	94	Carillion Construction[1] Carillion Services Ltd.[2]
Carlisle Hospitals NHS Trust	65	AMEC[1] Building and Property Group[2]
South Buckinghamshire NHS Trust	45	Taylor Woodrow[1] Healthcare Group[2]
Greenwich Healthcare NHS Trust	93	Kvaerner Construction[1] ISS Mediclean/Kvaerner Rashleigh/Weatherfoil[2]
Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust	65	Bovis[1] RCO/Bovis Building Management[2]
North Durham Health Care NHS Trust	61	Balfour Haden JV[1] Initial/Haden[2]
Norfolk and Norwich NHS Trust	158	Laing[1] Serco[2]
South Manchester University Hospitals NHS Trust	66	Alfred McAlpine[1] WS Atkins/Sodexho[1]
Bromley Healthcare NHS Trust	118	Taylor Woodrow[1] Taylor Woodrow/ISS Mediclean[2]
Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust	54	Bouygues[1] Ecovert South[2]
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	87	Bovis[1] RCO/Bovis[2]
Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust	64	Alfred McAlpine/[1] Sodexho/WS Atkins[2]
South Durham Healthcare NHS Trust	41	Shepherds[1] Jarvis/ISS Mediclean[2]
South Tees Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	122	Mowlem[1] Aqumen FM[2]
Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust	96	Carillion Construction[1] Carillion Services Ltd.[2]
King's Healthcare NHS Trust	64	Costain/Skanska[1] Sodexho[2]
Leeds Community NHS Trust	47	Carillion/Weaver Construction[1] Bradford and Northern Housing Association[2]
St. George's Hospital NHS Trust	49	Gleeson[1] Chesterton[2]
University College London Hospitals NHS Trust	404	AMEC/Balfour Beatty[1] Building and Property Group[2]
Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust	22	Bilfinger and Berger/Haden Young[1] MandW Zander[2]
West Middlesex University Hospitals NHS Trust	60	Bouygues[1] Ecovert[2]
Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust	137	Sir Robert McAlpine[1] Building and Property[2]
West Berkshire Priority Care NHS Trust	30	Kier[1] ISS[2]

[1] Constructor
[2] FM provider

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what central monitoring his Department undertakes of value for money obtained in Private Finance Initiative projects; and if he will make a statement. [4460]

Mr. Hutton: The Department reviews all private finance initiative projects over £1 million in value through the Business Case approval system. To be approved, the Business Case must clearly demonstrate that, overall, the private finance option is better value for money when compared to the publicly funded alternative, the Public Sector Comparator, and that it provides improved facilities for the national health service. NHS trusts are required to monitor performance throughout the lifetime of the PFI contract.

As a result of PFI, six major new hospitals have opened and another 17 are under construction, representing capital investment in the NHS of over £2 billion.

Consultant

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the number of whole-time equivalent consultant vacancies in the NHS by specialty. [4421]

Mr. Hutton: Information is not available about the number of whole-time equivalent consultant vacancies. The Department collects information about vacant consultant posts, and information by speciality, taken from the 2001 vacancy survey, is provided in the table.

Department of Health vacancies survey, March 2001—vacancies in national health service trusts in England—consultants three month vacancy rates[1,2] and numbers[3] for total of each group

	Rates (percentage)	*Vacancies*
Total consultants	3.0	670
Specific specialities		
Accident and emergency	7.9	40
Anaesthetics (inc. intensive care)	1.7	60
General surgery	1.7	20
Obstetrics and gynaecology	1.5	20
Ophthalmology	0.8	10
Oral and Maxillo Facial Surgery	5.6	10
Otolaryngology	2.9	10
Paediatric surgery	5.7	10
Plastic surgery	2.9	10
Trauma and orthopaedic surgery	2.2	30
Urology	2.7	10
Cardiology	2.6	10
Cardiothoracic surgery	1.6	0
Clinical oncology	3.8	10
Clinical radiology	4.6	70
Haematology	2.1	10
Histopathology	6.0	50
Medical oncology	3.8	0
Palliative medicine	7.4	10
Forensic psychiatry	5.2	10
General psychiatry	7.8	130
Learning Disabilities	13.3	30
Geriatric medicine	3.0	20
Old Age Psychiatry	9.3	30
Diabetes medicine	2.7	10

[1] Three month vacancies are vacancies as at 31 March 2001 which trusts are actively trying to fill, which had lasted for three months or more (whole-time equivalents)

[2] Three month vacancy rates are three month vacancies expressed as a percentage of three month vacancies plus staff in post from the September 2000 medical and dental and non-medical work force censuses (whole-time equivalent)

[3] Numbers are rounded to the nearest ten

Notes:

1. Percentages rounded to one decimal place
2. England totals include staff from Special Health Authorities
3. Totals may not equal sum of component parts due to rounding

Source:

Department of Health Vacancies Survey 2001

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants left the NHS in *(a)* England and *(b)* Buckingham in each year since 1980. [5644]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is not available centrally.

Information about consultant vacancies in England and in Buckinghamshire health authority are shown in the table.

Department of Health Vacancies Survey, 1999–2001
Consultant vacancies in Buckinghamshire health authority[1]
Three-month vacancy rates[1,2] and numbers[4]

	Number of three-month consultant vacancies	*Three-month consultant vacancy rate (percentage)[5]*
1999		
England	470	2.3
Buckinghamshire HA	10	2.6
2000		
England	600	2.8
Buckinghamshire HA	0	0.8
2001		
England	670	3.0
Buckinghamshire HA	0	0.4

[1] Three-month vacancies are vacancies as at 31 March 2001 which trusts are actively trying to fill, which had lasted for three months or more (whole time equivalents).

[2] Three-month vacancy rates are three-month vacancies expressed as a percentage of three-month vacancies plus staff in post from the September 2000 medical and dental and non-medical work force censuses (whole time equivalent).

[3] HA figures are based on Trusts, and do not necessarily reflect the geographical provision of health care.

[4] Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

[5] Percentages are calculated on unrounded figures and rounded to one decimal place.

Source:

Department of Health Vacancies Survey 2001

Hospital Travel Costs Scheme

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to extend the hospital travel costs scheme; and if he will make a statement. [4642]

Mr. Hutton: We have no immediate plans to extend the hospital travel costs scheme. However, the scheme is being kept under review.

National Service Framework

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out the terms of reference, work programme and schedule for the national service framework reviews. [4081]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The Commission for Health Improvement (CHI), with the Audit Commission—and Social Services Inspectorate where appropriate—will review the implementation of each national service framework (NSF) at an appropriate time following their publication to allow for a period of early implementation prior to review.

NSFs which have already been published are: Mental Health NSF, September 1999; Coronary Heart Disease NSF, March 2000; and Older People NSF, March 2001.

The next NSF due to be published in 2001 is the Diabetes NSF. We have announced further NSFs on Renal Services, Children's Services, and Long Term Conditions.

CHI will publish details of the broad scope and timing of each review once this has been agreed.

CHI and the Audit Commission have already undertaken a review of the implementation of the Calman-Hine/Cameron reports on commissioning cancer services in England and Wales. The report is expected in the autumn.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the implications of the National Service Framework for Older People set out in paragraph 29, page 141 of the NSF; and what plans his Department has to analyse the impact of them. [4873]

Jacqui Smith: A general assessment of implications for wider areas of education and training was provided within the National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People. A more detailed assessment and analysis to ensure achievement of the NSF milestones will be undertaken nationally by the National Workforce Development Board, informed by the Care Group Workforce Team for older people to be established shortly, and working with education and training bodies. Regional directors of workforce development and local workforce development confederations working with local education and training organisations will play a local role.

Child Protection Register

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in each London borough council are registered on the child protection register; and if he will make a statement. [4788]

Jacqui Smith: The latest figures available show the number of children on the child protection register of each London borough council as at 31 March 2000. These are as shown in the table.

Numbers of children on child protection registers at 31 March 2000, and rates per 10,000 of the population

	Numbers of children on the CPR at 31 March 2000	*Rate per 10,000 population*
London	4,809	29
Inner London		
Camden	179	48
City of London	1	12
Greenwich	255	47
Hackney	263	51
Hammersmith and Fulham	153	50
Islington	221	58
Kensington and Chelsea	70	22
Lambeth	212	34
Lewisham	217	37
Southwark	164	28
Tower Hamlets	130	25
Wandsworth	142	29
Westminster	98	26
Outer London		
Barking and Dagenham	110	27
Barnet	181	24
Bexley	137	27
Brent	112	19
Bromley	172	27
Croydon	294	37
Ealing	84	12
Enfield	101	16
Haringey	226	44
Harrow	148	30
Havering	106	21
Hillingdon	129	22
Hounslow	214	43
Kingston-upon-Thames	37	12
Merton	87	21
Newham	223	31
Redbridge	73	13
Richmond-upon-Thames	83	22
Sutton	101	25
Waltham Forest	86	16

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of children aged under 18 years registered during 1999–2000 on the child protection register had previously been registered. [5233]

Jacqui Smith: Of those children registered on a child protection register in England during the year ending 31 March 2000, 14 per cent. had previously been registered.

Health Care (Undergraduates)

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his estimate is of the annual cost of providing to undergraduate students *(a)* free dental care, *(b)* free eye tests and *(c)* free prescriptions. [4911]

Mr. Hutton: The estimated costs of extending free treatment to undergraduate students in England are shown in the table:

Free treatment	*Approximate figure £ million*
Dental care	12
Eye tests	5
Prescriptions	34

Nursing Vacancies

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing vacancies there are in *(a)* England and *(b)* Cumbria. [5341]

Mr. Hutton: The listed data show the number of nursing posts which have been vacant for three months or more (and the vacancy rate) in England and in North Cumbria and Morecambe Bay health authorities.

Department of Health vacancies survey, March 2001
Qualified nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff vacancies in England and in the specified health authority areas[1] three month vacancy rates[2,3] and numbers[4]

	Vacancies	Vacancy rate (percentage[5,6])
England	9,020	3.4
North Cumbria HA	20	1.4
Morecambe Bay HA	10	0.7

[1] HA figures are based on Trusts, and do not necessarily reflect the geographical provision of healthcare.
[2] Three month vacancies are vacancies as at 31 March 2001 which trusts are actively trying to fill, which had lasted for three months or more (whole-time equivalents).
[3] Three month vacancy rates are three month vacancies expressed as a percentage of three month vacancies plus staff in post from September 2000 medical and dental and non-medical workforce censuses (whole-time equivalent).
[4] Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.
[5] Percentages are calculated on unrounded figures.
[6] Percentages rounded to one decimal.
Source:
Department of Health Vacancies Survey 2001.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many days on average were lost per employee in his Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from his Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5055]

Ms Blears: The information requested is shown in the table.

Year	Average[1] days lost per employee through sickness	Early retirements
1992	[2]—	64
1993	9.7	104
1994	9.68	92
1995	9.8	253
1996	7.14	171
1997	7.8	44
1998	7.4	26
1999	6.8	21
2000	[3]—	26
2001	[3]—	10

[1] Working days absences exclude weekends and bank holidays for staff working a "Monday to Friday" week
[2] Not available
[3] Not yet published
Note:
Combined data for the Departments of Health and Social Security continued to be collected by the then Department of Social Security (DSS) following the break up of the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS). Separate figures are not available for the Department of Health.

Psychiatric Services

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses are qualified to work with children and adolescents in Milton Keynes; and how many this represents in relation to the population under 16 years of age. [5315]

Jacqui Smith: The information requested is not available centrally in the format requested. Information on child and adolescent psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses for Buckinghamshire is as follows:

National health service hospital and community health services: medical and dental and qualified non-medical staff working in the psychiatric areas of work within Buckinghamshire health authority as at 30 September 2000

	headcount	per 100,000 of under 16 population
Psychiatric nurses	440	296.3
of which:		
Community psychiatry	130	88.6
Other psychiatry	310	207.7
Child and adolescent psychiatrists	20	10.8

Notes:
1. Figures exclude learners and agency staff
2. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10
3. Due to rounding totals may not equal the sum of component parts
Source:
Department of Health Non-Medical Workforce Census
Department of Health Medical and Dental Workforce Census

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the waiting times are for referrals to child and adolescent psychiatric services in Milton Keynes. [5316]

Jacqui Smith: Information on the waiting times for an appointment for child and adolescent services following referral are collected on a quarterly basis and placed in the Library. The latest figures for quarter 4 (January to March 2001) of the 2000–01 financial year indicate that Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust had no patients waiting over 13 weeks.

Drug Procedures

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures are in place to ensure that injections of drugs that may be life threatening are correctly and safely administered. [4578]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The controls assurance framework requires all national health service trusts to identify the risks associated with the safe and secure handling of medicines and develop and implement procedures to ensure the minimisation of risk. These procedures would cover drugs which would be hazardous if given by the wrong route, for example, injected intrathecally rather than intravenously.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology

Barbara Follett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has

received applications for research for the purposes set out in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Research Purposes) Regulations 2001. [6035]

Yvette Cooper: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has recently received an application for research from the Centre for Genome Research in Edinburgh. I understand that this centre has an established research team which has already held licences for embryo and stem cell research.

The application proposes to establish stem cell lines from spare embryos, with a view to depositing the resulting cells in the Medical Research Council stem cell bank, to improve understanding of the growth and survival of pre-implantation human embryos, thereby benefiting in-vitro fertilisation treatment programmes. The proposed programme will also examine the potential for cell replacement and tissue repair therapies for a range of serious diseases.

Embryo research in the United Kingdom is subject to the most comprehensive regulation. As with all applications for research involving embryos, this application will be subject to detailed consideration by the HFEA to ensure that it meets the strict requirements of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. Before deciding on the application, the HFEA requires full details of the project and Research Ethics Committee approval. The application must also explain the project's objectives, protocols and why the use of embryos is necessary for the research.

This application will require specific justification for the extraction of stem cells and will be subject to peer review on its merits. It will also require details of patient information and consent forms specifying the purpose of the research and all possible uses of the cells lines derived from it. If approved, the project will be closely monitored by the HFEA to ensure that it continues to meet the conditions laid down by the 1990 Act and any conditions imposed by the authority.

Nurses

Annette Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average length of time it took the UK Central Council to register nurses from overseas over the last six months for which figures are available, broken down by country. [4188]

Jacqui Smith: This is a matter for the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC). The UKCC does not collect information on the length of time for specific registrations by country. However, I am informed by the UKCC that the average time for processing non-European Union applications for registration is 85 working days.

Recruitment Agencies

Annette Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what procedure recruitment agencies achieve recognition by an NHS trust; and what steps he takes to monitor their performance. [4189]

Jacqui Smith: Individual national health service trusts have their own procedures for recruiting staff and may use a variety of ways to select recruitment agencies.

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency helps by awarding, where appropriate, national or regional contracts for medical locums or nurses. The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency monitors the performance of the contracts that it awards by holding regular meetings with the NHS trusts and the agencies involved to monitor whether the NHS is receiving value for money. The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency inserts a clause in these contracts that allows it to carry out an audit of the contracted agencies.

The NHS Professionals Agency which will be set up from August 2001 will provide a non-profit making staffing service for the NHS. Initially it will provide nursing staff, but eventually will also cover other medical staff. The NHS Professionals Agency will oversee training and continuing personal development, give temporary staff a better employment package, and will provide a cost-effective staffing solution for the NHS.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will set out the timetable for commencement of section 49 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 for each group affected by the provision; [4924]

(2) what arrangements will be made to monitor the adequacy of the money allocated for free nursing care from October to April and to allocate additional funds in the event of a shortfall of allocation to actual expenditure; [4923]

(3) if he will make a statement on the draft guidance and directions he plans to issue to implement the provisions of section 49 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001; [4869]

Jacqui Smith: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Kidney) on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 113–14W.

Anti-psychotic Medication

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, on anti-psychotic medication, what work his Department has undertaken to explain the trend in prescribing; what were the key findings; and if he will set out prescription numbers *(a)* by region and *(b)* by ages (i) under 16, (ii) 16 to 25, (iii) 26 to 35, (iv) 36 to 45, (v) 46 to 55, (vi) 56 to 65, (vii) 66 to 75 and (viii) over 75. [5292]

Jacqui Smith: The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is expected to issue guidance on the use of these drugs in December.

The two tables show:

(a) The number of prescription items dispensed in the community in England by health authority for atypical anti-psychotic drugs, 1999 and 2000; and

(b) The number of prescription items dispensed in the community in England for atypical anti-psychotic drugs by broad age group 1999 and 2000.

We do not hold prescribing information on the age breakdown asked for.

Number of prescription items dispensed in the community in England for atypical anti-psychotic drugs, 1999 and 2000

Thousand

Health authority	*1999*	*2000*
Avon	13.4	21.7
Barking and Havering	5.1	8.0
Barnet	6.9	10.1
Barnsley	2.6	4.1
Bedfordshire	4.7	10.3
Berkshire	11.2	16.2
Bexley and Greenwich	5.7	8.1
Birmingham	16.7	25.3
Bradford	6.8	10.5
Brent and Harrow	8.7	12.6
Bromley	4.8	6.6
Buckinghamshire	9.4	14.7
Bury and Rochdale	6.4	9.6
Calderdale and Kirklees	8.5	14.3
Cambridgeshire	8.6	13.2
Camden and Islington	8.2	11.4
Cornwall and Isles Of Scilly	6.2	8.5
County Durham and Darlington	8.5	13.7
Coventry	7.8	12.0
Croydon	7.5	10.9
Doncaster	4.0	5.0
Dorset	10.3	13.8
Dudley	3.1	4.3
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	10.7	15.6
East and North Hertfordshire	6.8	10.3
East Kent	12.0	16.5
East Lancashire	9.3	13.9
East London and The City	12.4	17.4
East Riding and Hull	10.1	14.5
East Surrey	5.8	7.3
East Sussex, Brighton and Hove	15.5	22.0
Enfield and Haringey	8.6	13.2
Gateshead and South Tyneside	6.5	8.9
Gloucestershire	5.4	8.3
Herefordshire	1.3	2.1
Hillingdon	2.5	3.5
Isle Of Wight	3.3	4.9
Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster	7.6	11.1
Kingston and Richmond	5.4	8.4
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	15.7	22.8
Leeds	17.1	23.5
Leicestershire	11.6	16.8
Lincolnshire	6.5	10.2
Liverpool	12.8	18.1
Manchester	12.7	18.7
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	12.9	18.4
Morecambe Bay	6.2	9.1
Newcastle and North Tyneside	15.6	21.6
Norfolk	9.1	15.5
North and East Devon	9.1	12.8
North and Mid Hampshire	10.2	14.2
North Cheshire	3.8	5.6
North Cumbria	5.9	8.9
North Derbyshire	3.9	5.8
North Essex	12.9	19.0
North Nottinghamshire	4.2	5.6
North Staffordshire	5.2	7.9
North West Lancashire	7.5	14.5
North Yorkshire	7.8	12.6
Northamptonshire	8.6	10.8
Northumberland	6.0	7.6
Nottingham	2.7	3.1
Oxfordshire	9.5	14.5
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	8.6	12.7
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	8.1	11.7
Rotherham	5.1	7.1
Salford and Trafford	9.0	13.8
Sandwell	4.5	4.7
Sefton	6.0	10.5
Sheffield	5.5	7.1
Shropshire	6.3	9.2
Solihull	3.2	4.0
Somerset	4.5	8.3
South and West Devon	9.8	17.4
South Cheshire	11.3	17.9
South Essex	9.3	13.8
South Humber	4.5	5.9
South Lancashire	4.0	7.0
South Staffordshire	5.9	9.5
Southampton and South West Hampshire	9.7	17.2
Southern Derbyshire	4.1	6.1
St Helens and Knowsley	6.2	10.9
Stockport	5.8	8.9
Suffolk	6.7	11.4
Sunderland	5.2	6.7
Tees	7.8	12.6
Wakefield	6.1	9.1
Walsall	4.8	5.7
Warwickshire	8.1	11.8
West Hertfordshire	8.4	12.1
West Kent	12.8	21.4
West Pennine	6.9	8.8
West Surrey	8.0	13.1
West Sussex	11.2	16.6
Wigan and Bolton	10.2	16.0
Wiltshire	10.3	14.1
Wirral	9.2	13.6
Wolverhampton	5.1	5.5
Worcestershire	4.8	7.0
England	772.6	1,149.4

Notes:

1. The prescription information is from the Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) system and is based on a full analysis of all prescriptions dispensed in the community, i.e. by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered in England. Also included are prescriptions written in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man but dispensed in England. The information shows the number of prescription items dispensed in each health authority. The data do not cover drugs dispensed in hospital or private prescriptions.

2. Atypical anti-psychotics are defined within British National Formulary paragraph 4.2.1, antipsychotic drugs, and cover the drugs Amisulpride, Clozapine, Olanzapine, Quetiapine, Risperidone and Zotepine.

Number of prescription items dispensed in the community in England for atypical anti-psychotic drugs by broad age group 1999 and 2000

	1999	*2000*
Prescription items dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors only (thousands)		
Children aged 0–15 years	6.5	9.7
Elderly people aged 60 and over	252.7	428.8
Aged 16 to 59 years[1]	405.4	555.1
Aged 16 to 59 years[2, 3]	81.5	117.4

Number of prescription items dispensed in the community in England for atypical anti-psychotic drugs by broad age group 1999 and 2000

	1999	2000
Prescription items dispensed by dispensing doctors and items personally administered (thousands)		
All ages	26.5	38.4
All prescription items dispensed in the community		
All ages	772.6	1,149.4

[1] Exempt
[2] Charged
[3] Includes prepayments

Notes:

1. The age related information is based on an analysis of those not required to pay a charge indicated by the categories completed on the back of the prescription form. This is based on a 1 in 20 sample of all prescription items submitted to the Prescription Pricing Authority by community pharmacists and appliance contractors only. Dispensing doctor prescriptions were not analysed into categories for 1999 and most of 2000. Personally administered items are free of charge.

2. Atypical anti-psychotics are defined within British National Formulary paragraph 4.2.1, antipsychotic drugs, and cover the drugs Amisulpride, Clozapine, Olanzapine, Quetiapine, Risperidone and Zotepine.

Community-based Services

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of people aged 65 years and over receive community-based services. [5218]

Jacqui Smith: As at 31 March 2000 (the latest date for which data are available), an average of 8.5 per cent. of people in England aged 65 years and over were in receipt of community-based social services provided or commissioned by local authorities.

In 1999–2000, the latest year for which information is available, it is estimated that 21 per cent. of people aged 65 and over were receiving care from the district nursing service, 2 per cent. from health visitors and 2 per cent. from the community psychiatric nursing service. Contact with the community learning disability service for this age group was negligible. We do not hold data centrally on the proportion of people aged 65 and over who receive primary care-based services.

Nursing and Residential Care

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing and residential care *(a)* homes and *(b)* beds have closed in Buckingham in each year since 1997. [5637]

Jacqui Smith: The number of residential and nursing care establishment closures in 1999 and 2000, together with number of new registrations, are shown in the table. Information is not available centrally on the number of beds associated with closures or new registrations.

Number of care home establishment closures and new home registrations in Buckinghamshire. Year ending 31 March

	1999	2000
Number of establishment closures		
Residential[1]	5	5
Nursing[2]	[3]—	3
Number of new registrations		
Residential[1]	10	10
Nursing[2]	[3]—	2

[1] Buckinghamshire county council and Milton Keynes council
[2] Buckinghamshire health authority
[3] Not available

Source:
Registration and Inspection Survey

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing and residential care *(a)* homes and *(b)* beds have closed in Cumbria in each year since 1997. [5764]

Jacqui Smith: The number of residential and nursing care establishment closures in 1999 and 2000, together with number of new registrations, are shown in the table. Information is not available centrally on the number of beds associated with closures or new registrations.

Number of care home establishment closures and new home registrations in Cumbria. Year ending 31 March

	1999	2000
Number of establishment closures		
Residential[1]	19	11
Nursing[2]	2	2
Number of new registrations		
Residential[1]	15	8
Nursing[2]	0	0

[1] Cumbria county council
[2] North Cumbria and Morecambe Bay health authorities

Source:
Registration and Inspection Survey

General Practitioners

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for (1) Health how many general practitioners there were in *(a)* England and *(b)* Buckingham in each year since 1980; [5639]

(2) how many general practitioners ceased working in *(a)* England and *(b)* Buckingham in each year since 1980. [5641]

Mr. Hutton: The information regarding the number of general practitioners in England and Buckinghamshire in each year since 1980 is shown in table 1. Information regarding leavers is available only from 1990–91. This information is shown in table 2.

Table 1: Unrestricted principals and equivalents (UPEs)[1] in England and Buckinghamshire FHSA/HA 1980 to 2000[2]

Headcount

Year	*England*	*Buckinghamshire FHSA*
UPEs in post		
1980	21,812	255
1981	22,304	264
1982	22,786	273
1983	23.254	282
1984	23,640	293
1985	24,035	304
1986	24,460	312
1987	24,922	323
1988	25,322	332

Table 1: Unrestricted principals and equivalents (UPEs)[1] in England and Buckinghamshire FHSA/HA 1980 to 2000[2]

Headcount

Year	*England*	*Buckinghamshire FHSA*
1989	25,608	335
1990	25,622	337
1991	25,686	348
1992	25,968	353
1993	26,289	358
1994	26,567	365
1995	26,702	367
1996	26,855	375
1997	27,099	372
1998	27,392	382
1999	27,591	396
2000	27,704	403

[1] UPEs includes GMS unrestricted principals, PMS contracted GPs and PMS salaried

[2] Data as at 1 October 1980 to 1999 and 30 September 2000

Source:

Department of Health General Medical Personal Service Statistics

Table 2: Unrestricted principals and equivalents (UPEs)[1]: Leavers[2] from England and Buckinghamshire FHSA/HA 1990–91 to 1999–2000[3]

Headcount

	Leavers	
Year	*England*	*Buckinghamshire FHSA/HA*[4]
1990–91	1,432	17
1991–92	1,171	15
1992–93	1,030	12
1993–94	1,048	14
1994–95	1,249	25
1995–96	1,184	18
1996–97	1,058	14
1997–98	1,040	13
1998–99	1,030	12
1999–2000	1,090	17

[1] UPEs include unrestricted principals, PMS contracted GPs and PMS salaried GPs.

[2] Leavers and defined as those UPEs reported in the Department of Health's annual GP census in one year but not reported the following year. Leavers will include both career breaks and wastage.

[3] Date relate to those leaving between 1 October and 30 September.

[4] Excludes UPEs who moved to another FHSA/HA.

Source:

Department of Health General and Personal Medical Services Statistics

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many GPs were appointed last year. [4424]

Mr. Hutton: Between October 1999 and September 2000 1,203 unrestricted principals and equivalent general practitioners joined the National Health Service in England.

Health Visitors

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on the recognition of health visitors as specialist nurses. [4929]

Mr. Hutton: The recognition of health visitors is a matter for the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting. The proposals for replacing the council with the Nursing and Midwifery Council include the retention of current arrangements.

Health Committee

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will reply to the third report of the Health Committee, Session 2000–01, HC 307. [4991]

Mr. Hutton: We expect to publish our response to the report before Parliament rises on 20 July.

Health Trusts and Boards (Membership)

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what machinery is used for reviewing the panel of members of the public accepted as eligible for membership of health trusts and boards; and if he will make a statement. [4917]

Ms Blears: Since 1 April 2001, appointments of chairs and non-executives to the boards of National Health Service trusts, health authorities and primary care trusts have been the responsibility of the NHS Appointments Commission. Details of the appointment process are therefore a matter for the Commission.

Care Homes

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 12 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 590W, concerning care homes, if he will place a copy of the interim report in the Library; and if he will list the research projects and their purpose and reporting dates. [5366]

Jacqui Smith: The purpose of the research projects commissioned from the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) is to:

Collect information on the costs, fees, profitability and closures of care homes.

Collect information on local authority purchasing and contracting arrangements.

Study local variations in numbers of supported older care home residents.

Model future demand for publicly funded residential and nursing home care over the next decade.

These reports will be delivered by the end of the year. I understand from PSSRU, which retains intellectual property rights in the research, that publications arising from these streams of work will be published by the end of the year. I will ensure that copies are placed in the Library when publication takes place. Existing studies by PSSRU, on which these projects build, have already been published.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Freedom of Information Act

Tony Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to announce a timetable for implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. [5088]

Mr. Wills: The Freedom of Information Act received Royal Assent on the 30 November 2000 and so has to be fully implemented by 30 November 2005. However, the Government are firmly committed to implementation of the Act before this deadline which we set for ourselves.

As of yet, there is no timetable for implementation within this deadline but the Lord Chancellor will be under a statutory duty to report to Parliament on progress towards implementation by 30 November this year. Before a timetable for implementation of the Act can be announced, there are consultations which need to be completed with the Information Commissioner, most notably with regard to the work needing to be done on publication schemes.

Tony Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) how many bodies subject to the open government code of practice have indicated that they could not fully implement the Freedom of Information Act 2000 by July 2002; [5086]

(2) if the Information Commissioner has indicated that she would be unable to discharge her responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to bodies subject to the open government code of practice by July 2002. [5087]

Mr. Wills: It is not a question of bodies or the Information Commissioner expressing doubts as to meeting any particular date for implementation, but simply that no one can be certain, as yet, as to when all of the preparatory work towards implementation of the Act will be completed.

My officials are currently in consultation with the Information Commissioner and public authorities, including the several hundred currently covered by the code of practice on access to Government information, in order to determine how soon it is practicable for them to be able to implement the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

One of the major issues which has to be resolved before a definitive date for implementation of the Act can be set is the obligation on all public authorities to produce and maintain a publication scheme setting out what information they are proactively making available.

Before public authorities can make a definitive judgment as to when they can have their publication schemes ready, and hence when the Information Commissioner will be able to devise a timeframe for approval of the schemes, the Commissioner has to decide what she expects from the content of the schemes. To this end, the Commissioner arranged a conference, held in Manchester on 17 July 2001, to discuss the content and format of publication schemes.

In addition there are five bodies taking part in a pilot publication scheme programme in conjunction with the Commissioner, as she announced on the 16 July 2001. These bodies are the Ministry of Defence, the Department for International Development, the Health and Safety Executive, the Medicines Control Agency and the Public Record Office. The pilot programme should be completed by the end of this year.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 are yet to come into force; what the planned timetable is for their introduction; what orders remains to be brought forward relating to the Act; and if he will make a statement. [5113]

Mr. Wills: The provisions of the Act set out in section 87(1) came into force on 30 November 2000, when the Act was passed. These provisions relate to:

the bodies covered by the Act;

approval of publication schemes by the Information Commissioner;

recommendations as to good practice from the Information Commissioner;

the Commissioner's obligation to report to Parliament;

the power to make environmental information regulations relating to the Aarhus Convention;

the power to amend or repeal statutory bars to disclosure of information; and

certain miscellaneous provisions, for example, relating to interpretation of terms used in the legislation.

The provisions set out in section 87(2) of the Act came into force on 30 January 2001. These relate primarily to the creation of the post of the Information Commissioner.

Certain provisions relating to the amendment of the Data Protection Act, as provided for by the Freedom of Information Act 2000, were brought into force on 14 May by a Commencement Order in Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 1637, made on 30 April 2001.

All other provisions of the Act are not yet in force. The Act must be fully implemented by 30 November 2005 and, as yet, there is no other timetable than this outer date. However, the Government are committed to bringing the Act into force before this deadline and to ensuring that the time taken to ensure that implementation is a success will be used well.

Some powers contained in the Act will need to be exercised before the Act comes into force, for example the Codes of Practice to be made under sections 45 and 46 of the Act will need to be agreed.

Others, such as the ability to amend Schedule 1, contained in section 4, or the ability to amend or repeal statutory bars to disclosure, contained in section 75, are on-going processes. These will have to be exercised regularly when, for example, new non-departmental public bodies are created, or decisions are taken that specified statutory bars could be amended or repealed.

Powers, such as that to provide for environmental information regulations in relation to the Aarhus Convention, contained in section 74, will only need to be exercised once or very infrequently.

Discussions are under way on the terms of those Orders or regulations which need to be made before the Act can be fully implemented. Drafts of the two Codes of Practice have been circulated for public consultation.

Parental Responsibility

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will place a copy of the Government's response to the EU Commission's working document "Mutual Recognition of Decisions on Parental Responsibility", when made, in the Library. [4103]

Mr. Wills: The Government have submitted to Parliament an Explanatory Memorandum in response to the European Commission's working document, "Mutual Recognition of Decisions on Parental Responsibility". This was deposited on 20 June and copies of it have been placed in the House of Commons Library. It did not contain a substantive response on issues of policy because the Commission's document did not seek views, and the Commission intends to propose a draft Regulation on this subject in early September. The Government will submit an Explanatory Memorandum on this proposal in the autumn; this will deal with the policy issues raised in that proposal, although a final view on these will only be taken after proper consultation with the judiciary and legal practitioners.

Correspondence

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the letter that her predecessor undertook to write to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling at the conclusion of his Adjournment debate on child abduction on 3 May will be sent. [4102]

Ms Rosie Winterton: I have now written to the right hon. Member, and apologise for the delay in doing so.

Civil Enforcement

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress has been made on phase two of the review of civil enforcement. [6178]

Mr. Wills: I am pleased to announce the publication of "Towards Effective Enforcement", a Green Paper on the structure and regulation of enforcement and a single piece of bailiff law. It explores options for the regulation of all enforcement agents.

The paper discusses what legal powers are needed to allow agents to do the job properly and proposes principles for the fees for enforcement and costs of regulation. It also examines the possibilities of improving access to information and making better use of information through clear, precise and limited powers.

The primary purpose of the Green Paper is to look at how best to achieve a fundamental improvement in warrant enforcement by opening up to public consultation a range of options and ideas for the future regulation of enforcement agents in England and Wales. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

A White Paper will be published in early 2002 setting out proposals for legislation in the light of this public consultation. It will also cover revised procedures for attachment of earnings, garnishee orders and charging orders arising from Phase One of the Review. At that stage it ought to be possible to develop a practical structure for warrant enforcement service delivery.

Public Records Act

Mr. John Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which Minister in the Lord Chancellor's Department has responsibility for the execution of the Public Records Act 1958 and for decisions about the opening of the 1911 Census records to public inspection. [4995]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Minister responsible for the execution of the Public Records Act 1958 is my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. Under the Act, the Lord Chancellor may, with the approval, or at the request, of the Minister primarily concerned vary the closure period for a particular class of public records. In the case of the 1911 Census, the Minister primarily concerned is my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Magistrates

Mr. Watts: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates are in post in the St. Helens and Knowsley court service. [5531]

Mr. Leslie: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Merseyside, has provided the following information. There are 108 magistrates on the St. Helens bench and 94 on the Knowsley bench.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures are taken to make sure that people apply to be magistrates who declare themselves politically do not face discrimination. [5535]

Mr. Leslie: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, has asked me to say that an individual must be personally suitable for appointment as a magistrate before any other factors are considered. He will then take into account gender, residence, occupation, and political views in order to try and achieve a bench which reflects the community it serves.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the establishment figure is for magistrates in St. Helens and Knowsley. [5530]

Mr. Leslie: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, has asked me to say that the target number of magistrates required for the St. Helens bench is 130 and Knowsley bench 110.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action the Lord Chancellor takes to monitor the *(a)* political balance of magistrates court and *(b)* residential areas from which magistrates are recruited. [5537]

Mr. Leslie: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and

Merseyside, has asked me to say that he takes into account the political balance of benches and candidates' areas of residence when considering appointments to a bench.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action the Lord Chancellor's Department takes to make sure political balance among magistrates is maintained. [5534]

Mr. Leslie: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, publishes Directions to Advisory Committees on Justices of the Peace. The section on political balance states:

> "The political views of a candidate are neither a qualification nor a disqualification for appointment. However, the Chancellor requires, in the interests of balance, that the voting pattern for the area as evidenced by the last two general elections, should be broadly reflected in the composition of the bench."

The same Directions are published by the Lord Chancellor for Advisory Committees in the remainder of England and Wales.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many people applied to be magistrates in St. Helens and Knowsley in 2000. [5533]

Mr. Leslie: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Merseyside, has provided the following information. During 2000, 13 candidates applied to become magistrates on the St. Helens bench and 14 on the Knowsley bench.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if the Lord Chancellor will make it a requirement for all people to declare their political allegiance in order to maintain the political balance in the magistrates courts system. [5536]

Mr. Leslie: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, has asked me to say that application forms for the magistracy require applicants to state which political party they generally support.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the current political balance of magistrates is in courts in St. Helens and Knowsley. [5532]

Mr. Leslie: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, has provided the following information on the political balance of the St. Helens and Knowsley benches.

	St. Helens	*Knowsley*
Labour	19	25
Conservative	21	30
Liberal Democrat	12	16
Other/uncommitted	56	23

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Government Performance

Geraint Davies: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the performance of the main Departments and agencies against the six service standards for central Government over the last financial year. [6177]

Mr. Leslie: I have arranged for a report on the performance of the main Departments and agencies to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

In most cases, Departments' performance in responding to correspondence from the public has continued to improve and there have been some particularly encouraging performances leading to a considerable narrowing in the range of performance. In particular, for the first time, all Departments and agencies have answered at least 70 per cent. of correspondence within their published target. But there is no room for complacency, which is why we have introduced targets for improvements in most Departments' Service Delivery Agreements. The performance of the main Departments and agencies is summarised in the table.

Against the other standards, the report shows that performance and standards are generally in line with public expectations. Visitors to public offices are usually seen within 10 minutes of their appointment, and most visitors without an appointment are seen within the designated standards. All Departments have at least one telephone inquiry point, and calls are usually answered promptly. Use of the internet is increasing rapidly and all the main Departments dealing with the public have websites, publicise their complaints procedure on-line and are able to accept e-mailed inquiries. The report also shows some of the innovative ways in which Departments and agencies are consulting their users and making their services more responsive to users' needs.

Comparison with performance in 1998–99 and MPs' correspondence

		Responses within target (1)			*Performance on MPs' correspondence*
Department/agency	*Target (working days)*	*2000–01 (%)*	*1999–2000 (%)*	*1998–99 (%)*	*2000 (%)*
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (2)	15	91	92	91	30
Cabinet Office	15	96	99	100	85
Crown Prosecution Service (3)	10	n/a	88	83	100
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	18	85	81	71	82
HM Customs and Excise	10	93	94	91	68
Ministry of Defence (4)	20	81	84	78	78

Comparison with performance in 1998–99 and MPs' correspondence

Department/agency	*Target (working days)*	*Responses within target (1) 2000–01 (%)*	*1999–2000 (%)*	*1998–99 (%)*	*Performance on MPs' correspondence[1] 2000 (%)*
Department for Education and Employment	15	94	90	89	72
Employment Service (Jobcentres (5)/Chief Executive Office)	10/15	90/98	90/97	94	98
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions	15	93	89	78	69
Driving Standards Agency	15	98	99	99	n/a
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)	15	97	97	97	99
Highways Agency	15	87	83	83	78
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	15	96	92	93	n/a
Vehicle Inspectorate	15	99	100	93	n/a
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	20	83	84	87	78/70 (6)
Government Offices for the Regions	[2]15	93	80–99	81–100	n/a
Department of Health	20	78	48	63	50
Medicines Control Agency	7	100	93	—	n/a
NHS Pensions Agency	20	99	100	—	n/a
Home Office	20	72	64	23	41
UK Passport Agency	10	98	81	97	100
HM Prison Service	20	95	94	85	75
Inland Revenue (7)	20	84	84	80	72
Intervention Board	10	93	92	79	n/a
Lord Chancellor's Department	20	84	88	72	74
Court Service	20	87	93	97	66
HM Land Registry	5	96	100	94	n/a
Department of Social Security	20	72	63	60	75
Benefits Agency	10	87	78	81–88	45
Child Support Agency	10	72	66	56	97
War Pensions Agency (8)	10	98	98	71	99
Department of Trade and Industry	15	95	96	92	60
Companies House	10	99	98	—	100
Employment Tribunal Service	10	81	97	—	n/a
Patent Office	5	100	100	—	99
Insolvency Service	15	98	97	—	87
Radiocommunications Agency	15	99	98	—	n/1
HM Treasury	15	74	36	—	60

[1] Where available
[2] Max.
Note:
Performance has been rounded up or down to the nearest whole figure

Government Consultations

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what representations he has received concerning the variations between the consultation processes undertaken by Government Departments. [5369]

Mr. Leslie: No such representations have been made directly to the Deputy Prime Minister; earlier representations about practice in conducting written consultations, especially the time allowed for responses, led to the publication in November 2000 of the Code of Practice on written consultation. The Code sets out minimum standards for consultation documents, and more generally promotes techniques of effective public involvement. It applies to all public national consultation documents issued from 1 January 2001. In response to views expressed during the passing of the Regulatory Reform Act 2001, supplementary guidance has also been issued to Departments by the Cabinet Office in respect of consultation documents under the Act.

Departmental Targets

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if his responsibilities include monitoring the performance of Departments other than his own against targets set out in departmental annual reports; and if he will make a statement. [2676]

Mr. Leslie: The responsibilities of the new Delivery Unit were set out in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's answer of 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 95W.

Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when the first report of the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission will be published. [4468]

Mr. Leslie: Responsibility for the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission has now passed to the Department of Trade and Industry. However, I understand that the Commission plans to publish a report

later this year on its case study of decision making on the Farm Scale Evaluations of genetically modified herbicide tolerant crops.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he last travelled on the London Underground in the course of his official duties. [3672]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I use the most efficient and cost-effective mode of transport wherever possible. In London this is frequently the underground. The last time I used the underground for official business was 3 April 2001.

Civil Service (Parliamentary Candidates)

Brian Cotter: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will review the restrictions on those employed in the civil service to permit them to stand as parliamentary candidates. [5873]

Mr. Leslie: The provisions regulating the rights of servants of the Crown to become candidates at elections are set out in the Servants of the Crown (Parliamentary, European Parliamentary and Northern Ireland Assembly Candidature) Order 1987. This Order, as amended by the Servants of the Crown (Parliamentary, European Parliamentary and Northern Ireland Assembly Candidature) Order 1999, specifies that the servants of the Crown to whom it applies must not issue an address to electors or in any other manner publicly announce themselves or allow themselves to be publicly announced as candidates or prospective candidates for election to Parliament. There are no plans to review these provisions.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Francois: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans his Department has to reduce the number of Government NDPBs. [5519]

Mr. Leslie: This Government have reduced the number of quangos (or non-departmental public bodies to use the official classification) by around 10 per cent. since 1997. This means that numbers now stand at their lowest level for over 20 years. Individual NDPBs are subject to regular review and we continue to work hard to ensure that the overall number of quangos is kept to a minimum.

Regulatory Impact Assessments

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister which Government Departments have failed to produce a regulatory impact assessment for each paper that requires an RIA. [5368]

Mr. Leslie: All Government Departments and agencies are required to produce a regulatory impact assessment (RIA) for proposed regulations that could impact on business, charities or the voluntary sector.

An RIA may not be required in certain, strictly defined, circumstances. For example, where the proposal imposes no or negligible additional costs or savings; or where statutory fees are increased by a predetermined formula, such as the rate of inflation. Departments must be prepared, if challenged, to defend their decision not to produce an RIA. No central records are maintained of such cases.

Sellafield

Llew Smith: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to put the issue of Sellafield safety on the agenda of the Council of the Isles. [1760]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the British-Irish Council, which brings together the British and Irish Governments, the devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the authorities in Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man.

At their meeting in London in October 2000, Environment Ministers of the British-Irish Council agreed that the environment was of vital importance to all of their Administrations. They agreed on a range of issues in the environment field, including Sellafield and climate change, that would be taken forward as part of the programme of work.

Special Advisers

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if it is standard practice for special advisers to co-ordinate work that costs the policies of opposition parties; and which sub-clauses of section (iv) of schedule 1 (Part 1) of the standard contract for special advisers set out the role of special advisers in costing the policies of opposition parties. [4401]

Mr. Leslie: The work of individual special advisers will vary from Department to Department according to the relevant Ministers' requirements. Section (iv) of Schedule 1 to Part 1 of the current model contract for special advisers describes the duties special advisers may be required to undertake. These include for example checking facts and research findings, such as information provided by officials costing policy options.

Flags

Paul Flynn: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will instruct Departments to fly the Red Ensign on their buildings on Merchant Navy Day. [2365]

The Deputy Prime Minister: My own Department will be flying the Red Ensign on Merchant Navy Day. The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, as the sponsoring Government Department for the Merchant Navy, will also be flying the Red Ensign.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events the Cabinet Office has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5048]

Mr. Leslie: The Cabinet Office, through its Management Units, participates in many events, national and international. The information requested is not held centrally and any response provided could be achieved only at a disproportionate cost.

Government Task Forces

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the purposes and membership of the Government task forces and reviews *(a)* which report to his Department and *(b)* to which his Department (i) appoints members and (ii) provides administrative support, indicating in each case the date on which their first meeting took place; and if he will make a statement. [6239]

Mr. Leslie: I shall write to the hon. Member with a full answer and place a copy in the Libraries of the House during the summer recess.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 20 July 2001

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

IT Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the information technology contracts in excess of £500,000 let by the Cabinet Office or its predecessor since April 1991, giving in each case the original estimated cost and original estimated completion date and the actual cost and actual completion date and the names of the contractors involved and consultants retained by his Department. [3495]

Mr. Leslie: I will write during summer recess and place copies of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

Departmental Units

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list for each of the units dealing with cross-cutting issues based in his Department and for each financial year for which figures are available *(a)* the number of staff employed, *(b)* the annual cost of their operations, *(c)* the cost of capital works to provide premises for their work and *(d)* their capital and revenue budgets for the current financial year and future years for which the figures are available. [5896]

Mr. Leslie: I will write during summer recess and place copies of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister which Minister in his Department oversees the work of each unit run from his Department; which Minister leads on projects arising out of their work; and what their remit and responsibilities are. [6240]

Mr. Leslie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by the Deputy Prime Minister on 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 573W.

Senior Managers (Guidance)

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to recommend revision to his Department's guidance to senior managers on better quality services; what assessment he has made of the operation of this guidance to date; and if he will make a statement. [6236]

Mr. Leslie: My officials have conducted a review of the better quality services initiative. Its findings are currently under consideration.

Social Exclusion Unit

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the implementation of the report of the social exclusion unit on truancy and school exclusions published in May 1998. [5895]

The Deputy Prime Minister: The Department for Education and Skills has lead responsibility for implementing the report, together with other interested departments.

A major investment has been made in supporting schools to tackle truancy and exclusion. The target for reducing permanent exclusions by a third has been achieved a year early. A second target to ensure all pupils excluded from school for more than 15 school days would receive suitable full-time education is on course to be achieved on time by September 2002.

Measures on truancy are taking longer to show results. However, schools and police now have a very full range of powers and resources to tackle the problem, including

a higher level penalty for parents who fail to ensure their children attend school regularly;

learning mentors through the Excellence in Cities initiative; and

an extra £11.25 million on electronic registration systems for over 500 schools over the next two years; and

powers to pick up truants.

The Government are reinforcing this by

setting school-level targets for schools with truancy levels more than 3 per cent. above average; and

encouraging every local education authority and police authority to carry out regular 'truancy sweeps' to pick up young people who are not in school.

Departmental Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the top 10 companies to which his Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6427]

Mr. Leslie: I will write during summer recess and place a copy of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

People's Panel

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the purpose and responsibilities are of the people's panel; for what reasons its future is under review; when the review will be completed; and if he will make a statement. [6238]

Mr. Leslie: The people's panel was set up as a representative sample of the adult population of the UK who agreed to be involved in surveys and other forms of research about their views on, and attitudes to, public services and similar matters of public interest.

The individuals who comprise the panel are under no obligation to participate in surveys or other studies, and have no responsibilities.

We have long been committed to evaluation of the panel, as a new initiative, and a small-scale evaluation was conducted last year. The current review will consider its continuing technical viability, its impact on policy formation, usage by Government Departments, and cost-effectiveness. It will be completed in autumn 2001.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 124W, if he will list the title, cost and client for each of the projects included in the expenditure totals already given. [6234]

Mr. Leslie: Details of the title, cost and clients for each of the projects mentioned in my response of 3 July are set out in the tables.

Year 1998–99

Client/title	*Cost (£)*
Cabinet Office	
Wave 1 (also includes £80,000 for set-up costs)	300,000
Wave 2	89,000
Modernising Government	12,750
Management fee to MORI	8,000
Top-up recruitment	49,250
Total	459,000

Year 1999–2000

Client/title	*Cost (£)*
Cabinet Office	
Wave 3	6,000
Women's Unit—Listening to Women	63,800
Access pages	13,800
Older people	4,500
Management fee to MORI	40,000
Top-up recruitment	49,250
Evaluation report	17,690
OST	
Attitudes to bio-sciences	60,000
DfEE	
Parents' attitudes on value-added school performance tables	12,400
The literacy hour	2,500
DETR	
Urban White Paper	19,500
HSE	
Gas safety regulation	14,750
Post Office Counter	
One-stop shops/electronic service delivery	17,000
Total	321,190

Year 2000–01

Client/title	*Cost (£)*
Cabinet Office	
Open All Hours?	14,400
Change of address portal	14,200
Wave 4	68,600
Public services and ethnic minorities	68,100
Public awareness of Charter Mark	6,000
Social Exclusion Unit—Attitudes to public services in deprived areas	14,100
Wave 5	64,400
The last 12 months	52,550
Management fee to MORI	36,000
Department of Health	
Attitudes towards Human Genetics issues	52,500
Health messages and young people	30,000
The Patent Office	
Benchmarking of intellectual property awareness	14,500
DfEE	
Service standards in working agency	10,600
DETR	
Research into public's expectations of transport in the future	29,050
MAFF	
Reactions to new GM food leaflet	19,200
Country of origin food labelling	31,665
Total	525,865

Summaries of the research results have been placed in the House Library and full reports are published on my Department's website.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 124W, if the results of projects carried out for clients other than his own Department were published in full. [6235]

Mr. Leslie: The summaries of all research projects using the people's panel have been placed in the House Library. Full reports are available on the Internet at www.servicefirst.gov.uk.

Ombudsmen

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many cases investigated and rejected by *(a)* the local government and *(b)* the parliamentary ombudsmen that have subsequently gone to judicial review have been successful and found in the complainant's favour; and if he will make a statement. [6210]

Mr. Leslie: This information is not held centrally. However, I would refer the hon. Gentlemen to general information on caseload which is published in the ombudsmen's annual reports.

Judy Mallaber: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what action he intends to take following the consultation exercise on the review of the public sector ombudsmen in England. [6445]

Mr. Leslie: This Government are committed to the renaissance of public services, improving access and delivery and driving up standards. The effective handling of complaints is an important element of this programme of renewal, but there will be times where, having pursued a complaint about a particular public service, a complainant remains dissatisfied. Such cases need to be considered independently and that role is fulfilled by, among others, the public sector ombudsmen in England that were the subject of this review. These ombudsmen comprise the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the Health Service Commissioner and the Commission for Local Administration (which comprises the three local government ombudsmen and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration ex officio).

In 1999, following representations from the ombudsmen, the Government announced a review to determine whether the present arrangements are in the best interest of complainants and others, against the background of moves towards more integrated public services and an increasing focus on the needs of the consumers of such services. The review team consulted widely and their report was published in April 2000. A consultation paper seeking views on the review's main recommendations and its other conclusions was published last June. In all we received 174 responses to the consultation paper and copies will be placed shortly in the Library of the House together with a statement of the Government's conclusions.

Briefly, these are that, in light of the responses received to the consultation paper, the Government are satisfied that there is broad support for the review's main recommendations.

We therefore intend to replace the existing arrangements by a unified and flexible ombudsman body for central and local government and the national health service (excluding NHS Pensions, which will continue to fall under the jurisdiction of the pensions ombudsman, established by Part X of the Pensions Schemes Act 1993 (as amended)). In line with the review's recommendations, there will be direct access to this new body irrespective of whether the complaint is concerned wholly or in part with a central Government body. Furthermore, and again in line with the review's recommendations, the new body will have a collegiate structure within which the individual ombudsmen are identified with a particular group of the bodies under jurisdiction but free to carry out crosscutting investigations. Proposals for the precise powers and accountability of the new body, and on whether its jurisdiction should be extended beyond the bodies subject to the Jurisdiction of the existing ombudsmen, will be published in due course.

Regulatory Impact Assessments

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the *(a)* subject, *(b)* responsible Department and *(c)* date of each regulatory impact assessment on which his Department has been consulted since the publication of the "Modernising Government" White Paper. [6237]

Mr. Leslie: The degree of consultation with my Department varies from telephone conversations (which may not be recorded), to detailed exchanges in writing, depending on the nature of the issue raised. However, no central record is maintained of the number of regulatory impact assessments on which my Department is consulted.

Transport and Social Exclusion

Dr. Stoate: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when the Social Exclusion Unit will launch the consultation exercise for its prospect on transport and social exclusion. [6531]

Ms Keeble: I have been asked to reply.

The consultation exercise will be launched next week on Wednesday 25 July.

The consultation letter, copies of which will be placed in both Libraries, is aimed at anyone with an interest in transport and social exclusion issues and includes a wide-ranging questionnaire to help consultees frame their contributions. The SEU is keen to obtain the views of as wide a range of people as possible and the consultation period will include visits, interviews and focus groups.

The letter is also available on the SEU's website, which can be found at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/index.htm.

SCOTLAND

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events her Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5035]

Mrs. Liddell: The Scottish Office before July 1999 and the Scotland Office since July 1999 have participated in many such events. Details could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many days on average were lost per employee in her Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from her Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5060]

Mrs. Liddell: The numbers of early retirements from the core departments of the former Scottish Office in each year from 1 April 1994 to 30 June 1999 are:

Full time equivalent (FTE) staff retiring early, by financial year
Scottish Office core departments, 1 April 1994–31 March 1999

Year	*FTE staff retiring*
1994–95	61.1
1995–96	99.7
1996–97	124.7
1997–98	16.8
1998–99	13.0

On average, the number of working days lost per permanent employee in the Scottish Office core departments was 6.7 days in 1997–98, and 8.1 days in 1998–99.

Information for earlier years for early retirements and sickness absence is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The Scotland Office was established in its present form on 1 July 1999. No officials have retired early from the Department since that date. Information on sickness absence rates per employee is not available on a comparable basis.

ADVOCATE-GENERAL

Mr. Surjit Chhokar

Harry Cohen: To ask the Advocate-General if she will arrange to be made available to the family of Mr. Surjit Chhokar the documents presented to *(a)* the inquiry into the conduct of the Crown Office and *(b)* the inquiry under Dr. Jandoo into the treatment of the Chhokar family during the investigation into the murder of Mr. Chhokar; what representations have been received from the Chhokar family about (i) those two inquiries and (ii) the murder of Mr. Chhokar; what has been the response to them; and if she will make a statement. [5656]

The Advocate-General: This is a matter for the Scottish Executive and my hon. Friend may wish to write to the Lord Advocate about the case.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Patrick Hall: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list *(a)* Government expenditure on ministerial overseas visits for the financial years 1995–96 to 2000–01 and *(b)* all visits overseas undertaken by Cabinet Ministers costing in excess of £500 between 1 April 2000 and 31 March 2001, including the cost, destination and purpose of the visit. [6180]

The Prime Minister: Expenditure on ministerial overseas visits for the periods requested is estimated as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1995–96[1]	7.3
1996–97	7.9
2 May 1997 to 31 March 1998	6.4
1998–99	4.9
1999–2000	4.6
2000–01	4.7

[1] The figure for 1995–96 does not include some expenditure falling to the Ministry of Defence and the Welsh Office because the information was not recorded centrally or is incomplete. Full costs are available from 1996–96 onwards.

A list of all visits overseas undertaken by Cabinet Ministers costing £500 or more during the period 1 April 2000 and 31 March 2001 has been placed in the Libraries of the House. The list provides details of the date, destination and purpose of all such visits and the cost of Ministers' travel and accommodation where appropriate.

Special Advisers

Dr. Ladyman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on special advisers. [6181]

The Prime Minister: I have today placed in the Libraries of the House copies of the new Code for Special Advisers, and the revised Model Contract for Special Advisers, together with details of the new pay arrangements for Special Advisers and a list of the Special Advisers currently in post.

Ministerial Travel Code

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister when he plans to publish a revised Ministerial Code on Travel by Ministers. [6189]

The Prime Minister: I have today published a revised "Ministerial Code" and "Travel by Ministers". They provide guidance to Ministers on how they should conduct themselves in carrying out their official duties. The foreword to the Code makes it clear that I will expect all Ministers to operate within the letter and spirit of the Code. The revised Code takes account of recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Copies of both documents have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Hinduja Brothers

Norman Baker: To ask the Prime Minister if all papers under his control relating to the Hinduja brothers were made available to Sir Anthony Hammond as part of his inquiry. [5477]

The Prime Minister: I made it clear when I set up the independent review headed by Sir Anthony that all relevant information that he required would be made available to him. I also said that it was for Sir Anthony to decide on how he carried out the review, what papers and files he needed to see and to whom he needed to speak.

Norman Baker: To ask the Prime Minister if he will reopen the Hammond Inquiry into the application for passports by the Hinduja brothers. [5482]

The Prime Minister: Sir Anthony Hammond has already carried out a thorough review of the issues. I do not think any further inquiry would be fruitful.

Norman Baker: To ask the Prime Minister (1) on what date *(a)* he and *(b)* another Minister last received a communication from one of the Hinduja brothers; [5475]

(2) if he will made a statement on his meeting with the Hinduja brothers on 24 February 1998. [5478]

The Prime Minister: It is public knowledge that I and members of the Government have met members of the Hinduja family. Subject to that it is not the normal practice of the Government to release details of meetings or discussions with private individuals or companies.

Norman Baker: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library copies of *(a)* the letter to him dated 25 February 1998 from the Hinduja brothers and *(b)* the minutes from Jonathan Powell to the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) relating to the conversation between the Prime Minister and the Hindujas on 24 February 1998. [5479]

The Prime Minister: Information relating to internal advice and consultation is not disclosed under Exemption 2, Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Prime Minister if his chief of staff wrote to the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) in order to communicate an offer of sponsorship for the millennium dome from the Hinduja Foundation. [5560]

The Prime Minister: It is not the normal practice of the Government to release details of meetings or discussions with private individuals or companies.

Departmental Central Index

Mr. Burns: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister and which Government Department holds overall responsibility for the operation of the departmental central index. [5026]

The Prime Minister: The Department for Work and Pensions has responsibility.

Animal Experimentation

Norman Baker: To ask the Prime Minister for what reasons responsibilities relating to animal experimentation have been retained by the Home Office. [5692]

The Prime Minister: The Home Office has retained responsibility for matters relating to the regulation of animal products under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, because the Department neither sponsors scientific research involving the use of animals, nor does it set any requirements for data produced by such procedures.

Sellafield

Paul Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to ensure that the future of the mixed oxide plutonium fuels plant at Sellafield is considered as part of the energy review. [6250]

The Prime Minister: There are no plans to consider this as part of the review.

Peerage

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Prime Minister how many persons elevated to the peerage since 1 May 1997 were resident at the time of their elevation in each region of *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland. [5905]

The Prime Minister: This information is being collated. I shall write shortly to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Cleave Camp

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Prime Minister what was contained in Cabinet document H(67)20 dated 7 March 1967, relating to the transfer of Cleave camp, near Bude in North Cornwall, from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Public Building and Works; and for what reason it was removed from the file and destroyed on 5 March 1997. [5017]

The Prime Minister: H(67)20 sought the agreement of the Home Affairs Committee for the transfer of a site at Cleave camp, Bude, owned at that time by the Ministry of Defence, to the Ministry of Public Building and Works. The document is available at the Public Record Office (PRO) in file CAB 134/2855. Duplicate copies of Cabinet Committee documents are removed from departmental files as part of the usual records management procedures which have been promulgated by the PRO since shortly after the Departmental Committee on Public Records reported.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Laws: To ask the President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals to enable Back-Bench Members to have greater influence in the selection of members of Select Committees. [5830]

Mr. Robin Cook: The Select Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons has agreed that, as an immediate priority, it will look at how best to ensure transparency in nominations to Select Committees. In order to make quick progress on this urgent issue the Modernisation Committee will meet again during the recess, in September. Our intention will be to agree a report on procedures for nominations for vacancies when the House resumes in October.

Mr. Laws: To ask the President of the Council what plans he has to introduce measures to increase the powers and enhance the status of Select Committees. [5831]

Mr. Robin Cook: The Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons has agreed to undertake a comprehensive review of Select Committees. It will look at how Select Committees are set up, the powers available to them and how their reports are handled in Parliament, as well as other relevant issues.

WALES

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events his Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5037]

Mr. Paul Murphy: This information is not collected centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many days on average were lost per employee in his Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from his Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5056]

Mr. Paul Murphy: The information requested is as follows:

	Average number of working days sickness absence per staff year
1992	9.8
1993	10.1
1994	9.1
1995	10.0
1996	9.0
1997	8.3
1998	7.6
1999	7.6

Notes:

1. Figures relate to Welsh Office, Cadw and Estyn (formerly OHMCI).
2. 1999 figures relate to Welsh Office, Cadw and Estyn up to 30 June, and to Wales Office, National Assembly for Wales, Cadw and Estyn from 1 July.
3. Figures for 1992 and 1993 derive from a different source and might not have the same degree of reliability as those for later years.
4. Data for years prior to 1992 are not available.
5. No data are yet available for 2000.

	Number of early retirements
Welsh Office, Cadw and Estyn (formerly OHMCI)	
1991	6
1992	34
1993	29
1994	47
1995	109
1996	147
1997	39
1998	16
1999[1]	11
Wales Office	
1999[2]	0
2000	0

[1] To 30 June
[2] From 1 July
Note:
Includes early retirements of all types

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4898]

Mr. Paul Murphy: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and I will spend much of our time in Wales during the recess on visits and engagements. In line with paragraph 68 of the Ministerial Code, at least one of us will be on duty at all times.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Economic and Social Research

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development for what reason the Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Research Overseas is being disbanded as a non-departmental public body. [6530]

Clare Short: The Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Research Overseas (ESCOR) was constituted in 1968 (administratively, and not by statute). It provides advice on research proposals submitted for funding to the Department for International Development. It came to be classified as a non-departmental public body (NDPB) in the early 1980s. However,

the Committee is only advisory and has no executive powers;

members are not paid for their services;

it is the only one of four DFID Research Committees so classified;

half of its members are DFID officials.

In June 1997 the Prime Minister made a statement in Parliament announcing that a review would be undertaken to reduce overall numbers of NDPBs. ESCOR is being de-classified as a NDPB in response to this and to bring it in line with other DFID Research Committees, which are not classified as NDPBs. It will be re-constituted on the same lines as those Committees.

Membership of the reconstituted Committee will continue to be balanced between DFID officials and external academic experts. Membership will continue to be recorded with the Cabinet Office. Appointments will no longer be made directly by the Secretary of State. The Committee will continue to advise on the merits of proposals for economic and social research in development submitted to the Department.

GM Projects

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will list *(a)* the name and *(b)* the amount spent in each of the last four years on genetically modified related development projects. [5408]

Clare Short: The information is as follows.

Projects involving the potential release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) 1998 onwards

Plant Sciences

Genetically Engineered Resistance to Rice Yellow Mottle Virus[1]

Sainsbury Laboratory; WARDA; 07.95–06.98 £147,983 (R6355)

Assessing Resistance to Rice Tungro Virus Disease[1]

John Innes Institute; IRRI; 11.95–10.98 £87,420 (R6394)

Botrytis Grey Mould Resistance in Chickpea with PGIP Genes[1]

SCRI; ICRISAT; 10.96–12.99 £194,208 (R6409H)

Chromosome Painting (in situ Chromosome Hybridisation) for Forestry, Crop Protection and Plant Sciences[1]

University of Nottingham; NRI; 01.96–12.98 £154,879 (R6429 FF)

Development of Reliable Transformation and Transgene Expression in Cassava[1]

John Innes Institute; IITA; 12.95–12.99 £133,565 (R6442)

Transgenic Crop Resistance in Upland and Lowland Rice to Nematodes[1]

University of Leeds; IRRI; 01.96–12.98 £243,567 (R6453)

Enhancement of Grain Filling in Rice by Genetic Manipulation of Phytohormone Levels[1]

Norman Borlaug Institute, DeMontford University; IRRI 04.97–03.00 £300,000 (R6724H)

Development of Testing of Transgenic Cultivars of Bananas Resistant to Nematodes[1]

CAZS; WIBDECO, Roseau Research Station, St. Lucia; 11.96–10.99 £78,985 (R6743)

Crop Resistance to the Nematodes Globodera and Naccobus in Bolivian Hillside Potato Production[1]

University of Leeds; PROINPA, Bolivia; 10.97–09.00 £88,518 (R6830)

Development and Application of Transformation Systems in Rice[1]

John Innes Institute; IRRI; University of Dhaka; University of Delhi; IIAR, India; 09.97–08.00 £288,649 (R6948)

Durable Crop Resistance in Rice and Potato Plants to Nematodes[2]

University of Leeds; IRRI; WARDA; PROINPA, Bolivia; 01.99–12.01 £289,205 (R7294)

Transgenic Rice with Rice Yellow Mosaic Virus Resistance[2]

John Innes Institute; WARDA; 07.99–06.02 £335,683 (R7415)

Transformation and Mapping of Natural Resistance to Rice Yellow Mottle Virus and Nematodes[2]

John Innes Institute; WARDA; 01.00–12.02 £97,728 (R7548)

Resistance to Andean Weevil in Potato[2]

University of Leeds; PROINPA, 10.00–09.01 £7,537 (R7886)

Nematode Resistant Rice, Banana and Potato[2]

John Innes Centre; University of Leeds; 07.00–05.05 £768,913 (R8031)

Crop Protection

Biological Control of Bacterial Wilt of Potato[1]

CABI Bioscience; KARI, Kenya; CDRI Pakistan; INRA, Niger; 04.96–03.99 £176,560 (R6629)

Fish Genetics

Development and Exploitation of Transgenic Tilapia[1]

University of Wales—Swansea; University of Southampton; 04.98–03.00 £219,468 (R7113)

Production of Improved Reversibly Sterile Strains of Tilapia[2]

University of Southampton 04.00–03.04 £304,000 (R7591)

Animal Health

Identification of Immundominant Antigens of Mycoplasma capricolum subsp. Capripneumoniae for Use in Vaccines[1]

Moredun Research Institute; Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania; 04.96–03.99 £283,092 (R6555)

Contained Trial of Modified Recombinant Capripox-rinderpest Vaccine[1]

Institute for Animal Health (Pirbright); KARI, Kenya; 04.96–03.99 £88,000 (R6557)

Control Methods and Diagnostic Tools for Trypanosomosis[1]

University of Bristol; ILRI; KETRI, Kenya 04.96–03.99 £194,858 (R6560)

Thermostable Immunogens for Protection of Ruminants against Heartwater[1]

CTVM; NVRC, Kenya; NVL, Botswana; CIRAD-EMVT, Paris; FARM-AFRICA; 04.96–03.99 £363,107 (R6566)

Development of a Genetically Marked Rinderpest Vaccine[1]

Institute of Animal Health (Pirbright); 10.97—03.00 £119,698 (R7048)

Pen-side Diagnostics for the Detection of Antibodies Against a Marked Rinderpent Virus (RPV) Vaccine[2]

Institute for Animal Health (Pirbright); IVRI, India; SVDL, Ethiopia; PARC, Kenya; 05.99–04.02 £223,549 (R7362)

Evaluation of Genes for Dominant Cytotoxic T Lymphocytes Target Antigens for Use as Vaccine Components[2]

Institute for Animal Health (Compton); ILRI; 10.99–09.02 £206,877 (R7365)

Studies on GMO Issues

Predicting Costs and Benefits to Livelihoods of the Poor in Developing Countries from "Terminator" Gene Technologies[1]

GS Consulting; 07.99–02.00 £35,000

Plant Sciences

Modelling Gene Flow in Pigeonpea[2]

University of Birmingham; ICRISAT; NBPGR, India; 04.99–03.02 £199,276 (R7261C)

Crop Protection

Review of Genetically Modified Pest Management Technologies for Use in Developing Countries[1]

NRI; CICR, India; WARDA; ODI; PROINPA, Bolivia; University of Leeds; 02.00–09.00 £54,943 (R7585)

Further Information

DFID Natural Resources Project Database www.narsis.org

Acronyms

CAZS—Centre for Arid Zone Studies, University College of Wales, Bangor

CDRI—Crop Disease Research Institute, Pakistan

CIRAD—Centre de Cooperation Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Developpement (France)

CTVM—Centre for Tropical Veterinary Medicine, University of Edinburgh

ICRISAT—International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, India

IIAR—Indian Institute for Agricultural Research

IITA—International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Nigeria

ILRI—International Livestock Research Institute, Kenya

INRA—Institute National de la Recherche Agronomique, Niger

IRRI—International Rice Research Institute, Philippines

IVRI—Indian Veterinary Research Institute

KARI—Kenya Agricultural Research Institute

KETRI—Kenya Trypanosomiasis Research Institute

NVL—National Veterinary Laboratory, Botswana

NVRC—National Veterinary Research Centre, Kenya

NRI—Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich

PARC—Pan-African Rinderpest Campaign, Kenya

PROINPA—Programma de Investigation de la Papa, Bolivia

SCRI—Scottish Crops Research Institute

SVDL—Sabeta Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Ethiopia

WARDA—West African Rice Development Association, Cote d'Ivoire

[1] Completed projects. 1998–99 Expenditure £1,050,319. 1999–2000 Expenditure £465,068.

[2] Ongoing projects. 2000–01 Expenditure £445,903. 2001–02 Expenditure £663,613.

Note:

Date: 18 July 2001. Total Commitment £5,776,764

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many days on average were lost per employee in her Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from her Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5052]

Clare Short: Figures for average sickness absence for my Department over the last nine years are:

Days

Year	*Sickness average*
2000	6.18
1999	7.31
1998	7.34
1997	8.13
1996	6.81
1995	8.59
1994	8.64
1993	9.14
1992	8.21

These figures are provided on the basis of working days per staff year where 'working day' equals Monday to Friday, including holidays, and staff year is equivalent to one employee working full-time all year.

The numbers of early retirement and ill-health retirement are as follows:

Early retirement figures for the past five years

Year	*Figures*
1996–97	30
1997–98	7
1998–99	6
1999–2000	12
2000–01	6

Ill-health retirement figures for the past three years

Year	*Figures*
1998–99	2
1999–2000	5
2000–01	0

Figures for earlier years are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost in time and resources.

Commission on TRIPS

Mr. Borrow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will make a statement on the meetings of the Commission on TRIPS. [5528]

Clare Short: The Commission on Intellectual Property Rights held full meetings in London on 8 to 9 May and on 4 July. On 8 May, the Commission received oral and written submissions from UK Government Departments, from industry representatives and from development charities. Otherwise, the meetings were used to prepare and finalise the Commission's work programme up until March 2002, when it is expected to present its report.

In addition to these full meetings of the Commission, Dr. Mashelkar visited South Africa at the end of May to discuss IPR issues in general and South African views on access to medicines in particular; while Professor Correa and Professor Barton visited Brussels and Geneva at the beginning of July to meet with representatives from, among others, the European Commission, UNCTAD, WTO, WIPO, WHO and delegations from developing and developed countries.

The work programme which the Commission is now pursuing essentially comprises a programme of technical studies by leading international experts as well as consultations with interested parties from Government, the private sector and civil society around the world. The work programme focuses on nine main areas:

IPRs, Technology and Development

Pharmaceutical and Vaccines

Genetic Resources, Gene-based Inventions and Agriculture

Traditional Knowledge and Folklore

IPRs, the Internet and Copyright

National IPR legislation in Developing Countries

TRIPS and the International Framework

Process and Constitutional Issues in International Rule-Making

Institutional Issues for IPRs regimes in Developing Countries.

Looking ahead, I understand that the Commission is planning fact-finding missions to India and to other developing countries later in the year, as well as consultations in Brussels and Washington. I further understand that full meetings of the Commission are planned in early September and mid-December, as well as an expert's workshop to review the findings of the Commission's study programme in January.

Further information about the Commission's mission, composition and work programme can be found on its website www.iprcommission.org.

Mr. Borrow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will list the membership of the Commission on TRIPS. [5525]

Clare Short: The Commission on Intellectual Property Rights comprises the following six experts:

Professor John Barton, Professor of Law, Stanford University, USA (Chairman)

Daniel Alexander, Intellectual Property Barrister, UK

Dr. R. A. Mashelkar, Director, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, India

Dr. Gill Samuels, Senior Director of Science Policy and Scientific Affairs, Pfizer, UK

Dr. Sandy Thomas, Director, Nuffield Council for Bioethics, UK

Professor Carlos Correa, Professor of Economics, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Andhra Pradesh

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will provide a sectoral breakdown of the funding provided by the United Kingdom Government to the Government of Andhra Pradesh in *(a)* the past three years and *(b)* the next three years. [4933]

Clare Short: The table shows the amounts that DFID has spent in Andhra Pradesh in the last three years, and an estimate of the amounts which will be spent this year and the next two years on existing projects. A number of new project proposals are under discussion.

£000

	1998–99[1]	*1999–2000*[1]	*2000–01*[1]	*2001–02*[2]	*2002–03*[2]	*2003–04*[2]
Urban poverty	425	92	933	11,000	15,000	15,000
Rural livelihoods	86	40	48	3,000	6,500	7,500
Power sector reform	1,211	4,510	5,867	5,300	5,300	5,000
Energy efficiency	1.018	2,535	5,950	8,000	2,000	—
Economic reform	—	666	961	1,000	1,000	800
Primary education	4,092	4,601	3,895	3,500	4,000	4,000
Child labour	21	564	586	900	1,100	—
Tackling TB	190	6,004	841	1,800	2,000	2,000

[1] Actual

[2] Estimated

Note:

In addition to the expenditure given above, DFID is supporting a number of national and multi-state projects which cover Andhra Pradesh, but it is not possible to isolate the money that is spent in AP. These projects are for microenterprise, sexual health, water and sanitation, and training of police.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what contributions the Government have made to the implementation of Vision 2020 by the Government of Andhra Pradesh; and if she will make a statement; [4936]

(2) what steps have been taken to ensure that the needs of the poorest and most marginalized in Andhra Pradesh have been included in the design and implementation of Vision 2020; and what financial costs have been incurred by the United Kingdom Government as a result of these steps; [4934]

(3) what assessment she has made of the economic, social and environmental impact of implementing Vision 2020 in Andhra Pradesh. [4935]

Clare Short: Vision 2020 sets out a series of goals, including the eradication of poverty in the state in 20 years. The document is a draft on which the Andhra Pradesh Government have sought comments and views from civil society. To attain the goals outlined in Vision 2020, the AP Government are developing strategies, on which they are also consulting. Officials from my Department have been involved in some of the discussions because Andhra Pradesh is one of our partner states in India.

A DFID strategy paper, which sets out our approach to assisting in the elimination of poverty in the state, has been published. A copy is being placed in the Library.

Tariffs

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions she has had with her EU counterparts on reducing tariffs on *(a)* agriculture and *(b)* textiles in the context of WTO organisations. [5517]

Clare Short: We are working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to influence the European Commission's position at the on-going agriculture negotiations in Geneva, including discussions on tariffs. We are working with the Department of Trade and Industry to ensure that a new trade round will include substantial tariff reductions, including for textiles and clothing from developing countries.

Mongolia

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will make a statement on her Department's assistance to Mongolia. [5751]

Clare Short: The UK provides bilateral aid to Mongolia through a Small Grants Scheme (currently £225,000 per annum). Activities during 1999 included support to street children, HIV/AIDS educations for young people and income generation for households in the poorer provinces. DFID also provides support to the World bank's Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (£170,000 for 2000–01)—contributing to the Participatory Living Standards Assessment and project preparation.

In addition, as part of our regular contribution to these agencies, in 1998 the UK contributed approximately £3 million through multilateral agencies in Mongolia.

Over the past year, DFID has also contributed £1.2 million for the provision of emergency relief (for the winter diasters or 'dzuds') under the framework of the UN appeal.

Palestinian Authority

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what action she is taking to promote economic development in the Palestinian National Authority. [4141]

Clare Short: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 120W.

Free Trade

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what targets have been set by her Department to reach global free trade by 2020. [5516]

Clare Short: I refer the hon. Member to today's response from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State responsible for small business, *Official Report*, column 594W.

Kosovo

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) if she will list the agricultural projects funded by her Department in Kosovo; [5288]

(2) if she will make a statement on her policies on funding agricultural development and livestock reprovision in Kosovo. [5287]

Clare Short: Our support to agricultural projects in Kosovo is mainly through the programmes of the EC. In 2000 and 2001 the EC has committed 30 million euros for supply of fertiliser, seed production, rehabilitation and management of irrigation schemes and an agricultural information campaign. The UK's share of this commitment is £3.5 million.

Through a small projects scheme managed by the DFID office in Pristina we have provided £160,000 in grants to NGOs and the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo for projects to help farmers restock cattle, sheep and goats, construct greenhouses and revive beekeeping.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4896]

Clare Short: A Minister will be on duty throughout the summer period.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events her Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5043]

Clare Short: Both I and my officials attend a huge number of national and international events, and work with a wide range of UK and international organisations, to raise awareness and understanding of international development issues.

A description of our work in this area is provided in the 1997 and 2000 White Papers, and in our annual report.

NORTHERN IRELAND

RUC

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officers left the Royal Ulster Constabulary between 1 January and 30 June, broken down by rank. [3236]

Jane Kennedy: The number of officers who left the Royal Ulster Constabulary between 1 January and 30 June is as follows:

	Number
Assistant Chief Constable	3
Chief Superintendent	25
Superintendent	45
Chief Inspector	37
Inspector	106
Sergeant	216
Constable	469
Reserve Constable F/T	76
Total	977

Good Friday Agreement

Stephen Hesford: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the effect of the Good Friday Agreement on the lives of people in Northern Ireland in respect of issues relating to their security. [3734]

Jane Kennedy: The Good Friday Agreement both mandated and enabled the Government to pursue a process of normalisation. The general reduction in the level of threat has made it possible to return the security profile across much of Northern Ireland to that consistent with a normal, peaceful society. Troop levels are at their lowest for over 30 years; the Army has closed or demolished 25 bases since the Agreement and withdrawn from another 10 it shared with the RUC; routine military patrolling has reduced by over 50 per cent. Full and final implementation of all outstanding issues should return a secure, peaceful and prosperous society to Northern Ireland. However, the serious threat still posed by dissident terrorist organisations which remain opposed to the Agreement has prevented the community in certain parts of Northern Ireland from benefiting from the kind of progress enjoyed elsewhere.

Plastic Baton Rounds

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many police officers have reported *(a)* faults and *(b)* misfirings of riot guns used in the course of discharging plastic baton rounds in each of the past 10 years; and how many riot guns have been withdrawn from use after faults were discovered. [1225]

Jane Kennedy: None.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many L21A1 plastic baton rounds are held by the police; how many old model PBRs have been withdrawn from use consequently; and what arrangements have been made for the unspent rounds. [1227]

Jane Kennedy: For operational reasons it would be inappropriate to place in the public domain the exact numbers of the new model baton rounds held by the police or old model baton rounds that have been withdrawn. However the old model baton rounds have been withdrawn and are temporarily held in secure premises until arrangements are made for their return to the military.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by what means a spent plastic bullet round may be identified for the purposes of forensic evidence. [1228]

Jane Kennedy: A spent plastic bullet round does have 'rifling' detail on the round after firing. However, because plastic does not hold the exact detail of the marks the round cannot be identified with a specific riot gun.

Water Cannon

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the costs associated with the deployment of two water cannon vehicles in Northern Ireland. [3081]

Jane Kennedy: The Belgian Federal Police have agreed, as has been the case for the last three years, to lend two water cannon to the RUC during the marching season. They have been provided free of charge on a mutual aid basis between EU police forces. Last year RUC Land Rovers were supplied to the Belgian police for Euro 2000, on a similar basis. The only costs involved are shipping, insurance and maintenance costs amounting to approximately £14,000.

Francisco Notarantonio

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will *(a)* reopen the investigation of the death of Francisco Notarantonio and *(b)* make relevant classified information available to a judicial authority; and if he will make a statement. [2312]

Jane Kennedy: The death of Mr. Notarantonio was fully investigated by the RUC at the time and I understand that there was insufficient evidence to mount a prosecution. However, a murder investigation is not closed until those responsible for the crime have been brought to justice. As no one has yet been convicted for the murder of Mr. Notarantonio the investigation therefore remains open. Additionally Sir John Stevens is currently conducting an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the murder of Patrick Finucane and the terms of reference of this inquiry also cover the allegations of collusion in the murders of individuals like Mr. Notarantonio.

I am not aware of any information relevant to this case which has not already been forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Should any further evidence come to light I am confident that it will be reported to the prosecuting authority in the usual way.

Stun Grenades

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many stun grenades have been issued to the RUC; how many have been used in the past 12 months; what level of authorisation is required for use of this weapon; and what *(a)* rules and *(b)* guidance apply to its use. [1229]

Jane Kennedy: Percussion grenades, often referred to as stun grenades, are ACPO/Home Office approved equipment held by Specialist Firearms Teams throughout the United Kingdom. In the Royal Ulster Constabulary, stun grenades are available for use in hostage type situations. None has been fired operationally in the last 12 months. For operational reasons it would be inappropriate to place figures relating to the exact amount of grenades issued to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. However 201 have been issued for training purposes of which 101 have been fired in the last 12 months. The use of this weapon would be authorised at least at Regional Assistant Chief Constable level. Rules and Guidance are provided under the association of Chief Police Officers' Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms.

Policing Board for Northern Ireland

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to publish the names of the non-elected members of the new Policing Board for Northern Ireland. [3079]

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the independent members of the new Policing Board for Northern Ireland have been selected. [4559]

Jane Kennedy: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has not to date selected those individuals who should serve as independent members of the Policing Board. The names of those selected will be published as soon as the selections are made.

Police

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what changes were made to the terms of reference of the Oversight Commissioner following the passage of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000; what instructions he issued subsequently concerning the work of the Commissioner; what meetings he has had with the Commissioner; and what decisions were made at each meeting. [1143]

Jane Kennedy: I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the terms of reference to which Mr. Constantine is working.

The Commission has met either my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or Ministers during each of his six visits to Northern Ireland. The meetings were intended primarily to review progress rather than to make decisions.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what dates periodic reports containing objectives and timetables have been provided to the Oversight Commissioner by *(a)* the Government, *(b)* the Police Service, and *(c)* the Police Authority for Northern Ireland; and on what dates periodic progress review meetings on implementation of change in policing arrangements have been held with the Oversight Commissioner attended by (i) Government Ministers and officials, (ii) the Chief Constable, (iii) the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, and (iv) others in the 12 months following appointment of the Oversight Commissioner. [1145]

Jane Kennedy: The Commissioner has been briefed by Ministers, officials, the police, the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, and others during each of his six visits to Northern Ireland. In view of the number of meetings held with the Commissioner, his Chief of Staff and members of his Evaluation Team, it is not possible to provide the dates requested.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what correspondence he has received from the Oversight Commissioner in the last 12 months; and if he will place in the Library copies of correspondence and reports. [1099]

Jane Kennedy: The Commissioner has met my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and ministerial colleagues on a number of occasions since his appointment in May 2000. As a result, correspondence between the Commissioner and the Secretary of State has been minimal and confined to staffing issues. I do not propose to place copies of the correspondence received in the Library of the House.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what dates he received reports from the Oversight Commissioner concerning each periodic review of progress in implementation of police reforms set out in the Patten report. [1098]

Jane Kennedy: The Commissioner's first report was received by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in December 2000. A copy of the report was placed in the Library of the House on 10 January 2001.

Johnny Adair

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the result of his inquiry into the alleged attempted poisoning of Johnny Adair in HMP Maghaberry was; and what action he has taken as a result. [1114]

Jane Kennedy: Following receipt of information from the Forensic Science Agency on 6 March 2001 that the sample of Mr. Adair's protein supplement powder, sent away for analysis, was contaminated, Mr. Adair and the RUC were notified immediately. Due to the potentially serious nature of the incident the RUC was then requested to carry out an investigation, which is still ongoing.

It would be inappropriate to comment on the circumstances surrounding the incident at this stage.

Drug Dealers (Cash Seizures)

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much cash has been seized from

convicted drug dealers under Section 27 of the Misuse of Drugs Act; and how much of such cash has been directed into local drugs initiatives. [3238]

Jane Kennedy: In the last 12 months the Royal Ulster Constabulary Drugs Squad has seized and applied for Forfeiture Orders totalling £42,245 under Section 27 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. This money has been allocated at the discretion of the courts to various charitable and voluntary groups throughout Northern Ireland including some allocation to the RUC Drugs Squad to fund drugs education and prevention initiatives.

On occasions, local Drugs Liaison Units from District Commands may have been awarded minor sums by the courts, but currently no central record of the amount involved is maintained. To obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost.

Weston Park Talks

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish as soon as possible the details of the package agreed between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Irish Republic, as announced at the conclusion of the Weston Park talks. [5065]

Dr. John Reid: It is right that any package intended to secure full implementation of the Agreement should be considered first by those parties committed to that aim and away from the glare of publicity. But we will make public our assessment of the position we have reached, at the right time.

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he made of the compliance of the criteria for invitations to the Weston Park talks with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. [5066]

Mr. Browne: The participants at the Weston Park talks discussed the implementation of the Belfast Agreement. Participants in the talks were invited on the basis that they were parties to that Agreement. I am content that inviting participants on this basis was fully compliant with the Human Rights Act 1998.

North Belfast (Security Situation)

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give an assessment of the security situation in North Belfast. [5064]

Jane Kennedy: The security situation along the interface areas in North Belfast remains tense with nightly attacks on houses being carried out by both sides of the community. The security forces are maintaining a high presence in the area in an attempt to keep rival factions apart and calm the situation. Over 160 police officers have been injured as a result of attack from a barrage of missiles including blast bombs, bricks, bottles, petrol bombs and acid bombs. The Government have called on all those with influence in their communities to bring this mindless violence and thuggish behaviour to an end before someone is seriously injured or loses their life.

Probation Board

Mrs. Fitzsimons: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will publish the Probation Board for Northern Ireland's business plan for 2001–02. [6447]

Jane Kennedy: The Probation Board's business plan for 2001–02 was published today. The plan sets out the Board's key performance targets for the year. Copies of the plan have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Belize

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the nature of the assistance given by the British High Commission in Belize to KPMG during their visit to Belize while conducting the study commissioned by the British Government to review the regulation of offshore financial services in Belize and the effect of tax exemptions on pro-poor programmes; when this assistance was given; and if this assistance included discussing and planning to arrange meetings with representatives of the two public investment companies. [3376]

Mr. MacShane: The KPMG team visited Belize from 18 July to 1 August 2000. High Commission staff met them, supplied transport for them and arranged their in-country programme, including calls on the two public investment company groups.

Lord Ashcroft

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his Department received a letter from the lawyers of Lord Ashcroft and Carlisle Holdings regarding remarks the Secretary of State for International Development is alleged to have made at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in 1999; when his Department responded to the letter; if he will place copies of the correspondence in the Library; and if he will make a statement. [4055]

Mr. MacShane: Letters were received from solicitors for Lord Ashcroft complaining, inter alia, of remarks alleged to have been made by the Secretary of State for International Development (although these did not refer specifically to the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in 1999). The legal adviser in my Department replied on my right hon. Friend's behalf on 26 January 2001. A copy of this letter has been placed in the Library. Release of the letters sent by Lord Ashcroft's solicitors is a matter for him.

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if officials in his Department have been disciplined for passing documents relating to Michael Ashcroft and his activities in Belize to *The Times* and *The Guardian* in July 1999 and December 2000. [4057]

Mr. MacShane: It has not proved possible to identify the person or persons responsible for passing the official documents referred to by the hon. Member to *The Times* or *The Guardian* newspapers themselves. However, during the course of the investigation into *The Times* leak it was ascertained that an official of this Department had passed classified documents to an unauthorised person. These documents included those which appeared in *The Times*. The official concerned has been disciplined.

Tunisia

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Tunisian Government about the arrest and detention of the journalist Sihem Ben Sedrine; and when he last received reports about the human rights situation in Tunisia. [4738]

Mr. Bradshaw: I will write to the Tunisian Deputy Foreign Minister to express my concern at the arrest and detention of the journalist Sihem Ben Sedrine. In addition to regular reports from FCO officials, I have also received the latest statement from Amnesty International and other international human right organisations about the human rights situation in Tunisia.

Chechnya

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken by the Government to bring an end to the ill-treatment of civilians in Chechnya by Russian forces; and what human rights violations have been reported to have occurred last week during operations by Russian forces in the Chechen villages of Sernovodsk, Assinovskaya and Kurchaloi. [4735]

Peter Hain: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly, and copies of the letter will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Diplomatic Staff

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which British diplomatic missions locally engaged staff are paid below local poverty datum lines; and if he will make a statement. [4541]

Mr. Bradshaw: The salary scales and conditions of service for locally engaged staff are set in each country by reference to the good local practice of comparable employers, at a level enabling our posts to recruit, retain and motivate suitable staff. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office greatly values the contribution of its local staff.

British Consulate (Punjab)

Ann Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made to establish the British Consulate office in Jalandhar, Punjab; and if it will provide full consulate services. [4799]

Mr. Bradshaw: We propose to open visa liaison offices in Jalandhar (Punjab) and Ahmedabad (Gujarat). The objective behind this initiative is to make our visa services in India more accessible to our customers. The offices, which will be staffed by locally employed personnel, will assist applicants in completing visa application formalities and offering guidance on visa related matters to those who need it. We also hope that entry clearance officers from Delhi and Bombay will visit the offices on a regular basis to assess the visa applications of those who would find it difficult to undertake the long journey to one of our visa issuing posts, such as old and infirm applicants.

The Indian authorities have welcomed these proposals, but have not yet given formal approval. Without this, we are unable to identify office accommodation or to recruit and train new staff. But we remain committed to opening these offices as soon as possible, and are ready to move quickly once formal agreement is given.

Lord Levy

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what office accommodation, staff and other facilities have been made available to Lord Levy at the Foreign Office. [5259]

Mr. Bradshaw: Lord Levy has the use of an office in the FCO Main Building in London. He receives part-time help from FCO officials as required in support of his role as the Prime Minister's envoy.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what classification of papers and official documents will be seen by Lord Levy. [5260]

Mr. Bradshaw: Lord Levy will see papers and official documents relevant to his role as the Prime Minister's envoy.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events his Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5046]

Mr. Straw: My Department has been involved in many international and national awareness events since June 1997 in support of departmental objectives. The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I would be happy to provide the right hon. Member with further details if he could be specific about the events he has in mind.

Israel

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding *(a)* the seven Israeli soldiers and *(b)* the Israeli civilian, Elchanan Tenenboim, held captive by Hezbollah; and what plans he has to take steps to assist in bringing about their release. [5188]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* This Government condemn hostage taking under any circumstances. On 3 May my right hon. Friend the then Foreign Secretary and my hon. Friend the then Minister of State met the families of the three soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah on 7 October and the reservist Colonel kidnapped on 4 October. We have received a number of letters from Members of this House and members of the public raising their concern about the fate of the captives.

The Government are doing what they can to help and have raised these cases, and continue to do so, with the relevant countries in the region pressing particularly for access to the hostages for the ICRC. We strongly support all efforts to secure the release of all hostages, particularly efforts led by the United Nations Secretary General.

Although there is no clear evidence on the fate of the other four servicemen, three of whom have been missing in action since 1982, it is important that they are not forgotten.

We have continued to raise the fate of these missing servicemen with those who might have information about their whereabouts whenever a suitable opportunity arises.

Visit Visas

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, for each British post abroad which operates a pre-sift system for people applying for visit visas, how many people *(a)* were advised to withdraw their applications and *(b)* followed that advice, in (i) 1999, (ii) 2000 and (iii) 2001 for the latest date for which figures are available. [5406]

Mr. Bradshaw: We do not record the number of applicants who are advised to withdraw their application at the pre-shift stage. To ask posts to provide this information now would require them to carry out a manual search of their records. This could be done only at disproportionate cost.

The number of applications actually withdrawn at posts operating a pre-sift during 1999 and 2000 is shown.

The 2001 figures are based on monthly statistical reports received from the 109 largest posts up to May 2001. The remaining posts submit information on an annual basis. To answer this question for all 164 posts we would have to ask those additional posts to extract the information requested. Given that these posts are smaller it is unlikely that many of them will pre-sift applications.

Pre-sift withdrawals

	Number
1999	
Abdu Dhabi	61
Abuja	43
Accra	1,516
Addis Abba	2,210
Amman	353
Amsterdam	254
Baku	1
Bangkok	46
Banjul	687
Beirut	3
Belgrade	98
Bombay	5,212
Bucharest	216
Calcutta	109
Casablanca	333
Colombo	33
Copenhagen	54
Damascus	958
Dar es Salaam	542
Dhaka	1,002
Dubai	192
Dublin	181
Dusseldorf	564
Geneva	105
Islamabad	24,943
Kampala	21
Khartoum	11
Kingston	858
Lagos	1,341
Los Angeles	2,435
Madras	1,101
Manila	119
Maseru	2
Nairobi	2
New Delhi	6,078
Oslo	85

Pre-sift withdrawals

	Number
Paris	1,741
Peking	2
Quito	149
Rome	349
Sana'a	858
Sarajevo	20
Stockholm	34
Suva	21
Tashkent	1
Tegucigalpa	4
Tehran	1,835
Tunis	463
Ulaan Baatar	40
Wellington	34
2000	
Abu Dhabi	69
Abuja	883
Accra	9,221
Amman	422
Amsterdam	145
Ankara	1
Athens	29
Bangkok	38
Banjul	1,271
Beirut	1
Belgrade	214
Bombay	4,334
Bucharest	2,614
Cairo	246
Calcutta	276
Casablanca	440
Colombo	230
Copenhagen	85
Damascus	1,051
Dar es Salaam	355
Dhaka	610
Dubai	560
Dusseldorf	1,091
Geneva	209
Honiara	1
Islamabad	25,106
Kampala	540
Karachi	1,604
Kiev	80
Kingston	918
Kinshasa	37
Lagos	580
Lima	2
Los Angeles	2,908
Luanda	150
Madras	836
Madrid	58
Manila	163
New Delhi	8,407
Oslo	23
Paris	2,504
Peking	12
Quito	108
Sana'a	812
Stockholm	145
Tehran	1,876
Tripoli	57
Tunis	535
Wellington	120
Zagreb	98
2001[1]	
Abu Dhabi	39
Abuja	186
Accra	3,975
Addis Abba	16
Amman	229

Pre-sift withdrawals

	Number
Amsterdam	22
Ankara	3
Bahrain	8
Banjul	530
Belgrade	75
Bogotá	300
Bombay	1,766
Bucharest	921
Cairo	74
Calcutta	197
Casablanca	141
Colombo	132
Copenhagen	14
Damascus	229
Dar es Salaam	137
Dhaka	352
Dubai	74
Dusseldorf	233
Geneva	79
Islamabad	6,813
Kampala	255
Karachi	1,115
Kiev	52
Kingston	293
Lagos	506
Los Angeles	859
Luanda	137
Madras	612
Madrid	99
Manila	13
New Delhi	4,542
Oslo	4
Paris	967
Peking	102
Quito	72
Sana'a	74
Sarajevo	1
Sofia	1,084
Stockholm	70
Tehran	636
Tunis	257
Washington	2
Wellington	48
Zagreb	49

[1] To May

Gibraltar

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Windsor (Mr. Trend) of 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 473W, what date has been agreed with Spain for the resumption of ministerial-level talks on Gibraltar under the Brussels Process. [6450]

Peter Hain: Ministerial-level talks with Spain on Gibraltar under the Brussels Process will take place in London on 26 July.

Wilton Park Executive Agency

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Wilton Park Executive Agency performed against the targets agreed for 2000–01; and what the agreed targets for the current year are. [6451]

Mr. MacShane: Wilton Park met all four of the agreed targets set for the 2000–01 financial year, for income, cost recovery, the number of conference participants, and cost per head to the FCO overall. Wilton Park's performance in 2000–01 and targets for the current year are shown.

	Income (£)	*Cost recovery (%)*	*Number of conference participants*	*Cost to FCO per participant (£)*
2000–01				
Targets	2,500,000	82.3	2,400	224
Performance	2,870,000	87.4	3,093	134
2001–02				
Targets	2,963,000	86.0	2,400	203

The number of conference participants in 2000–01 was significantly higher than in previous years. This has had a significant impact on the cost-per-participant figure.

Antarctic

Shona McIsaac: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decision there has been on the location of the proposed Antarctic Treaty Secretariat. [6452]

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will announce the establishment of a Secretariat for the Antarctic Environmental Protocol; and if he will make a statement. [5910]

Mr. Bradshaw: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and commonwealth Affairs confirmed to Dr. Adalberto Rodriquez Giarvarini, Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, during their talks in London on 17 July that, in response to commitments made by the Argentine Minister of Defence, Dr. Horacio Jaunarena, in Buenos Aires on 6 July, to strengthen the civilian scientific elements of Argentina's Antarctic programme, the UK would join a consensus on the location of the proposed Antarctic Treaty Secretariat. This was relayed to the recent meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM XXIV) in St. Petersburg. The texts of the Argentine and UK Statements of 6 July and 17 July respectively have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evaluation has been undertaken by his Department of the effects of tourism in the Antarctic. [5908]

Mr. Bradshaw: The UK remains in close contact with other Antarctic Treaty Parties and the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) to ensure adequate regulation of tourism activities, within the jurisdictional constraints peculiar to Antarctica. Under the Antarctic Act 1994 the UK requires tourist voyages undertaken by UK flagged vessels and tourist parties organised in the United Kingdom to obtain permits from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The FCO closely monitors compliance with the permit conditions. The UK is the sole government sponsor of the most comprehensive monitoring programme in the Antarctic Peninsula area aimed at determining what impact tourism might have on environmental and wildlife values.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many days on average were lost per employee in his Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from his Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5049]

Mr. Bradshaw: It has not been possible to collate the information requested in the given timescale. We will write to the right hon. Member shortly and place copies of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

China

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the achievements which have resulted from the policy of constructive engagement with the Chinese Government in respect of advances in human rights. [5696]

Mr. MacShane: Since our human rights dialogue with the Chinese authorities started in 1997, there have been some signs of progress. While these can not be attributed entirely to the dialogue itself, we believe that our dialogue with China, along with that of the EU and a number of other partners, has contributed to this process. Progress includes:

Signature in 1997 and ratification in March 2001 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Signature in October 1998 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Meeting of a bilateral Working Group to promote the ratification and implementation of the provisions of the two International Covenants.

Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, in November 2000 on the provision of human rights technical assistance. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office contributed £60,000 towards first year activities which have included seminars on police and human rights, and reform of the system of administrative detention.

A commitment to work towards abolition of the death penalty, and co-operation with a visit in September 2000 by members of the Foreign Secretary's Death Penalty Panel.

Agreement to a visit to Tibet by the All Party Group on Tibet (although this has yet to be take place).

The provision of greater information on individual cases of concern.

The dialogue process has also facilitated a comprehensive range of targeted UK and EU funded programmes to promote positive change, particularly in the field of rule of law. In July, the FCO funded a Human Rights Law Month, including a Mock Trial, with senior participants including the Lord Chief Justice. Issues addressed by other programmes this year include promoting environmental rights in western China, the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, child rights in Tibet, the legal status of internal migrants and trade union rights.

We continue to press the Chinese authorities to do more to promote greater respect for human rights across the board in China, including in Tibet.

Tibet

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations his Department has had with oil companies concerning oil exploration and railway construction in Tibet. [5914]

Mr. MacShane: We have regular consultations with major British oil companies engaged in business with China. Neither we, nor Trade Partners UK, have, to the best of our knowledge, discussed with them questions of oil exploration or railway building in Tibet.

We are not aware of any British oil companies being directly involved in either oil exploration or railway building in Tibet. We would expect British companies involved in development in Tibet to observe best social and environmental standards.

Indonesia

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions HM Government's Ambassador to Indonesia held with the Indonesian authorities during his visit to the site of British Petroleum's Tangguh project in Bintani Bay, West Papua in June; what are the *(a)* statutory and *(b)* other requirements for the Indonesian security forces to provide security for the project; what arrangements will be made to secure the project; what access local people will have to independent information about the likely impact of the project; and what proportion of the project's revenue will be returned to local communities. [6391]

Mr. Bradshaw: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly and place copies of the letters in the Libraries of the House.

West Papua

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has collated about the number of *(a)* political prisoners and *(b)* other persons subject to arbitrary detention in prison in West Papua; and what representations he has made to the Indonesian authorities concerning their release. [6390]

Mr. Bradshaw: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly and place copies of the letters in the Libraries of the House.

Security Council

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to inform the House on future occasions in which the UK's veto at the United Nations Security Council is used. [5928]

Peter Hain: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Iraq

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received about the causes of the bombing on 19 June of a football pitch at Tal A'far in Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [5018]

Mr. Bradshaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave and the answers my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave to my hon. Friend the Member

for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) on 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, columns 17W and 32W, and 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 539–40.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many holds on applications for imports to Iraq in the sanctions committee of the United Nations Security Council were lifted after *(a)* zero to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months and *(e)* more than one year. [5929]

Peter Hain: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government will advocate lifting the economic sanctions imposed upon Iraq. [6403]

Mr. Bradshaw: UN sanctions on Iraq can only be lifted when Iraq complies with its obligations under Security Council resolutions, including on disarmament. To date, Iraq has refused to do so. Resolution 1284, a UK initiative, introduced the prospect of sanctions suspension, if Iraq co-operates with UN weapons inspectors to a standard well short of that required for sanctions lift. Again, Iraq refuses to engage. In an effort to alleviate the plight of the Iraqi people, the UK and US recently proposed changes to the sanctions regime. Under our proposals there would be no sanctions on ordinary imports, only controls on military and weapons-related goods. Despite widespread international support for this approach, the Security Council was unable to agree the details of the new arrangements earlier this month. But we remain serious about addressing the welfare needs of the Iraqi people and focusing controls on Iraq's weapons. We will continue to work for the adoption of the new approach as soon as possible.

Human Rights

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what UK representation will be at *(a)* the UN Human Rights conference in Geneva in July/August, *(b)* the UN conference on repression in South Africa in August/September and *(c)* the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva in March/April 2002. [5920]

Peter Hain: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Chagos Islands

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with representatives of the Chagos Islands since their visit to the UK. [5919]

Mr. Bradshaw: Since the visits of representatives of the Diego Garcia Island Council and the Chagos Refugee Group to London in April, officials in the British High Commission in Port Louis have had four meetings with Ilois representatives. There has also been a steady flow of correspondence between officials in London and Ilois representatives, and lawyers of Ilois representatives.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what visits to the Chagos Islands have been made by UK officials in the last year; and what visits are planned in the current year. [5918]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Assistant Administrator of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) visited in September 2000. There were monthly visits by MOD staff or military personnel to Diego Garcia and we expect that pattern to continue over the next year. We also expect that the Commissioner, Administrator and Assistant Administrator will make visits over the next 12 months.

Colombia

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Government of Colombia concerning Human Rights abuses and land ownership; and if he will make a statement. [5924]

Mr. MacShane: We have a regular and on-going dialogue with the Colombian Government about the human rights situation in Colombia. Most recently, British Embassy officials in Bogota raised our concerns about the vulnerability of the peace communities in the Department of Choco with the Human Rights Unit of the Vice Presidency's office (on 16 July 2001), and HM Ambassador wrote to the Vice Presidency on 4 July about the disappearance and murder of indigenous leaders in Cauca, expressing his concern and asking the Colombian authorities to investigate and prevent a repetition. In June 2001, the UK and its EU partners strongly supported the proposal of an expanded International Labour Organisation mandate and presence in Colombia to report on trade union rights and the security of trade union members to verify measures taken by the Colombian Government to protect them. This solution was fully endorsed by the Workers Group, the Colombian Government and all the other parties. We regularly discuss forced displacement and the problems it causes; we have made no recent representations to the Colombian Government specifically about land ownership.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the UK financial contribution to Plan Colombia; and what is planned in the current year. [5923]

Mr. MacShane: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Paul Flynn) on 9 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 351W.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the total UK diplomatic and military presence is in Colombia for the latest available date. [5922]

Mr. MacShane: There are 30 UK Diplomatic and military staff accredited in Colombia. This includes the Defence Attaché, his two assistants and the Head of Security at the British Embassy. As at 18 July 2001, 22 of these staff were in Colombia; there are no other UK military personnel in Colombia.

Malaysia

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received from human rights groups concerning the Internal Security Act's operation in Malaysia. [5915]

Mr. Bradshaw: We have received no recent representations but regularly discuss human rights issues, including detentions under the Internal Security Act, with interested parties both in the United Kingdom and in Malaysia.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Zimbabwean High Commission in London regarding acts of violence and intimidation in Zimbabwe. [5998]

Mr. Bradshaw: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has not yet met Zimbabwe's High Commissioner to London. Baroness Amos met the High Commissioner on 26 June and had a wide ranging discussion about the situation in Zimbabwe including the state of the economy and our concerns.

Laos

Andy King: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Laos about the persecution of Christians there; and if he will make a statement. [6395]

Mr. Bradshaw: The British Government are aware of reports of the detention and mis-treatment of Christians in Laos, a country where all group meetings without previous official sanction are illegal. We regularly raise our concerns about the situation of those imprisoned for their beliefs with the Lao Government: most recently with the Deputy Foreign Minister when he visited the UK in June.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the Private Finance Initiative; and if he will make a statement. [5731]

Mr. MacShane: Penalties have been imposed in relation to two PFI contracts during the last five years. The details are commercially confidential.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many PFI transactions have been overseen by his Department in each of the last 10 years; what his estimate is of the cost savings made in each of these transactions by comparison with the public sector alternative; what are the outstanding payments to be made in relation to these transactions for each of the next 15 years; and if he will make a statement. [5730]

Mr. MacShane: The FCO has overseen four PFI projects over the last 10 years. Details are as follows:

(i) 1996—electronic archive system (Minerva) at a cost saving of £140,000 over the public sector comparator.

(ii) 1997—lease of official vehicles through a call-off contract available to posts overseas. Value for money is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

(iii) 1998—construction of the British Embassy in Berlin at a cost saving of £1.2 million over the public sector comparator.

(iv) 2000—establishment of FCO Telecommunications Network at a cost saving of £20.3 million over the public sector comparator.

Published guidance on public sector comparators notes that: "Accounting Officers should not rely solely on a straight comparison of a PFI bid to its PSC, which should never be regarded as a pass/fail test but instead as a quantitative way of informing judgment". (Treasury Taskforce Technical Note No. 5: How to construct a public sector comparator).

Details of individual payments to contractors under PFI contracts are usually regarded as commercially confidential. Aggregate figures of estimated payments under all PFI contracts for the years 2000–01—2025/26 were published in Table C18 of the Budget 2001 "Red Book".

Indian Subcontinent

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many decisions by entry clearance officers refusing entry to visitors from the Indian subcontinent were overturned following the exercise of ministerial discretion by an FCO minister between November 1999 and April 2001; and how many of those visitors have returned. [5857]

Mr. Bradshaw: Between November 1999 and April 2001, 36 decisions to refuse entry clearance to visitors from the Indian subcontinent were overturned following the exercise of ministerial discretion. To date, 28 of those visitors are reported to have left the UK.

Entry Clearance

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 27 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 87W, on entry clearance, what guidance he has given about the exceptional circumstances required for the use of ministerial discretion to overturn an entry clearance officer's decision and about the factors used in deciding whether the entry clearance officer made a correct decision under the rules; and if he will place a copy of the guidelines in the Library. [5856]

Mr. Bradshaw: As my earlier answer set out, FCO Ministers' discretion may only be exercised within the terms of the Immigration Rules. Consequently, all such decisions must be consistent with the rules. Internal guidelines on the use of that discretion are in the process of being revised. I am currently looking at these and will consider whether they should be placed in the Libraries of both Houses in due course.

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person who applied for entry clearance for settlement in *(a)* April, *(b)* May and *(c)* June at (i) each of the posts in the Indian subcontinent, (ii) Lagos, (iii) Abuja, (iv) Accra, (v) Moscow, (vi) Bangkok and (vii) Manila had to wait for interview; and how long a person applying in July may expect to wait. [5405]

Mr. Bradshaw: The waiting times for those persons who applied for entry clearance for settlement at the end of April, May and June (where available) is shown.

Statistics for July are not yet available.

	Waiting time in weeks		
Post	*April 2001*	*May 2001*	*June 2001*
Post using 4 queue system			
Islamabad			
Q1	3	3	
Q2	12	9	
Q3	16	12	
Q4	20	18	
Dhaka			
Q1	18	20	20
Q2	25	16	16
Q3	18	20	20
Q4	39	44	44
New Delhi			
Q1	0	0	0
Q2	12	11	10
Q3	13	14	11
Q4	13	14	11
Bombay			
Q1	0	0	0
Q2	6	6	6
Q3	6	6	6
Q4	6	6	6
Other posts			
Abuja	44	9.6	
Accra	32.50	15	
Bangkok	4.8	5.6	5.4
Calcutta	0	0	3
Colombo	8	9	9
Karachi	4	3	
Lagos	12		10
Madras	2.5	4	3
Manila	20	25	
Moscow	4.2	2.7	

Q1 = Dependent relatives over 65: special compassionate cases
Q2 = Spouses, children under 18
Q3 = Finance(e)s: other settlement categories
Q4 = Reapplicants
Note:
For those posts where figures do not appear we have not received their statistics.

Scotland

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what notification he has received of meetings during the Belgian presidency of the EU where the Belgian delegation will be led by Ministers from the Flemish or Walloon Governments; if he will provide details of the subject matters of these meetings; and if he will make a statement; [5800]

(2) if it is his intention for a UK delegation to EU meetings during the Belgian presidency to be led by Scottish Executive Ministers; [5799]

(3) what discussions have been held between Scottish Executive and Her Majesty's Government regarding UK support for the proposals in the agreement of the constitutional regions, with particular reference to the proposal for direct access for the Scottish Executive to the European Court of Justice; what his policy is in respect of the agreement; and if he will make a statement; [5802]

(4) if he will set out the mechanism by which it is agreed with the Scottish Executive who will lead the UK delegation to EU Council of Ministers meetings; if it is the presumption in all cases that UK delegations are led by the UK Government; and if he will make a statement; [5801]

(5) in respect of each year since 1999, how many delegations to European Union meetings have *(a)* included Scottish Executive Ministers and *(b)* been led by a Scottish Executive Minister; if he will list the subject matter and location of each meeting; and if he will make a statement. [5798]

Peter Hain: I will write to the hon. Member shortly and place copies of the letters in the Libraries of the House.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for promoting Scottish trade, tourism and inward investment; if he will list the events or activities he has specifically arranged for the next six months in *(a)* the UK, *(b)* Europe and *(c)* the rest of the world for such promotion; and if he will list the documents his Department has produced, and the events his Department has organised over the last three years, which specifically and exclusively promote Scottish trade, tourism and inward investment. [5817]

Mr. MacShane: My Department—through British Trade International—promotes the whole of the UK as a location for inward investment and delivers export advice and support to companies throughout the UK. It works closely with Scottish Trade International and Locate in Scotland both within the UK and overseas. I urge all ambassadors to serve Scottish whisky at receptions and official meals. The promotion of the UK as a destination for tourism is primarily a matter for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Azerbaijan

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has made to the Government of Azerbaijan concerning freedom of assembly and political expression in Azerbaijan; [6011]

(2) if he will make a statement on relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia; [6012]

(3) if he will make representations to *(a)* the President and *(b)* Foreign Office of Azerbaijan about the attempts to seize the headquarters of the National Independence Party of Azerbaijan. [6013]

Peter Hain: I will write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he had made to the Government of Sri Lanka concerning the suspension of the Sri Lankan Parliament; and if he will make a statement; [6008]

(2) if he will ask the Commonwealth to send observers to the forthcoming referendum in Sri Lanka; [6009]

(3) what plans he has to send election observers to oversee the forthcoming referendum in Sri Lanka. [6010]

Mr. Bradshaw: I will write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Departmental Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the top 10 companies to which his Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6421]

Mr. MacShane: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly and place copies of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

Highways Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what action has been taken following the discovery of the overspend by the Highways Agency; and how many civil servants have been disciplined; [1037]

(2) what discussions have been held with the Highways Agency about the recovery of the overspend on financial consultants; [1036]

(3) when he will answer the question on the Highways Agency tabled for answer on 26 June 2001 by the Member for Crewe and Nantwich. [5675]

Mr. Spellar: In its reply to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee's Seventh Report, the Government concluded that progress on the introduction of resource accounting in the Highways Agency was slower than expected and that there were shortcomings in both the procurement of consultancy support and the management of the project. The costs of implementing resource accounting in the agency reflect the agency's large and complex asset base valued at some £60 billion, and its annual capital and revenue budget of approximately £1.5 billion. The agency has dealt with the concerns raised and put in place robust systems and procedures for the future management of its contracts. Financial recovery was not an appropriate response. Appropriate managerial action was taken with the civil servant concerned.

Road Network

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what was the increase in road transport journeys in the last four years; and what change was made to the capacity of the road network during the same period. [1602]

Mr. Byers: The information is contained in the DTLR National Travel Survey, 1998–2000 update, a copy of which is in the Library.

Road Schemes

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list *(a)* road widening schemes for the strategic road network, *(b)* major trunk road schemes, *(c)* new bypasses on trunk and local roads and *(d)* local road improvement schemes outlined in "Transport 2010: The 10 Year Plan", indicating in each case when work will commence. [3539]

Mr. Jamieson: The 10 Year Plan sets out the funding to be made available for 360 miles of motorway and trunk road widening and associated junction improvements, 80 major schemes tackling bottlenecks at other junctions, 100 new bypasses and over 100 other local road improvement schemes. Decisions on individual schemes and on their timing will depend upon the outcome of the multi-modal studies and decisions taken in the context of Regional Planning Strategies in the case of trunk roads and the local transport plan in the case of local roads. Schemes will also have to be appraised using the New Approach to Appraisal.

Road Traffic

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local government and the Regions what his forecast is of the likely rate of increase in road traffic in the next four years. [1606]

Mr. Byers: The relevant figures are contained in the National Road Traffic Forecasts (Great Britain) 1997, a copy of which is in the Libraries of the House.

Special Advisers

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) if he will list the special advisers in his Department together with their date of appointment and their responsibilities; which of them are authorised to speak to the media; and if he will make a statement. [1288]

(2) if he will list the special advisers in his Department together with their date of appointment and their responsibilities; which of them are authorised to speak to the media; and if he will make a statement. [3417]

Dr. Whitehead: DTLR has approval for the appointment of three full time equivalent special advisers, covering the range of departmental responsibilities:

Jo Moore took up post on 11 June

Dan Corry took up post on 18 June

Michael Dugher will take up post on 1 August

Special advisers are authorised to speak to the media as necessary in fulfilling their duties.

Millennium Dome

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will arrange for hon. Members to visit the dome building. [3102]

Ms Keeble *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* My noble Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning would be happy to arrange a visit at an appropriate time.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the potential liability to public funds resulting from litigation by Legacy plc over the withdrawal of preferred bidder status in relation to the dome sale. [5130]

Ms Keeble *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* No such liability exists.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Wellcome Trust, *(b)* Grosvenor Estates, *(c)* Quintain and *(d)* the BBC regarding the future of the dome. [5125]

Ms Keeble *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* As part of the on-going process, the Dome sale team has had, and continues to have, numerous meetings and discussions with interested parties concerning the future use of the Dome.

To reveal details of any of these discussions could compromise the on-going process and would be against the public interest. It is of course open to interested organisations to make their interest public.

The market testing has revealed a wide range of interest in the dome and the regeneration of land on the peninsula. Market testing continues.

The future of the dome is a key factor in the continued regeneration of the Greenwich Peninsula. We are keeping other major stakeholders—particularly Greenwich Council—informed of progress, and the Greenwich Peninsula Partnership continues to evolve.

The Government will continue to keep Parliament informed of the progress being made.

South-east Second Runway Study

Laura Moffatt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress is being made on the south-east second runway study; and when it will complete its work. [3169]

Mr. Jamieson: The South East and East of England Study (SERAS) is examining a wide range of options at existing airports and new sites. We have completed the development and initial appraisal of a long list of options at individual sites and are now considering which options to take forward to Stage 2.

Stage 2 will involve the more detailed appraisal of a number of packages of options providing differing levels of capacity. Towards the end of the study, options will be narrowed down to a short list on which there will be full public consultation before Ministers make decisions.

We expect the study to be completed towards the end of this year. Public consultation will take place following completion of the study and the Secretary of State's decisions on the fifth terminal at Heathrow.

Following the public consultation we will carefully analyse the responses and consider these as part of our comprehensive review of aviation and airports policy and looking ahead for 30 years we shall set out our conclusions in next year's White Paper.

Rail Services (London)

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to proceed with *(a)* an east-west rail link in London, *(b)* the Thameslink 2000 project and *(c)* an extension to the East London Line; and what the timetable is for construction. [3430]

Mr. Spellar: As my predecessor announced on 3 May, the Strategic Rail Authority and Transport for London are jointly taking forward work on project definition, including alternative service patterns, and design development of an east-west cross-London rail link. Once a project has been worked up, statutory powers would be required before it could be implemented. Construction of such a link could not in any event begin before 2005–06.

We are awaiting the Inspector's report on Railtrack's applications under the Transport and Works Act 1992 in respect of the Thameslink 2000 project. I cannot prejudge the eventual decision, but if the project receives approval, construction could begin in 2003.

The Inspector's report on London Underground Ltd.'s application under the Transport and Works Act 1992 in respect of the southern extensions to the East London Line is currently under consideration. Again, I cannot prejudge the outcome, but if this project were to receive approval, construction could begin in 2003. London Underground Ltd., under SRA sponsorship, intends to start work on the northern extension later this year, powers for which have already been approved.

Rail Line Modernisation

Mr. Syms: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the timetable for the modernisation of the *(a)* East Coast Main Line and *(b)* West Coast Main Line. [3556]

Mr. Jamieson: A project development group led by the Strategic Rail Authority is currently reviewing Railtrack's proposals for the upgrade of the East Coast Main Line, including the time scales. Railtrack's proposals include four phases—to be completed in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010.

Railtrack have stated that they are committed to completing the West Coast Main Line route modernisation to schedule. Phase I of the work is due to be completed in 2002; the principal outputs of Phase II are due to be delivered in 2005.

Council Tax

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what levels of payment have been made to local authorities to recompense them through the premium support grant for the 50 per cent. council tax discount given to *(a)* second homes and *(b)* other dwellings entitled to the 50 per cent. discount in each of the last two years (i) by district and (ii) by county and unitary authority. [4331]

Dr. Whitehead: Our best estimates of the recompense in 2001–02 are £80 million in relation to second homes and £140 million in relation to discounts for other dwellings.

Corresponding estimates for 2000–01 and comparable figures for either year for each district and county/unitary area in England are not available.

In the Rural White Paper the Government indicated that there would be consultation on a proposal that the additional council tax raised from ending the discount should be retained by the local authorities concerned.

Muslim Burial Places

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what advice he has issued to local authorities on the provision of burial places for the Muslim community. [4032]

Ms Keeble: No specific advice has been issued. However, under Article 5(1) of the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, burial authorities are empowered to set aside for the use of a particular denomination or religious body any part of a cemetery, which has not been consecrated. In addition, Planning Policy Guidance note 12—Development Plans, requires local authorities to consider the social needs of their area when preparing local plans and to make provision for community facilities, which could include cemeteries and crematoria.

Heavy Rail Network

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many *(a)* new miles of track and *(b)* new stations have been opened within the heavy rail network in each year from 1980. [4168]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Waterloo Station

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what proposals there are to improve the roads and environment around Waterloo station; and if he will make a statement. [4730]

Mr. Jamieson: This is a matter for Transport for London and Lambeth borough council. For further information contact Derek Turner, the Director of Street Management at Transport for London, Windsor House, 42–50 Victoria street, London, SW1H OTL, or Michael Bridgland, Head of Transportation and Highways, London borough of Lambeth, Blue Star House, 234–244, Stockwell road, Brixton Hill, London SW9 9SP.

Electoral Systems

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will complete his review of the electoral systems used in the last European parliamentary elections. [4310]

Dr. Whitehead *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* A Home Office review of the 1999 European parliamentary election was published in May 2000 and a copy placed in the House of Commons Library. It is also available on the Home Office website.

Local Government Act

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what action he has taken to change the use of his powers under the Local Government Act 1974 to achieve compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998; and if he will make a statement. [4552]

Dr. Whitehead: The Local Government Act 1974 makes provision for the Commission for Local Administration in England. We have taken no action to change the use of the Secretary of State's powers in relation to these provisions, since we see no case to do so.

Regional Differentials

Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what information his Department has collated on the differential difficulties in *(a)* recruitment, *(b)* market rates of pay and *(c)* retention of essential public services staff in (i) the south-east and (ii) the north-east; and if he will make a statement on continued area cost adjustments in local government finance. [4794]

Dr. Whitehead: We receive information from other Government Departments, in particular the Department for Education and Skills, the Department of Health and the Home Office, about the recruitment and retention of teachers, social services staff and police officers.

The present Area Cost Adjustment mechanism used in the local government revenue grant distribution system is based on differences in labour costs and rates costs in different parts of England. Information on labour costs is taken from the New Earnings Survey. This enables us to calculate the market rates of pay in different areas of the country and to reflect the higher costs of certain areas in the funding provided to local authorities. The current system does not include specific factors for differential recruitment and retention rates, as these issues should already be reflected in the prevailing pay levels in an area and therefore captured within the earnings data.

It is generally accepted that the grant distribution system needs to reflect higher labour costs in parts of the country. Our current review of the system includes a review of how exactly that should be done.

Housing Survey

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what proportion of children live in a home that is not defined by the English House Conditions Survey as decent at the latest date for which figures are available. [4809]

Mr. Byers: I will write to my right hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

Rail Franchises

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to alter targets for train operating companies in future franchise negotiations with the Strategic Rail Authority relating to *(a)* punctuality, *(b)* levels of overcrowding, *(c)* numbers of standing passengers, and *(d)* age of rolling stock. [4797]

Mr. Jamieson: Where the Strategic Rail Authority have negotiated replacement franchises an ultimate target of 15 out of 16 trains arriving punctually has been set. The existing method of monitoring overcrowding through the passengers in excess of capacity mechanism has been maintained. There are no target dates for the age of rolling

stock, but the Government have made regulations requiring that slam-door Mark 1 stock must be removed from the network by the end of 2004.

Our draft franchising policy statement issued on 16 July asks the Strategic Rail Authority to take a fresh look at what can be achieved within existing franchises to drive up safety, punctuality and comfort across all franchised services.

Track Conditions

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the condition of track on Britain's railways in *(a)* each year since 1995–96 and *(b)* each month since April 1995. [4790]

Mr. Jamieson: Assessment of track condition is not susceptible to presentation in the form requested. However, the Rail Regulator in April this year amended Railtrack's network licence to require from April 2002 an annual report on the performance and condition of their network over the previous year.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many broken rails there were on Britain's railways in *(a)* each year since 1995–96, and *(b)* each month since April 1995. [4832]

Mr. Jamieson: Details on broken rails can be found in HM Chief Inspector of Railways' annual reports on railway safety, copies of which are placed in both House Libraries. The number of broken rails on Britain's railways since 1995–96 are also shown in the table. Providing the monthly number of broken rails since 1995–96 can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Broken rails 1995–96 to 2000–01

	Railtrack infrastructure	*London Underground Limited*	*Other railways*	*Total*
1995–96	752	30	10	792
1996–97	709	27	3	739
1997–98	755	43	2	800
1998–99	952	33	3	988
1999–2000	919	29	1	949
2000–01	618	18	5	641

Note:
2000–01 data are provisional and subject to possible change.

Train Operating Companies

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the punctuality statistics for each train operating company for each month since April 1995. [4831]

Mr. Jamieson: The Strategic Rail Authority and its predecessor Opraf have produced regular statistics on train operator performance in its Performance Bulletin and since June 2000 in its "On Track" publication. Copies of these are available in the Library of the House. These publications are also available on the SRA's website: www.sra.gov.uk.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list for each train operating company *(a)* the percentage of journeys on which maximum levels of overcrowding were exceeded and *(b)* the average number of standing passengers per journey in (i) each year since 1995–96 and (ii) each month since April 1995. [4795]

Mr. Jamieson: The Strategic Rail Authority does not monitor passenger numbers in the form in which the information is requested.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the average age of fleet for each train operating company *(a)* was for each month since their franchise was awarded, *(b)* was for each year since their franchise was awarded and *(c)* is projected for each year under the remainder of their franchise agreement; and if he will make a statement. [4796]

Mr. Jamieson: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the table shows the current life expiry of existing rolling stock on the network. The Government have made regulations requiring the removal of Mark 1 slam-door stock by the end of 2004. Since privatisation, over 3,300 new passenger vehicles have been ordered of which nearly half are in service or expected to enter service by the end of 2001.

TOC	*Class*	*Life expiry*
Anglia	150	2017
	153	2017
	170	2034
	Mk2	2004
	Mk3	2006
	86	2004
Arriva Trains Northern	142	2016
	144	2014
	150	2016
	153	2016
	155	2018
	156	2018
	158	2020
	321	2024
	333	2035
ATML	507	2014
	508	2014
C2C	357	2035
Cardiff Railway	142	2016
	143	2016
	150	2016
Central	150	2016
	153	2016
	156	2018
	158	2020
	170	2034
	323	2029
Chiltern	165	2021
	168	2034
Cross Country	158	2020
	220	2035
	221	2035
	Mk2	2002
	Mk3	2009
	47	2002
	86	2002
FGE	315	2015
	321	2024
	360	2035
FGW	180	2035
	Mk2	2006
	Mk3	2009
	43	2009
	47	2002

TOC	Class	Life expiry
FNW	142	2016
	150	2016
	153	2016
	156	2018
	158	2020
	175	2035
	323	2030
Gatwick	460	2034
GNER	Mk4	2002
	Mk3	2009
	43	2009
	91	2020
Island Line	483	2002
MML	170	2034
	Mk3	2009
	43	2009
ScotRail	150	2016
	156	2018
	158	2020
	170	2034
	314	2014
	318	2021
	320	2025
	334	2035
	Mk1	2002
	Mk2	2004
Silverlink	150	2016
	321	2024
	313	2012
South Central	205/7	2002
	319	2022
	455	2018
	456	2025
South Eastern	365	2032
	375	2035
	465	2029
	466	2029
	508	2014
SWT	159	2022
	170	2035
	442	2019
	455	2019
	458	2035
Thames	165	2022
	166	2022
Thameslink	319	2022
W&W	143	2015
	153	2016
	150	2017
	158	2020
WAGN	313	2012
	315	2015
	317	2018
	365	2032

Train Overcrowding

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his Department's definition is of overcrowding for each train operating company *(a)* at present and *(b)* at the time the franchise was awarded; and if he will make a statement. [4833]

Mr. Jamieson: Specific definitions or thresholds for capacity apply to peak commuter services in London and Edinburgh only. Each train in use has a nominal capacity and operators must plan their services so that the aggregate number of passengers in excess of capacity does not exceed 3 per cent. over both the morning and evening peak, or 4.5 per cent. for either peak in isolation. For journeys of over 20 minutes the nominal capacity of the train is equal to the number of seats. For journeys of under 20 minutes the nominal capacity is equal to the number of seats plus the number of passengers who can stand at a density of $0.55m^2$ per passenger. These calculations apply today as they did at the time of franchising. Reducing overcrowding is a key target of our 10-Year Plan, particularly for commuter services.

SPADs

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the number of signals passed at danger on Britain's railways in *(a)* each year since 1995–96 and *(b)* each month since April 1995. [4791]

Mr. Jamieson: Information on the number of signals passed at danger (SPAD) incidents are published in the Health and Safety Executive's monthly SPAD reports, copies of which are placed in both Libraries of the House.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many train drivers have been prosecuted for passing through a red light since 1990. [5240]

Mr. Byers: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has not prosecuted any drivers in the period since 1990. The British Transport Police occasionally carry out legal proceedings against drivers, as they did for example following the accident at Watford Junction on 8 August 1996, although the driver was acquitted. Train operating companies operate their own internal disciplinary procedures.

Foreign Seafarers (Certification)

Mr. Prosser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many certificates of equivalent competency have been issued to foreign seafarers by the United Kingdom maritime administration in each year since the scheme began. [4837]

Mr. Jamieson: The MCA has issued the following number of certificates of equivalent competency in each year since the scheme began in 1997:

Year	Number of CECs
1997	37
1998	257
1999	363
2000	1,107
2001	826

Mr. Prosser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what steps the Maritime and Coastguard Agency takes to ensure that the certificates held by foreign seafarers serving on British ships are genuine. [4839]

Mr. Jamieson: When foreign seafarers serving on UK ships present their certificates for recognition, the MCA scrutinises the documents and any suspicious certificates are checked with the issuing administration. Spot checks are also carried out on foreign certificates by checking authenticity with the issuing administration.

Mr. Prosser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when the Government intend to extend United Kingdom work permit requirements to foreign seafarers serving on ships in United Kingdom coastal cargo and ferry trades. [4840]

Mr. Jamieson: Since 1996 work permit arrangements have applied to seafarers engaged in domestic shipping services in the UK where these services are provided by ships requiring a passenger certificate. This includes passenger ferries. It also covers roll-on/roll-off freight services where 12 or more lorry drivers are on board.

On 1 April 2001 the seafarer work permit system was extended to domestic scheduled freight services generally.

The arrangements apply to seafarers who are not European Economic Area (EEA) nationals. Such seafarers need work permits if they are serving on ships registered in the UK or in a foreign state other than an EEA state.

Mr. Prosser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the countries whose officer certificates are automatically recognised by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. [4835]

Mr. Jamieson: The officer certificates of other countries are only recognised when the training and certification system of that country has been assessed and is considered to afford an equivalent level of technical competence to the UK system. All officers whose mother tongue is not English or whose examinations were not conducted in English, must satisfy the MCA of their competence in the English Language. All senior officers, except the holders of Irish certificates of competency, must satisfy the MCA that they have knowledge of UK maritime legislation appropriate to their functions aboard ship. Recognition under STCW 95 is subject to final European Commission approval. At present, under STCW 78 we recognise officer certificates of competency from the following administrations:

Belgium
Denmark
Eire
Faroe Islands
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Italy
Netherlands
Portugal
Spain
Sweden
Australia
Canada
Croatia
Estonia
Hong Kong
Iceland
India
Jamaica
Latvia
Lithuania
Malta
Myanmar
Norway
Pakistan
Poland
Romania
Russia
Singapore
South Africa
Ukraine
USA.

Mr. Prosser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many foreign seafarers were granted United Kingdom certificates of competency in each year since the scheme began, broken down by nationality. [4838]

Mr. Jamieson: The United Kingdom has granted certificates of competency for around 150 years and until recently there has been no record kept of the nationality of the seafarers concerned. Since the introduction of the MCA's electronic database in 1998, records of nationality have been kept and are as follows.

	1998	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*Total*
Algeria	0	1	3	0	4
Argentina	0	3	0	0	3
Australia	3	3	12	11	29
Bahrain	0	3	3	1	7
Bangladesh	41	123	149	117	430
Barbados	0	0	1	0	1
Belgium	0	0	1	0	1
Brazil	0	0	0	1	1
Brunei Dar	0	1	4	1	6
Cameroon	0	1	0	1	2
Canada	0	1	3	1	5
Cape Verde	0	1	0	0	1
China	2	2	0	0	4
Columbia	0	0	1	0	1
Croatia	0	0	0	2	2
Cyprus	0	0	1	0	1
Denmark	0	3	1	0	4
Ecuador	0	1	0	0	1
Egypt	0	1	1	1	3
Eire	14	18	17	6	55
Ethiopia	1	5	9	7	22
Fiji	0	1	0	0	1
France	0	1	0	5	6
Gambia	0	2	0	2	4
Georgia	0	1	0	1	2
Germany	0	1	3	3	7
Ghana	2	14	44	37	97
Greece	1	1	1	0	3
Guyana	0	0	1	0	1
Hong Kong	0	0	1	2	3
Iceland	0	0	1	1	2
India	190	655	852	563	2,260
Indonesia	0	0	1	1	2
Iran	0	17	48	16	81
Iraq	0	5	8	4	17
Italy	0	0	0	5	5
Jamaica	0	0	1	1	2
Kenya	0	4	12	2	18
Kiribati	0	1	4	4	9
Kuwait	0	14	7	9	30
Lebanon	0	1	0	0	1
Liberia	0	1	0	0	1
Malawi	0	0	1	1	2
Malaysia	2	2	20	7	31
Maldives	0	1	0	1	2
Malta	2	1	5	0	8

	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
Mauritania	0	0	1	0	1
Mauritius	0	1	1	1	3
Myanmar	1	0		0	1
Netherlands	0	1	1	3	5
New Zealand	3	7	9	15	34
Nigeria	1	12	19	31	63
Oman	0	5	1	1	7
Pakistan	70	153	196	126	545
Panama	1	1	0	0	2
Portugal	0	1	1	0	2
Qatar	0	0	0	1	1
Seychelles	0	3	0	0	3
Singapore	1	3	2	4	10
Slovenia	0	0	1	0	1
South Africa	2	2	2	4	10
Spain	0	0	2	0	2
Sri Lanka	15	51	48	46	160
Saudi Arabia	1	15	15	11	42
Sweden	1	0	2	1	4
Switzerland	0	0	0	1	1
Trinidad and Tobago	2	0	0	6	8
Uganda	0	0	0	1	1
UAE	8	0	0	12	20
Total	364	1,145	1,517	1,078	4,104

Maritime Training

Mr. Prosser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of compliance of the International Maritime Organisation's whitelist of countries with the provisions of the 1995 International Standards of Training. [4836]

Mr. Jamieson: The MCA has made assessment visits to Australia, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Myanmar New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore and USA. All are deemed to be in compliance with STCW 95. All are deemed to be in compliance with STCW 95. The assessments reviewed education, training, certification and administration.

In relation to the continued recognition of certificates competency issued by other administrations, assessments will be undertaken either by the MCA or in co-operation with our EU partners. MCA visits are planned for India, Pakistan and Canada.

Recognition of third country STCW 95 certificates by EU Member States is subject to European Commission approval procedures.

Fire Service (Training)

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to ensure that the training of senior officers in the fire service forms an integral part of safety management arrangements within the Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1999. [4853]

Dr. Whitehead: The Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 require the operators of certain potential hazardous establishments to prepare on-site emergency plans. The local authority for areas where there are such establishments is required to prepare off-site emergency plans including the involvement of the fire service. These plans are required to be tested at least at three-yearly intervals.

The emergency procedures and training are largely site-specific to the potential risks presented by each establishment. Specific training to enable senior fire service officers to deal with major hazardous materials incidents is provided centrally at the Fire Service College in the form of the Hazardous Materials and Environmental Protection course.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list those bodies responsible for training requirements within the fire service which are responsible for safety; and if he will make a statement. [4854]

Dr. Whitehead: Fire authorities, as employers, are responsible for the enforcement of safe systems at work in their local fire service. The Health and Safety executive is responsible for the enforcement of health and safety and the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council provides advice and guidance to the Minister about the appropriate training for the Fire Service.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what guidance he has issued to HMI about assessing virtual reality training in the fire service. [4855]

Dr. Whitehead: Updated guidance on the inspection process is regularly issued within Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI). Based on this guidance HMFSI assess virtual reality training arrangements within the overall inspections of brigades.

Asbestos Deaths

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many deaths were caused by exposure to asbestos in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement. [4789]

Dr. Whitehead: In 1998, the year in which the most recent data are available, a total of around 1,600 deaths were attributable to asbestos exposure. Between 1,500 and 3,000 lung cancer deaths each year may also be attributable to asbestos, but these cannot be determined exactly since they are individually indistinguishable from cancers due to other causes such as smoking.

Liquid Biofuels

Mrs. Brinton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the potential of liquid biofuels to *(a)* improve local air quality, *(b)* save energy and *(c)* cut greenhouse gases. [5386]

Mr. Jamieson: As assessment of the environmental benefits of several potential liquid biofuels in the road transport sector was made by DETR for the Government's Green Fuel Challenge. A summary of this assessment is in the House of Commons Library and on the internet at: http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/index.htm.

Mrs. Brinton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to allocate financial assistance to the development of liquid biofuels. [5325]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government are supporting the development of liquid biofuels through fiscal measures: in response to the Green Fuel Challenge, the Chancellor

announced in the 2001 Budget the introduction of 20p/l duty cut for biodiesel, relative to ultra low sulphur diesel, from Budget 2002. Limited duty reductions or exemptions for viable pilot projects supporting research and development into other potential liquid biofuels, such as bioethanol and biogas, will be also granted.

Bus Travel

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what research his Department is undertaking to establish the cost and feasibility of establishing a national school bus strategy; and what the cost is of the proposed pilot scheme approved by his Department. [4908]

Ms Keeble: My Department has recently commissioned a study to test the likely take-up, by children who are not entitled to free home-to-school transport, if additional school transport services were provided and the extent to which this might be influenced by cost and other factors. Separately, FirstGroup has told us that many authorities are interested in running pilot schemes using American-style yellow school buses. We reached agreement with FirstGroup earlier in the year on modifications to the vehicles it intends to use for the pilots so that they will satisfy UK regulatory requirements. We intend to commission a study to monitor these pilot schemes once they have been agreed. The cost of the pilot schemes is a matter for FirstGroup and the local authorities concerned who will wish to be assured that the pilot schemes give value for money.

Secure Stations Scheme

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when it is expected that *(a)* 25 per cent., *(b)* 50 per cent., *(c)* 75 per cent. and *(d)* 100 per cent. of stations will be accredited under the secure stations scheme; and if he will make a statement. [4875]

Ms Keeble: The Department has not set any targets for the number of stations to be accredited under the secure stations scheme. The scheme is a voluntary one and it is up to the Train Operating Companies to decide which of their stations to put through the Scheme's accreditation process.

There are currently 110 stations accredited under the secure stations scheme. This includes three reaccreditations. We are aware that a number of stations are currently working towards accreditation and that some train operating companies have a commitment to the scheme within their franchises. We will continue to work with the rail industry to encourage further accreditations. The Strategic Rail Authority is seeking to encourage train operators to obtain more accreditations at appropriate locations in the franchise replacement and extension process.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions which stations are accredited under the secure stations scheme *(a)* for each month since the scheme began and *(b)* expected for the end of each year between 2001 and 2010; and what proportion they represent of the total number of stations. [4876]

Ms Keeble: The list sets out records the name of each station accredited under the Secure Stations Scheme and the month it was accredited.

August 1998
- Derby

September 1998
- Market Harborough
- Hither Green
- Waterloo International

December 1998
- Marylebone

January 1999
- Glasgow Central High Level

February 1999
- Victoria

March 1999
- Kings Cross
- Marylebone LUL
- Ashford International
- Weston-super-Mare

April 1999
- Kingston
- Richmond

May 1999
- Leicester

August 1999
- Charing Cross

October 1999
- Basildon
- Belvedere
- City Thameslink
- Fenchurch Street
- Manchester Piccadilly
- Kew Gardens

December 1999
- Gloucester
- Sutton Common
- Wimbledon Chase
- South Merton
- Morden South
- St. Helier
- Haydons Road

January 2000
- Limehouse
- St. Pancras
- Wimbledon
- Surbiton
- Guildford
- Woking

February 2000
- Chalkwell
- Thorpe Bay
- Chelmsford
- Newark Northgate

May 2000
- Southampton Airport Parkway
- Eastleigh
- Winchester
- Feltham

June 2000
- Westcliff
- Rainham
- Dagenham Dock
- Benfleet
- East Tilbury
- Grays
- Laindon
- Barking
- Southend Central
- Leigh-on-Sea
- Kilburn Park
- Tilbury Town
- Purfleet
- Stanford-Le-Hope
- Tooting
- Liverpool Street
- West Horndon
- Southend East
- Shoeburyness
- Paddington
- Charlton
- Greenwich

July 2000
- Chafford Hundred

August 2000
- Worthing
- Maidstone West
- Orpington
- West Sutton
- Upminster

October 2000
- Edinburgh Waverley
- Chipstead
- Dorking
- Horsham
- Tattenham Corner
- Oxted
- Eastbourne

November 2000
- Charing Cross LUL
- London Bridge

December 2000
- Ockendon

January 2001
- Stoke Mandeville
- Pitsea

February 2001
- Bracknell
- Haslemere
- Fareham
- Salisbury
- Twickenham
- Putney
- Waterloo International (reaccreditation)
- Waterloo
- Birmingham New Street

March 2001
- Euston
- Ashford International (reaccreditation)

April 2001
- Exeter Central
- Barnstaple
- Truro
- Penzance
- Chippenham

May 2001
- Alton
- Andover
- Ascot
- Basingstoke
- Farnborough
- Havant
- Hounslow
- Petersfield
- Southampton Central
- Windsor and Eton Riverside

June 2001
- Farnham
- Fratton
- Godalming

July 2001
- Gatwick Airport
- Glasgow Central High Level (reaccreditation).

The percentage of stations accredited under the scheme is very small in relation to the number of stations eligible to be accredited under the scheme. However, the accredited stations account for approximately one third of the total annual passenger throughput of overground rail journeys.

The Department has not set any targets for the number of stations to be accredited under the secure stations scheme. The scheme is a voluntary one and it is up to the train operating companies to decide which of their stations to put through the scheme's accreditation process.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made with the secure stations scheme; and if he will make a statement. [4877]

Ms Keeble: There are currently 110 stations accredited under the secure stations scheme. This includes three reaccreditations. The secure stations scheme, which was launched in April 1998, is designed to improve and standardise good security practices at all overground and underground stations. To become an accredited secure

station, each station operator needs to work with their local British Transport Police crime reduction officer to ensure that their station meets the national standards on design and management to cut down crime. The standards relate to such measures as staff training, Help Points, CCTV, lighting and information. Operators also have to conduct an independent passenger survey to see whether passengers feel safe at the station, and provide evidence that crime rates are low.

We are aware that a number of stations are currently working towards accreditation and we will continue to work with the rail industry to encourage further accreditations. The Strategic Rail Authority is seeking to encourage train operators to obtain more accreditations at appropriate locations in the franchise replacement and extension process.

Ms Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made with the secure stations scheme in south east London. [6227]

Ms Keeble: There are currently 110 stations accredited under the secure stations scheme. Of these, six are in south-east London. They are as follows:

Charlton

Greenwich

Hither Green

London Bridge

Waterloo

Waterloo International.

We are aware that a number of stations are currently working towards accreditation and that some train operating companies have a commitment to the scheme within their franchises. We will continue to work with the rail industry to encourage further accreditations. The Strategic Rail Authority is seeking to encourage train operators to obtain more accreditations at appropriate locations in the franchise replacement and extension process.

Train Passenger Information

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what measures he is taking to improve real time information for passengers on Britain's railways; and if he will make a statement. [4878]

Mr. Jamieson: We are working with transport operators, public authorities and technology providers to improve travel information on all modes. Transport Direct, a programme described in the 10 Year Transport Plan, includes real-time train operating information by 2003.

Railtrack are currently developing a "Real Time Train Movements" system, at the behest of the Association of Train Operating Companies which could feed information to all who need it. The Strategic Rail Authority are currently considering what resources they have to contribute to the funding of the system.

Transport Infrastructure Projects

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions which new transport infrastructure projects initiated since May 1997 will be open before June 2006. [4871]

Mr. Jamieson: Details of relevant schemes are given under the headings of "Trunk Road Schemes"; "Railways"; and "Local Transport Major Schemes". For the purpose of this answer I have defined "initiated" as meaning that formal approval to these schemes has been given since May 1997.

Trunk road schemes

Following the Roads Review the Government set out a targeted programme of trunk road improvements in 1998. The following TPI schemes will be open by June 2006:

Roads	
A1	Willowburn-Denwick Improvement
A6	Clapham Bypass
A6	Great Glen Bypass
A11	Roudham Heath-Attleborough Dualling
A27	Polegate Bypass
A41	Aston Clinton Bypass
A43	Whitfield Turn-Brackley Hatch Improvement
A43	Silverstone Bypass
A43	M40-B4031 Dualling
A63	Selby Bypass
A66	Stainburn and Great Clifton Bypass
A500	Basford, Hough, Shavington Bypasss
A650	Bingley Relief Road
A1033	Hedon Road Improvement, Hull

The following contracts are still to be let. The precise timing of the start of work will be a matter for the contractor. These schemes should also be open by 2006:

Roads	
A5	Nesscliffe Bypass
A6	Rothwell—Desborough Bypass
A6	Rushden and Higham Ferrers Bypass
A10	Wadesmill-Colliers End Bypass
A21	Lamberhurst Bypass
A46	Newark-Lincoln Improvement
A120	Stanstead Braintree
A6	Alvaston
M25	Junctions 12–15 Widening
A1(M)	Ferrybridge to Hook Moor
A1(M)	Wetherby to Walshford
A249	Iwade—Queenborough Improvement
M60	Junctions 5–8 (formerly M63 J6–9 Widening)

Railways

Major new rail infrastructure projects initiated since May 1997 and due to open before June 2006 are:

Chiltern re-doubling (Bicester to Princes Risborough)

East Coast Main Line Phase I

Train Protection and Warning System

Cross Country Upgrade

Tyne and Wear Metro extension to Sunderland

Parts of the South Central and South West Trains replacement proposals

Gauge enhancements and other facilities for freight services.

Additionally, Channel Tunnel Rail Link Phases I and II have been given the go-ahead following the collapse of the original 1996 project; Phase I will be completed before June 2006.

Because of the delegation of responsibility for scheme management in the privatised rail industry, this list does not cover the full range of infrastructure projects. Railtrack's Network Management Statement last year provides a fuller list of schemes.

Local Transport Major Schemes

Local transport major schemes are defined as local public and integrated transport schemes, local road schemes and local highway/bridge/street lighting maintenance schemes with a capital cost of over £5 million. The following schemes have been fully or provisionally approved for funding by the Government since May 1997. In all cases where Government funding is sought, a thorough appraisal of each scheme is undertaken before approval is given. According to the latest information provided by the local authorities concerned, work on all the schemes listed is expected to be completed by June 2006.

Authority	*Scheme*
Barnsley	Coalfields Link Road Phases 2 and 3 (provisionally accepted)
Bedfordshire	A507 Ridgmont Bypass and Woburn Link
Birmingham	Masshouse Circus
Bradford	A641 Manchester Road Quality Bus Scheme
	South Bradford Integrated Transport Improvements
	Bradford City Centre Integrated Transport Scheme (provisionally accepted)
Brent	Street Lighting
Buckinghamshire	A4146 Stoke Hammond and Linslade Bypass
Cambridgeshire	A142 Fordham Bypass
Cheshire	Chester Deeside Transport System (provisionally accepted)
Cumbria	Carlisle N. Development Route (provisionally accepted)
Darlington	Eastern Transport Corridor (provisionally accepted)
Derby City	Derby City Centre Integrated Transport Project
Devon	Barnstable Western Bypass (provisionally accepted)
	Shaldon Bridge
Doncaster	A19 North Bridge Project
	A6023 Denaby Main Diversion
	A638 Great Northern Road Quality Bus Corridor
Durham	Dawdon to Seaham Town Centre Link Road
	A689 Sedgefield to Wynard Improvements (provisionally accepted)
	A688 Wheatley Hill to Bowburn Link (provisionally accepted)
Essex	A131 Great Leighs Bypass
	A130 Essex
Gloucestershire	Gloucester South West Bypass
Greater Manchester PTA	Metrolink Vehicles (additional capacity)
	Leigh Guided Busway (provisionally accepted)
Hampshire	South Hampshire Rapid Transit Light Rail Fareham to Gosport
Hertfordshire	Baldock Bypass
Islington	Street Lighting
Kent	A206 South Thames-side Development Route—Stage 4
	Fastrack—Phase 1
	East Kent Access Phase 1 (provisionally accepted)
Leeds	Leeds Inner Road Stage 7
	East Leeds Link Road
	Leeds Supertram
	East Leeds Quality Bus Project
Leicestershire	Ashby Bypass Stage 2
	Earl Shilton Bypass (provisionally accepted)
	A607 Rearsby Bypass (provisionally accepted)
Lincolnshire	A1073 Spalding to Eye Improvement (provisionally accepted)
Manchester City	Urban Traffic Control Major Scheme
	Manchester Metrolink Extensions
	Manchester Street Lighting
	Transport Interchange
Medway	A289 Gillingham Northern Bypass—Noise Insulation
Merseyside PTA	Allerton Interchange (provisionally accepted)
Newcastle upon Tyne	West Central Route
	Quayside Public Transport
Norfolk	Broome Ellingham Bypass
	Nar Ouse Regeneration Project (provisionally accepted)
North Yorkshire	Scarborough Integrated Transport Scheme
Nottingham City	Nottingham Express Transit—Light Rail
Nottinghamshire	A617 Mansfield Ashfield Regeneration Route (provisionally accepted)
	A6002/A6007 Coventry Lane Improvement
	A617 Rainworth Bypass
Plymouth	Northern Corridor Major Public Transport Scheme

Authority	*Scheme*
Portsmouth	Portsmouth Maintenance Project
	Maintenance of the A2030 Eastern Road
Rotherham	A631 W. Bawtry Road Improvement (provisionally accepted)
Salford	A6042 Manchester/Salford Inner Ring Road
Sandwell	West Bromwich Town Centre Strategy
	Cradley Heath Town Centre (provisionally accepted)
Sefton	Park Lane Improvement Scheme
Sheffield	Inner Relief Road—Stages 2 and 3 (provisionally accepted)
Shropshire	A53 Hodnet Bypass
Somerset	Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road
	NW Taunton Package (provisionally accepted)
Southend	A13 Passenger Transport Corridor
Staffordshire	Burntwood Bypass
	Biddulph Inner Bypass (provisionally accepted)
	Rugeley Bypass (provisionally accepted)
	Street Lighting
Stockton on Tees	South Stockton Link
Stoke on Trent	Hanley Bentilee Link (provisionally accepted)
	Street Lighting
Suffolk	Stowmarket Relief Road (provisionally accepted)
Sunderland	Southern Radial Route (provisionally accepted)
	Street Lighting (PFI)
Surrey	School Bus Initiative (provisionally accepted)
Tameside	The Glossup Spur (provisionally accepted)
Tyne and Wear PTA	Stephenson Corridor Jobs Link
	Sunderland Direct
	Centrelink
	Track Dualling
	Scotswood Road Improvement (provisionally accepted)
West Sussex	Crawley Fastway
Wakefield	Hemsworth—A1 Link Road (provisionally accepted)
	Glasshoughton Coalfields Link Road (provisionally accepted)
	Street Lighting
Walsall	Street Lighting
Warrington	Urban Traffic Management and Control
	Bridgefoot Environment Enhancement (provisionally accepted)
Warwickshire	Nuneaton Development Project
	Barford Bypass (provisionally accepted)
	Rugby Western Bypass (provisionally accepted)
West Midlands PTA	Outer Circle/Radial Routes
	Hagley Road Bus Showcase
	Metro Line Birmingham City Centre (provisionally view)[1]
	Metro Line Wednesbury-Brierley Hill (provisionally view)[1]
Wolverhampton	Centre Access (provisionally accepted)
Worcestershire	Wyre Piddle Bypass

[1] A provisional view on the economic appraisal prior to the promoters seeking the necessary powers under the TWA Act. Final approval will depend on whether an updated appraisal confirms the scheme represents good value for money and satisfactory funding arrangements being made.

Note:

Where provisional approval has been given, the Government have indicated that it will be prepared to release funding subject to particular conditions being met—usually completion of statutory approval processes, further work on the appraisal case or funding being secured from a third party. Where, for example, a scheme requires statutory powers from the Secretary of State under the Transport and Works Act 1992, we must carefully consider all objections and other representations received before determining the application, and this may involve the holding of a public inquiry. Completion dates for provisionally approved schemes will depend on the satisfactory compliance with the conditions laid down and the outcome of applications for statutory approval, but subject to these the best current estimate is that the listed schemes will be completed by June 2006.

In addition to the major schemes listed, my Department expects to approve further bids for major local transport schemes as part of future local transport capital settlements.

All local transport authorities in England, outside London, have also received a block of funding for local transport schemes costing less than £5 million. As local authorities have discretion over which schemes to progress during the lifetime of their local transport plans, it is not possible to list the schemes to be supported by the Government in this way.

Lawrie Quinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to speed up the processing of major infrastructure projects in the planning system. [6446]

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to reform the system of public inquiries into significant transport projects; and what research his Department has commissioned into such reform. [5497]

Mr. Byers: We need a modern and fair process for making decisions about major infrastructure projects, such as new airports, runways, rail links and roads. These projects are essential for our economic future and bring benefits through better services but they are also controversial because they can affect the lives of people living near them.

I am therefore announcing today a package of measures to streamline the procedures and reduce unnecessary delays while safeguarding public consultation and

involvement. Delay is costly and perpetuates uncertainty. Lengthy inquiries make it difficult and costly for people to be properly involved.

The package comprises national policy statements and an improved regional framework for considering individual projects, new parliamentary procedures for approving projects, improved public inquiry procedures and reform of the arrangements for compulsory purchase and compensation.

We propose that up-to-date statements of Government policy should be in place before major projects are considered in the planning system. This will help to reduce unnecessary debate at inquiry and has the potential to save a significant amount of inquiry time. The nature and approach of policy statements may vary from case to case. There would normally be prior public consultation on them so that people have the chance to comment and make an input to the policy proposed.

Last year, we put in place revised arrangements for preparing Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), incorporating regional transport strategies. The process of reviewing RPG has been completed in two regions and is well advanced in another five. PRG will help to provide greater certainty as regards the broad location of new development and the need for infrastructure improvements at the regional level.

These arrangements will be complemented and enhanced by the findings of the multi-modal studies of transport corridors currently under way. These will feed in to reviews of the transport elements of RPG during 2002–03. Under our new arrangements for RPG preparation we have enhanced the openness and inclusiveness of the process, including improved consultation and the chance for people to have their say, with a public examination before an independent panel.

Approval in principle for major infrastructure projects should be a matter for Parliament. Procedures will be developed which allow that. These will give people the right to object before Parliament debates the issues. Detailed aspects will be examined at a subsequent public inquiry if Parliament approves the project. We want the overall process for deciding projects to be shorter and more focused while ensuring that people affected have a full right to make their views known.

We shall introduce legislation to achieve this when a suitable opportunity arises. We shall consult beforehand on proposals for the details of the new procedures. In the meantime, we are initiating a fundamental review of the Transport and Works Act 1992, the effectiveness of whose procedures is essential to delivering rail, tram and other forms of infrastructure falling within its scope.

Public inquiries are and will remain an important feature of the planning process. They are a tried and tested way of exploring the issues in public and giving people the chance to make an input to decisions. We shall improve the procedures for dealing with major projects at inquiry by way of further changes over and above the streamlining measures we introduced for planning inquiries generally last August. These will include stricter time-tabling and more clearly focused terms of reference, supplemented by a range of measures to tackle issues more flexibly and manage the inquiry process better.

In the light or responses to our 1999 consultation paper on streamlining the processing of major projects through the planning system, we also propose to add to inspectors' powers to deal with matters pre-inquiry. We do not intend to proceed with proposals to abolish the right of parties to cross-examine others. We shall bring forward new rules to implement the changes as soon as practicable. Similar changes will also be made where necessary for projects proceeding under other statutory regimes, such as the Highways Act 1980.

The implementation of major infrastructure projects sometimes depends on the compulsory acquisition of land. We propose to improve the operation of the compulsory purchase and compensation system so that it is more efficient, effective and fair. We are examining the compensation arrangements for people affected by proposed developments. The report of a fundamental review of the laws and procedures was published last year. The Law Commission have begun to look at how the legislation can be consolidated, codified and updated. We intend to make a policy statement on the way forward in the autumn. We shall also be publishing a new advice manual and good practice guide for everyone involved in the operation of the procedures.

A modern infrastructure system is essential to promote enterprise and competitiveness and underpin our economy. the measures I have announced today will help to get projects in place more quickly by streamlining the procedures and cutting unnecessary delay while ensuring that the process remains open and fair and democratically accountable.

Temple Sowerby Bypass

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the progress of the Temple Sowerby bypass in Cumbria. [5339]

Mr. Spellar: I have asked the Chief Executive of the Highways Agency, Mr. Tim Matthews, to write to the right hon. Member.

Letter from Tim Matthews to Mr. David Maclean, dated 20 July 2001:

The Transport Minister, John Spellar, has asked me to reply to your recent question about progress on the Temple Sowerby Bypass in Cumbria.

You will be aware from my colleague, John Kerman's letter of 29 January, that the Temple Sowerby Bypass is listed in the Government's 1998 strategic review of the roads programme, 'A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England', as a scheme to be progressed through its preparatory stages so that if, after full appraisal and statutory procedure, it is eventually endorsed it can be taken forward without delay.

Good progress is being made on the appraisal and we expect to report our findings to the Regional Planning Conference later this summer. The next stage will depend on the decisions taken by the Conference.

If you would like any further information about this scheme, you may wish to contact the Highways Agency's Project Manager for the scheme, John Yellowley, at Sunley Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester, M1 4BE (telephone 0161 930 5685).

A11

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he expects the safety study of the A11 to be completed. [5340]

Mr. Spellar: There is currently no safety study on the A11 as a whole. However, there is a programme of individual studies along the A11 which will all report separately.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many days on average were lost per employee in his Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from his Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5053]

Mr. Byers: As the Department has only existed since 8 June it is not possible to reply in the form requested.

A69

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the Government's plans to upgrade the A69 in Cumbria. [5262]

Mr. Spellar: I will write to the right hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

M6

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to widen that part of the M6 motorway which is in two lanes north of Carlisle. [5263]

Mr. Spellar: I will write to the right hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events the Department and its predecessors have participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5041]

Mr. Byers: The Department engages in a wide range of awareness activities designed to help deliver its policies and programmes. Information on them is not held centrally.

Allocations (Wiltshire)

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 2001–02 prices the SSA and AEF figures for (i) Wiltshire county council, (ii) West Wiltshire district council and (iii) Salisbury district council for each year since 1996–97. [5193]

Dr. Whitehead: The data requested are given in the table.

	SSA		Total external support[1]	
	Cash terms	2001–02 prices	Cash terms	2001–02 prices
Wiltshire CC				
1996–97[2]	327.959	370.499	233.338	263.605
1997–98	237.116	260.486	164.162	180.341
1998–99	246.919	263.725	166.981	178.347
1999–2000	261.572	273.154	176.765	184.592
2000–01	276.154	283.058	186.137	190.790
2001–02	289.458	289.458	193.974	193.974
West Wiltshire DC				
1996–97	8.764	9.900	5.692	6.431
1997–98	8.648	9.500	5.559	6.107
1998–99	8.522	9.102	5.278	5.637
1999–2000	8.762	9.150	5.373	5.611
2000–01	9.024	9.249	5.496	5.634
2001–02	9.508	9.508	5.690	5.690
Salisbury CC				
1996–97	10.212	11.537	7.251	8.192
1997–98	9.987	10.971	6.803	7.474
1998–99	9.486	10.132	6.331	6.762
1999–2000	9.771	10.204	6.331	6.611
2000–01	10.081	10.333	6.402	6.562
2001–02	10.494	10.494	6.572	6.572

[1] Total external support comprises the sum of Revenue Support Grant, redistributed National Non-Domestic Rates, SSA Reduction Grant (SSA Review) and, from 1998–99 onwards, Central Support Protection Grant.

[2] The data for 1996–97 include an amount to cover the Thamesdown area. On 1 April 1997 Wiltshire was reorganised with Thamesdown borough council becoming a unitary council, Swindon borough council. Services previously undertaken by Wiltshire county council for this area became the responsibility of Swindon borough council. Data for 1997–98 onwards for Wiltshire county council do not cover the Swindon area.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the methodology changes made since 1997 to the formulae for calculating the standard spending assessment and aggregate external finance figures for *(a)* Wiltshire county council, *(b)* West Wiltshire district council and *(c)* Salisbury district council; and if he will estimate the net financial effect of these changes. [5192]

Dr. Whitehead: There were 15 changes in the method of determining Standard Spending assessments (SSAs) for the 1998–99 Local Government Finance Settlement; and 20 changes for the 1999–2000 Local Government Finance Settlement.

In 1999–2000 the Government introduced a new damping grant, Central Support Protection Grant (CSPG), to ensure that no authority received less grant than the year before, and that authorities which had education and personal social services responsibilities received at least 1.5 per cent. more than the year before.

The July 1998 Local Government White Paper announced a three year review of Revenue grant Distribution. It said that the Government did not expect to make fresh changes to the method of calculation of SSAs except where there are changes in the functions of councils, or the funding of particular services.

In 2000–01 there were therefore only limited adjustments to SSAs to accommodate the establishment of the Greater London Authority and related changes, most notably those arising from the alterations to the boundary of the Metropolitan police district and the Essex, Hertfordshire and Surrey police areas. CSPG was retained in 2000–01.

In 2001–02 there was only one change in the method of determining SSAs to reflect the transfer of funding for nursery education for four year olds. CSPG was replaced for those authorities with education and personal social services responsibilities by floors and ceilings, which guaranteed that no authority would receive less than a 3.2 per cent. increase and that no authority could get more than a 6.5 per cent. increase.

Changes in the method of determining SSAs are contained in circular letters to local authorities, dated 2 December 1997, 2 December 1998, 25 November 1999 and 27 November 2000, copies of which are in the Library. For convenience, copies of the relevant extracts have been placed in the Library.

The table shows the net percentage change in SSAs against adjusted SSAs for the previous year for Wiltshire, west Wiltshire and Salisbury over the period, together with the percentage change due to changes in methodology. It is inappropriate to compare actual SSA between years because of changes to the services financed by grants allocated using SSAs. Adjusted SSAs enable a like-for-like comparison between years.

Percentage

	Wiltshire		*West Wiltshire*		*Salisbury*	
Year	*Change against adjusted SSAs*	*Of which change due to methodology*	*Change against adjusted SSAs*	*Of which change due to methodology*	*Change against adjusted SSAs*	*Of which change due to methodology*
1998–99	2.0	1.8	–1.5	–0.9	–5.0	–5.7
1999–2000	5.9	–0.6	2.8	–0.9	3.0	–0.4
2000–01	5.6	0.0	3.0	0.0	3.2	0.0
2001–02	4.8	0.0	4.5	0.0	3.1	0.0

Note:
It is not possible to perform a similar analysis for aggregate external finance.

Traffic Accidents (Wandsworth)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in road traffic accidents in the London borough of Wandsworth in the last three years. [4885]

Mr. Jamieson: The table shows the number of casualties in road accidents both killed, and injured, in the Wandsworth local authority for the last three available years.

Accident Year	*Number killed*	*Number injured*
1998	6	1,426
1999	9	1,411
2000	9	1,448

London Underground

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the capital expenditure for the London Underground was for each year since 1994. [1604]

Mr. Byers: The capital expenditure in the Underground is set out in London Transport's annual report documents, which incorporate their audited annual accounts. London Transport's annual report for 2000–01 will be published shortly.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) for each of the last three years what key performance indicators, subdivided by infracos, were used for safety critical maintenance and renewal work on LUL infrastructure; and to what extent London Underground and each infraco have complied with these key performance indicators; [5848]

(2) what was the expenditure allocated to London Underground for achieving each individual key performance indicator; and what the actual expenditure was for each key performance indicator broken down by infraco. [5849]

Mr. Jamieson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday, 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 366–68W.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his estimate is of the annual rate of repayment to private financiers of the PPP he has proposed for each of the London Underground projects. [5913]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government's plans for the London Underground will deliver £13 billion of investment over the first 15 years, giving London the 21st century underground that it deserves. London Underground is currently negotiating the contracts to deliver this investment. To estimate what the annual rate of repayment might be at this stage of negotiations would undermine London Underground's commercial position and jeopardise its ability to deliver best value.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what has been the cost to date of consultants' evaluation of the PPP plans for the London Underground undertaken by his Department. [5912]

Mr. Jamieson: London Underground employs external consultants to support the development of the PPP and associated restructuring. Some advisers provide joint advice to London Underground and to my Department. My Department has not employed any consultants to evaluate the PPP plans.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what is the proposed timetable for the refurbishment and replacement of trains running on the District line of London Underground. [6294]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government's plans for the London underground will deliver £13 billion of investment over the first 15 years, giving London the publicly-run, privately-built underground that it deserves. The contracts to deliver this investment remain under negotiation and so precise investment plans are still subject to change. I understand from London Underground that its current plans would see an interim refurbishment of District line trains by 2005. There would then be a full refurbishment or replacement of trains by 2016 at the latest, as part of an upgrade of the line.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many *(a)* escalators and *(b)* escalator faults in London Underground stations there were in each year since 1994–95 broken down by line. [5008]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* This is an operational matter for London Underground, which inform me that, in the time available, they are not able to provide an accurate breakdown of the number of escalators by line over the last seven years. However, they are preparing this information and I will write to the hon. Gentleman with it as soon as it is ready, placing a copy of my letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

London Underground also inform me that they track faults on escalators, but do not hold ready collated statistics showing long term trends in fault rates. This is because they regard this as a poor guide to the level of customer service provided, as many faults are minor and are corrected without affecting services. However, they do track escalator performance through keeping records of the percentage of machines available for service. These figures give a good indication of service levels because they include the effects of planned works (overhauls and renewals) as well as faults. The following table shows the average percentage of escalator availability by line for the last five years. The figures for 1994–95 and 1995–96 are not immediately available, but I hope to be able to include them in my letter to the hon. Gentleman.

	1996–97	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Bakerloo	92.6	97.7	97.4	94.4	94.1
Central	89.9	87.1	92.2	89.0	85.0
District	91.1	93.7	95.3	94.9	97.7
Jubilee	95.8	82.7	79.1	96.6	98.1
East London	—	99.6	99.7	97.9	77.0
Met & Circle	96.2	98.7	93.6	94.3	86.1
Northern	94.1	94.6	90.1	87.7	88.5
Piccadilly	94.9	93.8	93.2	91.6	90.8
Victoria	92.1	96.5	92.8	89.4	84.7
Total	92.8	93.3	92.7	92.0	91.4

Escalator availability across the network fell in the last two years because of the cracks that appeared in the top-shafts and steps of three types of escalator at various stages in 1999 and 2000. Of the 52 escalators affected by these faults, 51 have now been repaired and are back in service. The last one—at Old Street station—has now been incorporated into the planned refurbishment programme. The completion of these works has had a notable impact on recent escalator performance—with performance comfortably above 93 per cent. since the beginning of 2001.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what was the average number of train drivers working on London Underground each week day broken down by line in each of the last five years. [5004]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* This is an operational matter for London Underground, which have provided the following information on the total number of train operators required to work on any weekday for the current working timetable on each line.

Current timetable

Line	*Total number of train operators required each week day*
Bakerloo	114
Central and Waterloo and City	230
Circle and Hammersmith and City	134
District	267
East London	26
Jubilee	167
Metropolitan	154
Northern	273
Piccadilly	285
Victoria	127

London Underground inform me that to provide information for previous years would incur disproportionate costs as the data are not kept in this format.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the mean distance between train failures on the London Underground in each year since 1994–95 broken down by line. [5014]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* This is an operational matter for London Underground, which has provided the following information, broken down by line:

Mean distance between train failures (MDBF)—rolling stock

Kilometres

	1994–95	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Bakerloo	4,633	4,906	7,367	7,087	8,649	8,066	7,113
Central	5,800	7,855	5,807	5,620	6,049	5,077	4,019
District	6,513	8,546	9,934	13,542	15,112	19,277	25,042
Circle & Hammersmith	3,615	3,247	2,804	2,462	4,062	3,877	3,311
Jubilee	4,129	2,908	4,081	3,907	1,952	4,269	7,950
Metropolitan	4,874	4,221	4,518	5,924	6,993	7,289	7,051
Northern 59TS[1]	3,306	3,008	3,113	2,968	3,120	2,412	—
Northern 72MK1TS[1]	2,663	2,412	2,288	1,817	—	—	—
Northern 95ITS[1]	—	—	—	—	862	4,475	10,166
Piccadilly	5,585	6,069	6,372	5,966	5,310	5,734	5,037
Victoria	4,106	5,018	7,091	5,607	6,947	6,362	6,175

[1] 95ITS has replaced 59TS and 72MK1TS in the Northern line

Train performance is a key aspect of operational effectiveness and it is encouraging to see the substantial improvements which are being made in the performance of some rolling stock.

Multi-modal Studies

Mrs. Brinton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if the recommendations in Multi-modal Studies are designed to be consistent with the sustainability framework for that region. [5772]

Mr. Jamieson: While each Multi-modal Study addresses transport problems, it must also anticipate those of the future. Studies must take full account of sustainability, economic, regeneration and social exclusion objectives locally, regionally and nationally. Study reports and recommendations are submitted to Regional Planning Bodies who consider them in the regional planning context consistent with the sustainability framework for that region. Ultimately Ministers, when they consider Regional Planning recommendations, will take care to ensure they are also consistent with wider national policy objectives.

London Transport

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to his answer of 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 655W, on London Transport, if he will indicate the actual amount invested by the private sector in each of the contracts named, and the anticipated rate of return for each one. [5763]

Mr. Jamieson: The information requested is commercially confidential. London Transport is buying specified outcomes under each of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts. As is usual for such contracts, it is for the private sector contractor to decide how best to deliver those outcomes.

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen), of 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 655W, on London Transport, if he will list the net present value of payments due under the contract of each project; and if he will make a statement. [5443]

Mr. Jamieson: London Transport is buying specified outcomes under each of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts. The information requested about the net present value of payments due is commercially confidential.

Mobile Phone Masts

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to extend planning controls to mobile phone masts less than 45 ft in height. [5450]

Ms Keeble: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Westbury (Dr. Murrison) on 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 20W.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to restrict the granting of planning permission for mobile phone masts close to hospitals. [5449]

Ms Keeble: Mobile phone mast development close to hospitals is subject to the normal telecommunications planning arrangements in place throughout England. We have no plans to introduce specific planning arrangements in respect of mobile phone masts close to hospitals.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what *(a)* meetings he has had with and *(b)* requests for meetings he has received from, representatives of mobile phone companies to discuss planning matters since 7 June. [5448]

Ms Keeble: Ministers in this Department have had no meetings with representatives of mobile phone companies since 7 June. Vodafone and the Federation of the Electronics Industry (which represent the interests of the five mobile phone companies in the UK) have separately written to this Department since 7 June to request meetings with Ministers.

First North Western Trains

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the improvements made to services by First North Western Trains on the Blackpool to Manchester line. [5792]

Mr. Jamieson: New class 175 trains are operating on some Blackpool North to Manchester airport services. All of these services will be operated by the new trains when the full fleet is delivered by the late autumn. The class 142 and 150 units used on Blackpool South to Manchester services were refurbished last year. At Chorley station the car park has been extended and CCTV installed.

Conveyancing (Public Records)

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what powers he has in respect of complaints from the public about access to public records held by local authorities relevant to conveyancing transactions being obstructed. [5541]

Ms Keeble: The Secretary of State has no power to intervene where a local authority fails to comply with a statutory obligation to provide reasonable access to public records.

Local authorities are required by Section 8 of the Local Land Charges Act 1975 to allow any person to search in the local land charges register on payment of the prescribed fee. Local authorities are also under a statutory duty to provide access to other public records containing information relevant to conveyancing. In the case of the planning register, for example, sections 69, 188 and 214 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require local authorities to make the register available for inspection by the public "at all reasonable hours".

In cases where reasonable access to public registers is being denied, the matter may be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman or the courts. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 will improve the rights of

individuals to access information and provide a right to complain to the Information Commissioner if he or she is prevented from accessing it. The provisions of this Act are likely to come into force sometime next year with regard to information held by local authorities.

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received regarding local authorities obstructing personal searches of property and other public records relating to conveyancing transactions. [5539]

Ms Keeble: A number of representations have been received from companies within the Property Search Group who carry out personal searches as part of the conveyancing process.

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what guidance he gives to local authorities regarding access to registers by the public under the Town and Country Planning Act 1999. [5540]

Ms Keeble: The public are entitled to see any document held on a local authority's planning registers. Articles 25 and 26 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (the GDPO) set out the information which must be held on the register. Articles 25(10 and 26(7) of the GDPO provide that:

> "the register shall either be kept at the principal office of the local planning register authority or that part of the register which relates to land in part of that authority's area shall be kept at a place within or convenient to that part".

The "Planning Charter Standards" booklet, issued by the then Department of the Environment and the National Planning Forum, advises that local authorities must make their register available to the public at all reasonable hours. Authorities should put copies of valid planning applications in the register within three working days of receiving them. They also should put copies of their decisions in the register within three working days of dispatch.

M5/A46 Resurfacing

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he expects *(a)* the M5 at Whittington and *(b)* the A46 at Harvington to be resurfaced with low noise surfaces; and if he will make a statement. [5775]

Mr. Jamieson: I have asked the Chief Executive of the Highways Agency, Tim Matthews, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Tim Matthews to Mr. Peter Luff, dated 20 July 2001:

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, David Jamieson, has asked me to reply to your recent question about resurfacing the M5 at Whittington and the A46 at Harvington with low noise surfaces.

The Government's 10 Year Plan for Transport set out proposals for dealing with road noise, including the provision of quieter surfacing on the road network.

The resurfacing programme for roads, like those at Whittington and Harvington, with bituminous surfaces will depend largely on when the existing surfaces wear out and need to be replaced as part of our normal maintenance programme. Given that the condition of the carriageways here is fairly good it is likely to be at least three years before the work will take place.

If you would like any additional information please contact Tom Barry at our Birmingham office. He can be contacted at Broadway, Broad Street, Birmingham, B15 1BL or by telephone on 0121 678 8072.

Slot Auctioning

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received on her Department's commissioning of a report on slot auctioning from Dot Econ; and if she will make a statement. [5433]

Mr. Jamieson: The findings of the Dot Econ study were presented to representatives of UK airlines and airports on 15 March. Immediate feedback was given then, and written comments were requested by 12 April. A number of representations were received. The Government will take these into account in developing their response to the proposals for revision of the current European slot allocation regulations that were published by the European Commission on 20 June.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received from United Kingdom airlines on the proposed introduction of a monetised slot auctioning or transfer system. [5434]

Mr. Jamieson: My Department has met representatives of UK airlines on several occasions to discuss its declared intention to seek a new European slot allocation regulation that provides for the auctioning of new and pool slots and the legitimisation of trading between air carriers. Written representations have also been received.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will commission a report projecting the likely bidding behaviour of airlines based on consultation with United Kingdom and overseas carriers and assessing the benefits for consumers of an auctioning system. [5394]

Mr. Jamieson: I have no plans for such a study. But in taking forward the Government's proposals for a market-based approach to slot allocation, we shall consult fully with airlines and airports. The interests of the travelling public are and will continue to be at the heart of our objective of revising the current slot allocation regime.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many UK airlines have indicated to his Department their support of the introduction for a monetised slot auctioning or transfer system; how many have indicated opposition; and how many proposed new entrants to Heathrow or Gatwick have indicated their support. [5393]

Mr. Jamieson: There is general support among UK airlines for legitimising the trading of slots between airlines. To date, only Virgin Atlantic has openly supported the idea of slot auctioning. Others have been less enthusiastic, but we continue to discuss the matter with the industry.

The subject has not been discussed with representatives of overseas airlines. Airlines are reluctant to discuss their development plans, so it is not possible to answer the question about potential new entrants at Heathrow and Gatwick.

Bypass Construction

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received on the decision-making procedures for constructing bypasses under the 10-year transport plan. [5512]

Mr. Jamieson: My Department receives a large number of representations about the construction of bypasses, from a wide variety of organisations and individuals. Many of these refer to the decision-making processes involved.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement about the procedures for reaching decisions on the construction of bypasses made under the 10-year transport plan. [5513]

Mr. Jamieson: The final decision on the construction of major road schemes, including bypasses, rests with the Secretary of State. Major schemes will generally emerge in future from the Multi-Modal and Road Based Studies commissioned following the Roads Review and from decisions taken by regional planning bodies in drawing up their regional transport strategies as part of regional planning guidance on which they will submit recommendations to the Secretary of State. Plans for bypasses may also be submitted by local authorities as part of their local transport plans, decisions on which will also be announced by the Secretary of State as part of the local transport settlement.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions to whom the regional planning authority is accountable for reaching its decisions on the construction of bypasses under the 10-year transport plan. [5514]

Mr. Jamieson: Regional planning machinery varies by region. In Yorkshire and the Humber the Regional Assembly for Yorkshire and the Humberside is the regional planning body and is accountable to its member local authorities and, therefore, indirectly to local electors. The final decision on the construction of bypasses rests with the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the procedures for the construction of bypasses under the 10-year transport plan. [5272]

Mr. Jamieson: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

Stansted Airport

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what research his Department has commissioned into the spatial and economic impact of Stansted airport's growth since 1997. [5496]

Mr. Jamieson: I am unaware of any such research commissioned by my Department. The airport's owners, BAA, in preparation for the proposed development at Stansted, have commissioned reviews of both the spatial and economic effects of the airport.

Urban White Paper

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on his plans for implementing the Urban White Paper. [5498]

Ms Keeble: The implementation plan issued in March this year sets out how a wide range of initiatives across government are supporting the objectives of the Urban White Paper. This is available on my Department's website. Significant progress has already been made in delivering the measures listed in the plan. We are also working closely with towns and cities across the country to take forward the urban agenda. These efforts will feed into a proposed Urban summit in 2002 to assess progress in bringing about change and celebrate success, and a State of the Cities report in 2005.

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many recommendations of the Urban Task Force report entitled "Towards an Urban Renaissance" have been implemented since it was published. [5499]

Ms Keeble: The Government have endorsed the principles behind all of the recommendations in Lord Rogers' report and in the large majority of cases have accepted them either in full or in part. We have set out our response to each recommendation in the Annexe to the Urban White Paper.

M11

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what research his Department has commissioned on the development prospects of the M11 motorway corridor since 1997. [5500]

Mr. Jamieson: My Department is contributing to a study into strategic land-use development and transport issues in the London-Stansted-Cambridge sub-region, including the M11 corridor, which started in May 2001. The aim of the study is to formulate sustainable options for the longer-term spatial development of the study area to inform future regional and local strategies.

A30/A303

Mr. Swire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on his policy on the upgrading of the A30 and A303. [5492]

Mr. Jamieson: There are no proposals to upgrade this important route at the moment. However, there are a number of major improvements that are on hold pending the outcome of the London to the South-West and South Wales Multi-Modal Study, which will report next year. The emerging strategy of this study has identified the need to improve this route, the precise nature of these improvements will be set out in their final report.

A35

Mr. Swire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on his policy on the upgrading of the A35 in east Devon. [5493]

Mr. Jamieson: It is for the Regional Assembly to identify improvements to the trunk road network in line with their Regional Transport Strategy. The Highways Agency, however, is currently carrying out a Route Management Strategy study on the A35, as well as the A30 and A31, between Exeter and Southampton. The study is not about building new roads but about making best use of the trunk roads we already have.

Road Designation

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what criteria are applied in designating principal roads and principal destinations; [5521]

(2) when he last reviewed the designation of principal *(a)* roads and *(b)* destinations on the Isle of Wight. [5524]

Mr. Jamieson: Principal roads are the highest classification of local authority road. Decisions on their designation are based on whether the road is essential for traffic and whether it occupies a sufficiently important place in the national road system to justify central Government interest in its development. There are several principal roads on the Isle of Wight. Ministers have not received recent requests for reclassification of these roads. The Government do not have a designation of "principal destination".

Primary routes and primary destinations are a separate classification from principal roads. Primary routes are defined as routes which provide the most satisfactory route for through traffic between places of traffic importance. Places of traffic importance are known as primary destinations. There are no primary routes or primary destinations on the Isle of Wight. The Government office of the south-east regularly updates the primary route network and primary destinations, taking account of requests for redesignation by local highway authorities. No recent requests have been received in respect of the Isle of Wight.

South-East Region

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions for what reason Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are included in the Government's South-East region. [5100]

Dr. Whitehead *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Until 1994, and the creation of the Government Offices (GOs), Hampshire and the Isle of Wight had been part of the South-East standard region. That had been the position since at least 1974, when the English standard regions were established following local government reorganisation.

When the GO South-East region was defined in 1994, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were therefore included. Since 1994, the GO boundaries have become increasingly well established, reflecting the Government's commitment, in the "Modernising Government" White Paper, that, where possible, all Government bodies should align with GO boundaries. This need for coterminosity of regional boundaries based on existing GO configurations was also reinforced in the report by the Cabinet Office's Performance and Innovation Unit in 2000.

Wessex

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what requests he has received that Wessex should not be partitioned between the South-East and South-West regions. [5079]

Dr. Whitehead *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* We have no record of any formal representations to the effect that Wessex should not be "partitioned" between the South-East and South-West regions.

Rail Links

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the principal destinations which have no railway station. [5523]

Mr. Jamieson: The Strategic Rail Authority does not hold such a list and the content of any such list would depend on the definition of principal destination. I would refer the hon. Member to the national rail timetable which includes a route map showing destinations served by rail.

Harbour Authorities

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the harbour authorities in England; and how many members each authority has. [5520]

Mr. Jamieson: Harbour authorities vary in ownership and size, with some overlaps of jurisdiction. With those provisos the following list contains the names of the Harbour authorities in England based on the latest information available to the Department. Each authority will have its own constitution setting out its membership details and these will vary widely. We do not hold this information centrally.

Trust Ports (Non-Fishery)

Berwick Harbour Commissioners

Blyth Harbour Commissioners

Brightlingsea Harbour Commissioners

Cattlewater Harbour Commissioners

Chichester Harbour Conservancy

Cowes Harbour Commissioners

Crouch Harbour Authority

Dart Harbour and Navigation Authority

Dover Harbour Board

Falmouth Harbour Commissioners

Fowey Harbour Commissioners

Gloucester Harbour Trustees

Great Yarmouth Port and Haven Commissioners

Harwich Haven Authority
Kings Lynn Conservancy Board
Lancaster Port Commissioners
Langstone Harbour Board
Littlehampton Harbour Board
Port of London Authority
Lymington Harbour Improvement Commissioners
Maldon Harbour Improvement Commissioners
Maryport Harbour Commissioners
Orford Town Trustees
Padstow Harbour Commissioners
Poole Harbour Commissioners
Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners
Shoreham Port Authority
Teignmouth Harbour Commissioners
Tyne Port Authority
Warkworth Harbour Commissioners
Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners
Yarmouth (IoW) Harbour Commissioners
River Yealm Harbour Authority

Trust Ports (Fishery)

Bridlington Pier and Harbour Commissioners
Flamborough North Sea Landing Harbour Commissioners
Hope Cove Harbour Commissioners
Looe Harbour Commissioners
Mevagissey Harbour Trustees
Mousehole Harbour Commissioners
Newlyn Pier and Harbour Commissioners
North Sunderland Harbour Commissioners
Port Isaac Harbour Commissioners
Portloe Harbour Commissioners
Rye Harbour Commissioners
Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners
Sennen Cove Harbour Commissioners
Staithes Harbour Commissioners
Wells Harbour Commissioners

Private Ports (Non-Fishery)

Barrow (ABP)
Bembridge
Beaulieu River
Boston
Boscastle—non-statutory
Brighton Marina Company
Bristol, Port of (Avonmouth and Royal Portbury)
Bromborough Dock
Cattledown Wharves, Plymouth
Charlestown—non-statutory
Combe Martin—non-statutory
Dagenham Dock—non-statutory
Duddon River (Hodbarrow Mining)—non-statutory
Eastbourne (Sovereign Harbour)
Exmouth
Falmouth Docks (A and P Falmouth)
Fareham
Felixstowe (Hutchison Ports UK)
Fishbourne (Wightlink)
Fleetwood (ABP)
Folkestone (Sea Containers)
Fosdyke
Garston (ABP)
Goole (ABP)
Grimsby (ABP)
Hartlepool
Harwich Docks
Harwich International (Hutchison Ports UK)
Hayle
Heysham (Sea Containers)
Hull (ABP)
Immingham (ABP)
Ipswich (ABP)
Kings Lynn (ABP)
Lowestoft (ABP)
Lymington Pier (Wightlink)
Manchester Ship Canal
Margate Pier and Harbour
Medway Ports Authority (Mersey D and H)
Mersey Docks and Harbour
Mutton Cove
Newhaven (Seine Maritime Regional Authority)
Par (English China Clay)
Pembrey
Penarth
Pentewan
Plymouth (ABP)
Portland
Port Penrhyn—non-statutory
Portreath—non-statutory
Port Wrinkle—non-statutory
Royal Docks Management Authority
Ryde (Wightlink)
St. Mawes Pier and Harbour
St. Michael's Mouth—non-statutory
Seaham
Silloth (ABP)
Southampton (ABP)
Tees
Thamesport (Hutchison Ports UK)
Tilbury, Port of (Forth Ports)
Tilbury and Gravesend Ferry
Sutton Harbour
Sutton Bridge
Teignmouth Quay (ABP)
Trevethoe—non-statutory
Weston Point
Widnes—non-statutory

Private Ports (Fishery)
- Alnmouth—non-statutory
- Axmouth
- Blakeney
- Burnham Overy (NT)
- Clovelly—non-statutory
- Craster
- Cullercoats—non-statutory
- Eastbourne Pier
- Holy Island—non-statutory
- Hythe Hard
- Hythe Pier
- Lympstone
- Lytham Pier and Pavilion
- Mullion (NT)
- Penberth (NT)
- Porthgain
- Porthleven
- Seahouses
- Solva
- Swanage Pier

Local Authority (Non-Fishery)
- Barnstaple (North Devon DC)
- Bideford (Torridge DC)
- Bridgwater (Sedgemoor DC)
- Bridport (West Dorset DC)
- Bristol City Docks (City Council)
- Broadstairs (Thanet DC)
- Bude (North Cornwall DC)
- Exeter (City Council)
- Gillingham (Medway UC)
- Hamble River (Hampshire CC)
- Ilfracombe (North Devon DC)
- Leigh-on-Sea (Southend UC)
- Lyme Regis (West Dorset DC)
- Minehead (West Somerset DC)
- Newport IoW (Isle of Wight UC)
- Norwich (City Council)
- Paignton (Torbay UC)
- Penryn (Carrick DC)
- Penzance (Penwith DC)
- Portsmouth (City Council)
- Preston (BC)
- Ramsgate (Thanet DC)
- Ryde IoW (Isle of Wight UC)
- Salcombe (South Hams DC)
- Seaton Sluice (Blyth Valley DC)
- Southend-on-Sea (UC)
- Sunderland (BC)
- Torquay (Torbay UC)
- Truro (Carrick DC)
- Uphill (North Somerset UC)
- Watchet (Weymouth and Portland BC)
- Whitstable (Canterbury CC)
- Wisbech (Fenland DC)
- Workington (Cumbria CC)

Local Authority (Fishery)
- Brixham (Torbay UC)
- Morecambe (Lancashire CC)
- Newbiggin (Wansbeck DC)
- St. Ives (Penwith DC)
- Sandown Pier (Isle of Wight UC)
- Scarborough (BC)
- Southwold (Waveney DC)
- Topsham (Exeter City Council)
- Whitby (Scarborough BC)

Others
- River Dee (Environment Agency)
- Leeds (BWB)
- River Ouse (Yorkshire)(BWB)
- Rye (Environment Agency)
- Sharpness, Gloucester (BWB)

Road Tolls

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the principal roads on which tolls are levied. [5522]

Mr. Jamieson: There are, currently, no tolled principal roads in England. However, there are seven statutory tolled undertakings linking principal and trunk roads. There are:
- The Dartford-Thurrock Crossings—linking the A282(T)
- The Dunham Bridge—linking the A57(T)
- The Humber Bridge—linking the A15(T)
- The Mersey Tunnels—connecting the A5036 to the A554
- The Severn Bridge—linking the M48
- The Tamar Bridge—linking the A38(T)
- The Tyne Tunnel—connecting the A187 to South Tyneside.

Transport Links

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) how much is expended by the Government on the maintenance of transport links between Great Britain and Northern Ireland; [5543]

(2) how much was expended by the Government in each of the three years prior to the introduction of devolution for Scotland and Wales on the maintenance of transport links between Great Britain and offshore islands; [5544]

(3) if he will list the responsibilities of Government for the maintenance of transport links between Great Britain and *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* offshore islands. [5542]

Mr. Jamieson: Her Majesty's Government do not subsidise transport links between Great Britain and Northern Ireland or offshore islands. The Scottish Executive subsidises services to offshore islands for which it is accountable to the Scottish Parliament. Responsibility for expenditure on transport links in the three years prior to the introduction of devolution lies with the Secretary of State for Scotland.

South-coast Multi-modal Study

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what mechanisms exist to ensure the recommendations of the south-coast multi-modal study are implemented, where implementation falls to *(a)* private rail companies and *(b)* county councils. [5483]

Mr. Jamieson: The multi-modal studies provide an opportunity to identify integrated and sustainable solutions to some of the most pressing problems on our strategic transport network. The study process itself is designed to ensure that strategies are developed with key stakeholders so that they reflect the priorities of each and are genuinely deliverable.

Shared-use Facilities

Andrew Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he expects to publish the revised local transport notes on shared use facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. [4967]

Mr. Spellar: Revised drafts of Local Transport Notes 1/86 and 2/86 have been prepared and circulated to a limited number of consultees—a "reference group". The comments received have highlighted the importance of setting the advice on shared use in the wider context of Government policies to encourage both cycling and walking and the implications of those policies for the design and provision of facilities. We are therefore considering preparing comprehensive guidance which would include guidance on shared use. I will make a further announcement when a decision has been reached.

Ordnance Survey

Andrew Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what targets were set for Ordnance Survey in the financial year 2000–01; and for each, how far they were achieved. [4965]

Ms Keeble: Ordnance Survey achieved all of its targets for the financial year 2000–01 as follows:

Target	*Performance*
To achieve a revenue target of £82.3 million (excluding the National Interest Mapping Service Agreement)	£86.1 million
To achieve a return on sales of not less than five per cent. (excluding the National Interest Mapping Service Agreement)	9.4 per cent.
To ensure that, by March 2001, at least 99.5 per cent. of existing major detail is surveyed and available to customers	99.9 per cent.
To despatch 92 per cent. of small scale product ordered within three working days	96.3 per cent.
To achieve efficiency savings across activities associated with collecting and maintaining the data held within the National Topographic Database, producing and distributing products/services to customers and all other associated support activities. The long-term target is to achieve an efficiency gain of 6 per cent. over the period April 2000 to March 2004. The target for 2000–01 is 1.5 per cent.	5.0 per cent.
To increase the number of visits to the Ordnance Survey website, compared with the last half of 1999–2000 by at least 100 per cent. by 31 March 2001	120.6 per cent.

Fuller details of Ordnance Survey performance in 2000–01 can be found in the Annual Report laid in the House of Commons Library on 5 July 2001 and on the Ordnance Survey website at http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk

Capital Assets (Islington)

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what recent examination he has made of the sale of capital assets by the London borough of Islington; and if he will make a statement. [5363]

Dr. Whitehead: I have made no such examination.

Asset disposals are a matter for the authority. I would normally only become involved if any authority sought consent to dispose of property at less than the best consideration reasonably attainable. No such consent has been sought recently by the London borough of Islington.

Section 106 Agreements

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will review the effectiveness of section 106 agreements. [5472]

Ms Keeble: We are committed to reviewing the system for agreeing planning obligations and we propose to issue a consultation document later this year.

Noise Levels

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the proposed EU directives on noise levels, with particular reference to traffic noise. [5458]

Mr. Jamieson: An amending directive to Directive 92/23/EEC aimed at limiting the noise from new vehicle tyres has recently been adopted by the European Council and the European Parliament and will appear in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* imminently. Studies have shown that noise generated at the tyre-road interface is a significant environmental nuisance that, as a contributor to total vehicle noise and, hence, traffic noise, becomes more significant as vehicle speed increases. The directive will apply limits to the permitted noise of tyres that are fitted to new vehicle types entering into service from 2004. In addition it will require most new tyres sold in the replacement market to comply from 2009.

The European Commission also proposed a directive in July 2000 on the Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise. The main sources of noise to which this directive relates are transport and industry. The copy of the draft directive primarily covers noise in built up areas, in public parks or other quiet areas within built up areas and in quiet areas in open country. The proposed directive would require mapping of the principle sources of noise to provide information to the public and the European Commission, and the drawing up of action plans aimed at preventing and reducing undesirable levels of environmental noise.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on proposals to alleviate noise from the M5 at Upton St Leonards. [5459]

Mr. Jamieson: I have asked the Chief Executive of the Highways Agency, Tim Matthews, to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Tim Matthews to Mr. David Drew, dated 20 July 2001:

The Transport Minister, David Jamieson, has asked me to reply to your recent question about proposals to alleviate noise from the M5 at Upton St Leonards.

Following the installation of a quieter surface on the M5 motorway at Upton St Leonards in February 2000, we have been carrying out detailed noise studies to ascertain the noise levels and the extent of the problem. This work is near completion and a report is expected shortly. The findings will allow us to consider the problem in more detail and look at possible remedial measures.

New Build (East Sussex)

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received from parish councils in East Sussex regarding the number of new houses planned to be built in the county. [5995]

Ms Keeble: During the preparation of Regional Planning Guidance for the South East, which was published in March 2001, the former Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions received representations from the Sussex Associations of Local Councils; a number of parish councils including Alfriston, Barcombe, Catsfield, Glynde and Beddingham, Hadlow Down, Maresfield, Mountfield and Sedlescombe; and Uckfield Town Council. The representations commented on a range of issues including housing in East Sussex.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will review the number of houses to be built in East Sussex following the latest planning guidance on building and council policy. [5997]

Ms Keeble: The former Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions published Regional Planning Guidance for the South East in March 2001. This contains guidance on future housing provision and distribution. It is now for regional planning bodies to take forward work to the monitoring, implementation and review of this guidance.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many homeless people were accepted into bed-and-breakfast accommodation in *(a)* south Oxfordshire and *(b)* England in each of the last five years. [6096]

Ms Keeble: Information reported by South Oxfordshire district council on the number of households resident in bed-and-breakfast hotels under statutory homelessness provisions on 31 March in each of the last five years is given in the table:

Homeless households resident in bed and breakfast accommodation[1] as at 31 March

	South Oxfordshire	*England*
1997	33	4,100
1998	55	4,990
1999	28	7,460
2000	25	8,700
2001	47	10,830

[1] Includes households accommodated pending completion of inquiries by the local authorities.

Source:
DETR P1(E) housing return (quarterly)

Oxfordshire County Council

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the methodology changes made since 1997 to the formulae for calculating the standard spending assessment and aggregate external finance figures for Oxfordshire County Council; and if he will make an assessment of the net financial effect of these changes. [6089]

Dr. Whitehead: There were 15 changes in the method of determining Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs) for the 1998–99 Local Government Finance Settlement; and 20 changes for the 1999–2000 Local Government Finance Settlement.

In 1999–2000 the Government introduced a new damping grant, Central Support Protection Grant (CSPG), to ensure that no authority received less grant than the year before, and that authorities which had education and personal social services responsibilities received at least 1.5 per cent more than the year before.

The July 1998 Local Government White Paper announced a 3-year review of Revenue Grant Distribution. It said that the Government did not expect to make fresh changes to the method of calculation of SSAs except where there are changes in the functions of councils, or the funding of particular services.

In 2000–01 there were therefore only limited adjustments to SSAs to accommodate the establishment of the Greater London Authority and related changes, most notably those arising from the alterations to the boundary of the Metropolitan Police District and the Essex, Hertfordshire and Surrey police areas. CSPG was retained in 2000–01.

In 2001–02 there was only one change in the method of determining SSAs to reflect the transfer of funding for Nursery Education for four-year-olds. CSPG was replaced for those authorities with education and personal social services responsibilities by floors and ceilings, which guaranteed that no authority would receive less than a 3.2 per cent. increase and that no authority could get more than a 6.5 per cent. increase.

Changes in the method of determining SSAs are contained in circular letters to Local Authorities, dated 2 December 1997, 2 December 1998, 25 November 1999 and 27 November 2000, copies of which are in the Library. For convenience, copies of the relevant extracts have been placed in the Library.

The table shows the net percentage change in SSAs against adjusted SSAs for the previous year for Oxfordshire over the period, together with the percentage change due to changes in methodology. It is inappropriate to compare actual SSA between years because of changes to the services financed by grants allocated using SSAs. Adjusted SSAs enable a like-for-like comparison between years.

	% change against adjusted SSAs	*Oxfordshire of which: % change due to methodology*
1998–99	2.5	–2.3
1999–2000	3.9	–0.9
2000–01	5.4	0.0
2001–02	6.7	0.0

It is not possible to perform a similar analysis for aggregate external finance.

Regional Assemblies

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many written representations he has received from electors in the Henley constituency expressing support for an elected regional assembly in the south-east of England. [6088]

Dr. Whitehead: None.

SSA (Elderly Population)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will change the method of calculation of the size of elderly population used in arriving at the standard spending assessment for local authorities. [6050]

Dr. Whitehead: Together with local government we are reviewing the grant distribution system. We published "Modernising Local Government Finance: A Green Paper" in September 2000, and will announce our conclusions on the most promising ways forward in a White Paper later this year. Alongside this, we are currently working on a range of options for changes to the standard spending assessment formulae, but have not yet reached any conclusions on what changes should be made.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the method of calculating the size of elderly population in connection with the standard spending assessment, with special reference to resort authorities. [6051]

Dr. Whitehead: Estimates of the size of the elderly population for each local authority are made by the Registrar General. They are based on the 1991 Census, and rolled forward to more recent years to reflect births, deaths and migration.

The standard spending assessment formula for elderly residential care is based on the elderly population in households rather than the total elderly population (which includes those in institutions). The population estimates are therefore adjusted to reflect this. This is done by assuming that the proportion of the total elderly population that is in households for each authority is the same as that recorded in the 1991 Census.

The size of the elderly population is thus calculated in the same way for all authorities, including resort authorities.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many PFI transactions have been overseen by his Department in each of the last 10 years; what is his estimate of the cost savings made in each of these transactions in comparison with the public sector alternative; what are the outstanding payments to be made in relation to these transactions for each of the next 15 years; and if he will make a statement. [5714]

Dr. Whitehead: Information about the PFI transactions that have been overseen by this Department since 1992 (10 years) is included in the table. However, any estimates of cost savings made in each of these transactions in comparison with the public sector alternative could be provided only at disproportionate cost to my department and, as agreed with the National Audit Office, payments to be made to contractors under PFI contracts are commercially confidential. Aggregate figures of estimated payments under all PFI contracts for the years 2001–01 to 2025–26 have been published in Table C18 of the Budget 2001 "Red Book"

DTLR PPP/PFI Projects: Remaining service payment

Name of project	*Year contract signed*
HA—Birmingham North Relief Road	1992
LU—Northern Line Trains	1995
Midland Metrolink	1995
HA—A69	1996
HA—A50	1996
HA—A19	1996
HA—M40	1996
HA—A417/419	1996
HA—A30/35	1996
HA—A1 (M)	1996
HA—M1/A1 Link Road	1996
Croydon Tramlink	1996
Channel Tunnel Rail Link	1996
Waltham Forest HAT	1996
DLR Lewisham Extension	1996
QEII Conference Centre	1997
Manchester Metrolink	1997
LU—Power	1998
LU—Prestige	1998
LU—Connect	1999
LU—British Transport Police	1999
Tower Hamlets HAT	1999
VI—MOT Computerisation	2000

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the private finance initiative; and if he will make a statement. [5715]

Dr. Whitehead: The following table provides details of DTLR's PFI and PPP contracts signed in the past five years and states whether the service is operational, and whether service charge payments have been withheld. Should PFI and PPP contractors fail to provide the contracted service they will not receive the full unitary service charge payment for the relevant month.

PFI and PPP contracts signed since 1997

Year contract signed	*Name of contract*	*Status of service*	*Has part of service charge payment been withheld?*
PFI contracts			
1997	Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre—Catering	Operational	No
2000	Highways Agency—A13 "Thames Gateway"	Under construction	n/a
2000	Vehicle Inspectorate—MOT computerisation	Under construction	n/a

PFI and PPP contracts signed since 1997

Year contract signed	*Name of contract*	*Status of service*	*Has part of service charge payment been withheld?*
2001	Highways Agency—Traffic Control Centre	Under construction	n/a
PPP contracts			
1997	Manchester Metrolink—extension to Salford Quays and Eccles[2]	Operational	No
1999	Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust	Operational	No
2001	National Air Traffic Control Services (NATS) PPP	'—	n/a

[1] The A13 Thames Gateway contract has transferred to Transport for London

[2] The Manchester Metrolink contract was let by Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive and received substantial funding from DTLR.

[3] NATS have announced their preferred partner—Airlines Group (British Airways, British Midland, Virgin, Britannia, Monarch, Easy-Jet and Airtours) and is due to let the contract shortly.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement regarding proposed changes to compulsory purchase orders. [5946]

Ms Keeble: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 18 July 2001, *Official Report,* column 202W.

Road Fuel Gases

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many HGV vehicles have converted to road fuel gases since May 1997. [5943]

Mr. Jamieson: DVLA figures show that from December 1997 to the end of December 2000 the number of goods vehicles (over 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight) running on gas was 269. These figures do not distinguish between the road fuel gases LPG and CNG.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many public transport buses have converted to road fuel gases since May 1997. [5944]

Mr. Jamieson: DVLA figures show that from December 1997 to the end of December 2000 the number of buses running on gas was 81. These figures do not differentiate between the road fuel gases LPG and CNG.

Ministerial Visits

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the purpose was of his recent visit to India; what his itinerary was; what the cost to public funds was; and which officials accompanied him. [5945]

Dr. Whitehead: My right hon. Friend has not visited India in his capacity as Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.

Partnership Investment Programme

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made with replacing partnership investment programme funding ended under European state aid laws. [5942]

Ms Keeble: Substantial progress has been made on the replacement of the Partnership Investment Programme (PIP). The European Commission have approved five new land and property regeneration schemes which partially replace PIP. The schemes cover speculative and non-speculative gap funding, community regeneration, direct development, and environmental regeneration. Regional Development Agencies and English Partnerships are now able to support a wide range of land and property regeneration projects, including projects which can be taken forward in partnership with the private sector.

Negotiations are continuing with the European Commission over the possibility of a new regeneration framework under which state aid would be permitted for the regeneration of derelict, disused and contaminated land suffering from market failure throughout the European Community. In addition, we are liaising with other member states who are also interested in this subject.

Public Transport (Disabled Access)

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what steps he *(a)* has taken and *(b)* plans to take to ensure that people with disabilities have full access to public transport. [6315]

Ms Keeble: We are committed to providing an accessible public transport system in which disabled people will have the same opportunities to travel as everyone else.

We have made regulations under Part V of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to require new trains and trams (since January 1999) and new buses and coaches with capacity for more than 22 passengers, used on local or scheduled services (since January 2001) to be accessible to disabled people, including wheelchair users.

Access to transport infrastructure, such as rail stations and bus stops, is subject to Part III of the DDA, which covers access to goods, facilities and services. Since 1 October 1999, service providers have been required to take steps to change practices, policies or procedures that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service. From 2004, service providers will have to take steps to remove, alter, or provide means of avoiding physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service.

In addition, the 10-year transport plan includes a commitment to making access for disabled people a condition of public investment in transport.

Planning Applications (Tewkesbury)

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if she will call in the application for change of use of the

Elizabethan Pine Shop in Church Street, Tewkesbury to a fast food establishment; and if she will make a statement. [5993]

Ms Keeble: A decision not to intervene in an associated listed building application was issued on behalf of the Secretary of State on 4 July, this allowed the council to determine the application at its discretion. Permission was I understand granted for the application for change of use by Tewkesbury borough council alongside the listed building consent on 11 July.

SSA (Havering)

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the *(a)* methodology changes made since 1997 to the formulae for calculating the standing spending assessment and aggregate external finance figures for the London borough of Havering and *(b)* net financial effect of these changes. [6293]

Dr. Whitehead: There were 15 changes in the method of determining standard spending assessments (SSAs) for the 1998–99 Local Government Finance Settlement; and 20 changes for the 1999–2000 Local Government Finance Settlement.

In 1999–2000 the Government introduced a new damping grant, central support protection grant (CSPG), to ensure that no authority received less grant than the year before, and that authorities which had education and personal social services responsibilities received at least 1.5 per cent. more than the year before.

The July 1998 Local Government White Paper announced a three year review of Revenue Grant Distribution. It said that the Government did not expect to make fresh changes to the method of calculation of SSAs except where there are changes in the functions of councils, or the funding of particular services.

In 2000–01 there were therefore only limited adjustments to SSAs to accommodate the establishment of the Greater London authority and related changes, most notably those arising from the alterations to the boundary of the Metropolitan Police District and the Essex, Hertfordshire and Surrey police areas. CSPG was retained in 2000–01.

In 2001–02 there was only one change in the method of determining SSAs to reflect the transfer of funding for Nursery Education for four-year-olds. CSPG was replaced for those authorities with education and personal social services responsibilities by floors and ceilings, which guaranteed that no authority would receive less than a 3.2 per cent. increase and that no authority could get more than a 6.5 per cent. increase.

Changes in the method of determining SSAs are contained in circular letters to local authorities, dated 2 December 1997, 2 December 1998, 25 November 1999 and 27 November 2000, copies of which are in the Library. For convenience, copies of the relevant extracts have been placed in the Library.

The table shows the net percentage change in SSAs against adjusted SSAs for the previous year for the London Borough of Havering over the period, together with the percentage change due to changes in methodology. It is inappropriate to compare actual SSA between years because of changes to the services financed by grants allocated using SSAs. Adjusted SSAs enable a like-for-like comparison between years.

Year	*% change against adjusted SSAs*	*Havering of which: % change due to methodology*
1998–99	4.1	1.0
1999–2000	4.5	0.4
2000–01	4.2	0.0
2001–02	6.4	0.0

It is not possible to perform a similar analysis for aggregate external finance.

Train Services (Romford)

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what were the *(a)* punctuality and *(b)* reliability figures for trains running between Romford and central London in the last 12 months. [6274]

Mr. Jamieson: This service is provided by First Great Eastern railways. Performance statistics are not available at route level. The punctuality and reliability statistics for the last year (to 27 May 2001) for all First Great Eastern services are shown in the table. Services are deemed punctual if they arrived at their destination within five minutes of timetable.

Percentage

Period	*Punctual*	*Reliable*
28 May 2000 to 24 June 2000	91.2	99.7
25 June 2000 to 22 July 2000	92.8	99.3
23 July 2000 to 19 August 2000	90.9	99.5
20 August 2000 to 16 September 2000	89.8	99.2
17 September 2000 to 14 October 2000	87.9	99.3
15 October 2000 to 11 November 2000	36.5	91.9
12 November 2000 to 9 December 2000	60.0	99.2
10 December 2000 to 6 January 2001	84.6	99.4
7 January 2001 to 3 February 2001	74.2	98.7
4 February 2001 to 3 March 2001	69.3	97.5
4 March 2001 to 31 March 2001	80.0	99.3
1 April 2001 to 29 April 2001	87.5	99.4
30 April 2001 to 27 May 2001	79.4	99.4

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what recent assessment he has made of the number of, and the demand for, seats on trains travelling between Romford and central London during peak hours; and if he will make a statement. [6275]

Mr. Jamieson: A survey is undertaken every year by the Strategic Rail Authority of the number of passengers travelling on peak services into London. The survey is used to monitor overcrowding by identifying the number of 'Passengers in Excess of Capacity' (PIXC) on specific groups of commuter services. The allowable combined morning and evening peak percentage above capacity is 3.0 per cent. The PIXC survey results issued by the Strategic Rail Authority on 13 July show that the First Great Eastern suburban services morning figure was 5.5 per cent and the evening figure was 1.3 per cent. The combined peaks PIXC figure was 3.5 per cent.

Water Tower (Colchester)

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on what date the public inquiry into the planning appeal in respect of the Victorian Jumbo water tower at Colchester is to be heard. [6325]

Ms Keeble: The planning appeals and related listed building consent appeals were received on 19 June and are to be the subject of a public local inquiry. The Planning Inspectorate is processing the appeals and arrangements are currently in hand to identify a suitable date for the inquiry.

Departmental Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the top 10 companies to which his Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6418]

Dr. Whitehead: The table details the 10 top companies by spend to which DTLR Central contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months.

Top 10 firms

Service provider	*Spend £*
Dalkia Energy and Technical Services	3,004,046
Willmott Dixon Ltd.	2,102,034
Thrislington Engineering Co Ltd.	294,315
Dalkia Technical Service Ltd.	265,216
M J Ferguson Ltd	150,000
R G Carter Maintenance	131,988
Planned Maintenance Engineering Ltd.	130,578
Mansell Construction Services Ltd.	98,982
Hon. Lady Smith Construction Ltd.	75,270
Conrad Construction	34,826

River Wye

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans the Government have to provide more bridges over the River Wye in Herefordshire. [6241]

Mr. Jamieson: There are no plans for the Government to provide additional bridges over the River Wye.

Railways (Scotland and the Borders)

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what his policy is on *(a)* electrification of the east coast main line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen and *(b)* reopening the Borders railway; and if he will make a statement; [6314]

(2) what powers he has to compel rail operators and Railtrack *(a)* to begin the electrification of the east coast main line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen and *(b)* to reopen the Borders railway. [6313]

Mr. Jamieson: These are primarily matters for the Strategic Rail Authority whose Strategic Agenda contains a list of possible future rail schemes, including some electrification schemes and the reopening of the Borders railway.

The Secretary of State has no powers to compel rail operators and Railtrack to proceed with particular schemes.

Local Housing Development

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions for what reason the Government do not allow local *(a)* residents and *(b)* authorities to decide on the level of local housing development in their areas. [6217]

Ms Keeble: The Government believe that a strategic approach should be taken in determining the level of housing development to ensure that every member of our society has the prospect of a decent home, that economic growth is not impeded and that our countryside is protected from unnecessary and insensitive development. Local authorities, representing the local electorate, play a key role in this process but Government may need to intervene in the wider public interest.

Housing (Green Belt)

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans the Government have to increase the power of local residents to counter-appeal against housing developments on green belt land. [6216]

Ms Keeble: Local people already have the opportunity to make their views known on development proposals before local planning authorities determine planning applications. There is also the right to challenge the grant of planning permission by a local planning authority by seeking judicial review. We have no current plans to introduce a third party right of appeal against authorities' decisions to grant planning permission.

Planning

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the performance of the Government Offices for the Regions in 2000–01 was in meeting targets for issuing decisions on called-in planning applications and on recovered appeals following receipt of the inspector's report; and if he will make a statement. [6449]

Ms Keeble: The information is as follows:

Called-in applications

Target: issue 80 per cent. of decisions in 13 weeks and 100 per cent. in 20 weeks

Performance: 60.9 per cent. issued in 13 weeks and 72.9 per cent. in 20 weeks

Recovered appeals

Target: issue 80 per cent. of decisions within eight weeks and 100 per cent. in 13 weeks.

Performance: 56.4 in eight weeks and 66.9 in 13 weeks.

The number of call-in and recovery cases—typically, between 120 and 150 of each a year—represents a very small proportion of the number of planning applications and appeals dealt with every year. They also tend to be rather more complicated than the generality of planning decisions. Nevertheless, it is clear that, overall, there continues to be a need to expedite the decision-making process. The Department is considering what further measures are needed to improve performance.

EU Committee of the Regions

Mrs. Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what steps he is taking to select English candidates for appointment to the next term of the European Union Committee of the Regions; and if he will make a statement. [6455]

Mr. Raynsford: Members of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) are appointed by the European Council on the basis of proposals made by member states. We have invited comments from the Local Government Association and from regional interests on a proposed procedure for selecting persons to be proposed to the European Council this autumn as English members of the UK delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

The proposals are designed to give regional bodies—Regional Chambers and the Greater London Authority—a formal link with the Committee of the Regions, while maintaining a coherent group representation for England as a whole. These proposals reflect our intention to make an order under the Greater London Authority Act 1999, to amend the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, so as to extend eligibility for CoR membership to members of the Greater London Authority, including the Mayor.

A copy of a paper setting out the proposed selection procedure has been placed in the Library of the House.

Access to Information

Mr. Patrick Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what responses he has received to ""Access to Information in Local Government", a consultation paper on aspects of the access to information regime for local authorities in England. [6532]

Mr. Raynsford: To date we have received 150 written responses to "Access to Information in Local Government", a consultation paper on aspects of the access to information regime for local authorities in England. We are now considering these responses carefully.

A list of all the responses has today been placed in the Library of the House and full copies of the responses are available from my Department's Library.

Domestic Property (Revaluation)

Ms Atherton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to revalue domestic properties in England for council tax purposes; and if he will make a statement. [6528]

Mr. Raynsford: I propose that there should be a 10-yearly fixed statutory cycle of council tax revaluations. Work on the first revaluation should start in 2005, with council tax bills based on updated property values issuing in 2007. Revaluations will not, of course, lead to any overall increase or decrease in the council tax yield.

Regular revaluations will ensure that the council tax burden is distributed fairly on the basis of more up-to-date property values. Respondents to last year's Green Paper on local government finance were overwhelmingly supportive of the proposal to establish a fixed cycle for council tax revaluations. Setting out a timetable for revaluations gives local authorities a clear timetable and framework within which to make their financial plans.

Revenue Grant

Mr. Bailey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his plans are for distributing revenue grant to local authorities in 2002–03; and if he will make a statement. [6529]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government's objective is to create a local government finance system that distributes grant fairly and effectively and gives councils greater financial autonomy to help them better meet the needs of their local communities.

In our Green Paper on local government finance, published last September, we consulted on whether to extend the moratorium on changes to the formula used to distribute revenue grant to local authorities by a further year, to include 2002–03. After considering the consultation responses, we have concluded that while reforming the revenue grant distribution system is an important priority, we must ensure that there is adequate time for preparation and consultation.

We know that there remain disparities in the education funding formula which are not justified by the education needs of children. We have been working with local government and other education interests on the best way to resolve these issues but there is not yet agreement on the way forward.

We have therefore decided to keep the existing grant formula stable for 2002–03. Over the coming year, we will work up proposals in partnership with local government for a reformed grant formula which we will introduce in 2003–04. The Government will work to the same timetable with local government and the wider education community on revising the education funding formula to focus on children's needs. I then expect to see the moratorium on formula changes re-introduced for 2004–05 and 2005–06.

Today's announcement will give local authorities some welcome financial stability and will allow them to plan ahead. Meanwhile we will enhance that financial stability and predictability by developing the floors and ceilings protection which we introduced for some authorities in 2001–02 so that all authorities get a reasonable increase in grant and no authority gets an unduly large increase. We intend to extend floors and ceilings to cover police and fire authorities for 2002–03; and to discuss how best to enhance grant stability in 2002–03 for shire district councils, who do not have education and social service responsibilities.

TREASURY

Retail Petrol Industry

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when his officials last met representatives of the retail petrol industry; what was discussed at the meeting; and if he will place a copy of the minutes of the meeting in the Library. [5308]

Mr. Wilson: I have been asked to reply.

My officials regularly meet representatives from the retail petrol industry. A number of issues are discussed at these meetings including wholesaler and retailer relations, commercial and economic trends influencing the market and competitive factors affecting the industry. It is not our policy to make minutes of these meetings publicly available as they contain commercially sensitive information.

Personal Pensions

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review the £100,000 maximum binding limit for awards against firms by the Personal Investment Authority Ombudsman for the mis-selling of personal pensions. [2468]

Ruth Kelly: The Personal Investment Authority Ombudsman Bureau will cease to exist when the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 comes into force at midnight on 30 November. The successor body is the Financial Ombudsman Service.

Redress for mis-selling personal pensions takes the form of directing a firm to take an action, either to fund the reinstatement of a mis-selling victim to their occupational pension scheme or to top-up their personal pension. Where the Financial Ombudsman Service makes any direction to a firm, the cost to the firm will not be subject to a specific limit in cash terms, although all Financial Ombudsman Service awards will be subject to "fair and reasonable" criteria.

Under Section 229(4) of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (FSMA), it is for the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to specify the maximum amount that may be regarded as fair compensation for loss or damaged suffered by the complainant. Following a number of consultations on the Financial Ombudsman Scheme and its rules, the FSA decided that the maximum binding limit on firms for money awards should be £100,000. However, the Ombudsman may recommend that firms pay the balance on a voluntary basis. There was widespread support for that limit but also general agreement that the limit should be capable of regular review. The FSA confirmed that it would review the limit, in consultation with the Financial Ombudsman Service, and in the light of experience, every three years.

Insurance Premiums

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for reviewing the competitiveness and fairness to the consumer of the ways in which the insurance industry assesses risk in relation to insurance premiums on a postcode basis. [2098]

Ruth Kelly: The Government, through their National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, have brought together many different organisations in response to the specific problems of deprived neighbourhoods. For example, we are working with local authorities and housing associations to promote the take up of Insurance with Rent schemes. These, along with other initiatives, should help to work towards a situation where nobody is unfairly denied access to insurance services.

Customs and Excise (Suspensions)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Customs and Excise officers have been suspended since 1 January; and in which areas of the country they were based. [2831]

Mr. Boateng: The following table shows a summary of the number of officers who have been suspended since 1 January 2001 and the area of the country they were based.

Officers suspended within HM C and E since 1 January 2001

Region	*Discipline*	*Work area*	*Number*
Scotland	Detection	Law Enforcement	1
Northern	Investigation	Law Enforcement	1
Central	Detection	Law Enforcement	2
London	Support Services	Business Services and Taxes	2
	Investigation	Law Enforcement	3
	Detection	Law Enforcement	1
	Intelligence	Law Enforcement	1
Total			11

London Underground

Bob Russell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last travelled on the London Underground in the course of his official duties. [3673]

Ruth Kelly: Treasury Ministers use a variety of modes of transport during the course of their official duties.

VAT (Housing)

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the percentage change in the number of housing units built annually if VAT on new housing were increased to *(a)* 5 per cent., *(b)* 7.5 per cent. and *(c)* 17.5 per cent.; and if he will make a statement. [4398]

Mr. Boateng: The Government have no plans to put VAT on new housing.

National Statistics

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which statistical series National Statistics ceased *(a)* collecting, *(b)* calculating and *(c)* publishing in financial year 2000. [4399]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Matthew Taylor, dated 20 July 2001:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your recent question about which statistical series National statistics ceased collecting, calculating and publishing in financial year 2000 (4399).

The initial scope of National Statistics was defined in June 2000 as being "all of the public access databases and publications produced by the Office for National Statistics and many of the key public interest statistics produced by other Government Departments".

The initial scope of National Statistics will evolve and expand over time. In the first year, however, some in-scope publications were removed from actual or planned circulation for mainly operational reasons. These included:

(i) Department of Social Security:

Earnings Top-up Statistics (monthly): publication ceased because the Pilot scheme ended.

Disability Working Allowance Statistics Quarterly Enquiry: publication ceased because benefit ceased and replaced by the Disabled Person Tax Credit.

Family Credit Statistics Quarterly Enquiry: publication ceased because benefit ceased and replaced by the Working Families Tax Credit.

(ii) Department for Education and Employment:

Adult Participation in Education, Training and Self-Directed Learning: the original intention was to publish the results of the National Adult Learning Survey in a separate Statistical First Release but it was subsequently to continue their publication as a research paper outside the scope of National Statistics.

VAT (Nursing Home Fees)

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the cost would be to HM Customs and Excise of treating fees paid by individuals to nursing homes and registered residential homes for the elderly as VAT zero rated; and if he will make a statement. [4640]

Mr. Boateng: Details of such costs are not readily available. The Government are of the clear view that care of vulnerable people provided by residential homes should not be subject to VAT. At present, fees charged by nursing homes and registered residential homes for the elderly are exempt from VAT. European Community agreements prevent us from extending the zero rate of VAT to residential care.

Weatherall, Green and Smith

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) which organisations and individuals were consulted by Weatherall, Green and Smith in undertaking its work for HM Treasury on the planning system; [4637]

(2) if he will publish the research on the planning system undertaken by Weatherall, Green and Smith for HM Treasury. [4636]

Mr. Boateng: HM Treasury has not commissioned any research on the planning system from Weatherall, Green and Smith. An employee of the company is currently seconded to the Treasury to help with the Department's work in this area.

Private Finance Initiative

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the guidance issued by the Office of Government Commerce on PFI contracts. [4475]

Mr. Andrew Smith: General guidance on standardisation of PFI contracts, produced by the Treasury task force was published in 1999. A supplement on information technology was published in 2000. Copies are available in the House of Commons Library.

The Treasury task force also published a number of policy statements and technical notes on PFI issues. These are available on the OGC website (www.ogc.gov.uk).

The complete list is as follows:

Policy Statement No. 1: PFI and Public Expenditure Allocations

Policy Statement No. 2: Public Sector Comparators and Value for Money

Policy Statement No. 3: PFI and Public Expenditure Allocations for NDPBs

Policy Statement No. 4: PFI Projects: Disclosure of Information and Consultation with Staff and Other Interested Parties

Policy Statement No. 5: Provision of Information to Parliament

Technical Note No. 1: How to account for PFI Transactions

Technical Note No. 2: How to follow EC Procurement Procedure and Advertise in the OJEC

Technical Note No. 3: How to Appoint and Manage Advisers to PFI Projects

Technical Note No. 4: How to Appoint and Work with a Preferred Bidder

Technical Note No. 5: How to Construct a Public Sector Comparator

Technical Note No. 6: How to Manage the Delivery of Long Term PFI Contracts

Technical Note No. 7: How to Achieve Design Quality in PFI.

Additional guidance to Departments on refinancing PFI projects which was issued in 2000 is also on the OGC website.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the private finance initiative; and if he will make a statement. [5729]

Mr. Andrew Smith: The information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Taxation

Mr. Chope: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made of the impact on the NHS of the removal of tax relief on medical insurance premiums for those aged over 60 years. [3750]

Dawn Primarolo *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* None. There is no reliable information available to the Government about renewals by the over-60s of their private medical insurance policies for any period since the tax relief was abolished in 1997.

Mr. Cameron: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the total tax take was accounted for by *(a)* income tax, *(b)* VAT and *(c)* other taxes for (i) 1996, (ii) 1997, (iii) 1998, (iv) 1999 and (v) 2000. [5623]

Mr. Andrew Smith: This information is set out in the relevant Financial Statement and Budget Reports.

Euro

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is his policy to state the exchange rate at which the pound will be fixed to the euro in advance of any referendum on the euro; and if he will make a statement. [4850]

Ruth Kelly: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 22 June 2000, *Official Report*, column 539W.

Data Protection Act

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place all information on the hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell to which the hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell is entitled under section 7(1) of the Data Protection Act 1998 in the Library. [4848]

Ruth Kelly: The hon. Member's question amounts to a subject access request under the Data Protection Act 1998. I will write to him on that basis.

Parliamentary Written Answers

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of parliamentary written answers in his Department were redrafted by special advisers before they were sent to a Minister in each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement. [4859]

Ruth Kelly: Information relating to the number of occasions on which special advisers have contributed to the drafting of the 11,500 written parliamentary answers given by Treasury Ministers since May 1997 is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Single People (Living Standards)

Rachel Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take to improve the living standards of single, low paid, employed persons with no dependants. [4450]

Dawn Primarolo *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The Chancellor has already announced that the Government will, from 2003, introduce a new employment tax credit, extending the principle of in-work support to those without children. This employment tax credit will make work pay and help tackle in-work poverty for a wider range of households. It will complement a new integrated child credit, which will bring all income-related child payments into a single tax credit, providing a more transparent and streamlined system of support for families with children.

EU Structural Funds

Andrew George: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what public funds are budgeted to be available for each calendar year for which budgets have been set and which would be eligible to provide the public match funding for Objective 1 projects in each of the four Objective 1 regions, indicating *(a)* which funds have budgets identified to be spent in Objective 1 regions, *(b)* which are budgeted on a wider than Objective 1 region basis but lower than national basis and *(c)* which are set at a national level. [5300]

Mr. Boateng: The overall EU allocation to the UK's four Objective 1 regions for the 2000–06 period is £3.2 billion. Resources for match funding were provided for within the total departmental spending settlements following SR2000. These resources can be obtained from a number of sources at national, regional and local levels—e.g. central Government Departments, Regional Development Agencies, local government.

Financial profiles for UK Objective 1 regions for the period 2000–06 can be found at www.dti.gov.uk/europe/structural.

Inflation Measures

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce changes to the measure of inflation used by the Bank of England to achieve the Government's target of a 2.5 per cent. rate of inflation; and if he will make a statement. [4986]

Ruth Kelly: The Government's target measure of inflation is the retail prices index, excluding mortgage interest payments (or RPIX) target rate of 2.5 per cent. was reaffirmed by the Chancellor in the March 2001 Budget.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the use of the harmonised index of consumer prices as a measure of inflation in the United Kingdom. [4984]

Ruth Kelly: The harmonised index of consumer prices, or HICP, is designed for the purposes of comparing inflation rates between the UK and other EU countries.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent consultations he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England with regard to the harmonised index of consumer prices. [4985]

Ruth Kelly: The Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England meet regularly to discuss a wide range of economic issues, including inflation indicators.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent consultations his officials have had with officials of the Bank of England with regard to the use of the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices as a measure of inflation. [4987]

Ruth Kelly: Officials of HM Treasury meet with their counterparts at the Bank of England to discuss various economic issues as and when the need arises.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in each of the last 10 years *(a)* how many days were lost per employee due to sickness and *(b)* how many officials took early retirement from his Department. [5326]

Ruth Kelly: Figures published by the Cabinet Office on sickness absence are available since 1994. For the Treasury, the figures for working days absence per staff year were:

Year	*Working days per staff year*
1994	7.0
1995	8.4
1996	5.1
1997	4.9
1998	5.3
1999	5.5

The latest publication is "Analysis of Sickness Absence in the Civil Service 1999" published in February 2001.

For early retirement, the figures for the Treasury are in the table.

Year	*Number of officials taking early retirement*
1991	11
1992	14
1993	12
1994	34
1995	34
1996	30
1997	5
1998	10
1999	6
2000	10

Working Families Tax Credit

Caroline Flint: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what the annual cost would be of extending the Working Families Tax Credit to couples without children; [4914]

(2) what the annual cost would be of extending the Working Families Tax Credit to couples without children were the minimum income for a couple set at *(a)* £200 per week and *(b)* £225 per week. [4906]

Dawn Primarolo: The cost of extending the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) to couples with no dependent children, assuming the same structure of support, is estimated at about £½ billion per year in the steady state. This estimate is based on household survey data, and takes no account of behavioural changes generated by such an extension.

The net earnings plus WFTC of such a couple with an employee working 35 hours per week at £4.10 per hour would then be £180 per week. The cost of increasing this to £200 or £225 per week would depend on the combination of changes made to the tax credits in WFTC as well as the impact of these changes.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events his Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5047]

Ruth Kelly: This information is not held centrally, and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Public Expenditure Analysis

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors contribute to the difference between expenditure on agriculture in the North East and in London in the published analysis of general Government expenditure by region in 1999–2000; and if he will make a statement. [4580]

Mr. Andrew Smith *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The analysis of public expenditure by region published in Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (Cm 5110) attempts to allocate spending over regions to reflect the relative benefits incurred by the respective populations. The commentary in that document (paragraph 8.2) notes the limitations of this approach, in particular the definitional problems associated with allocating spending on the basis of who benefits. Where there is no clear basis for deciding which region benefits from a particular spending programme, or where accounting information for allocating spending by region is not available, allocation is based on other available indicators. Spending on agriculture has therefore been allocated over regions on a per capita basis.

Stamp Duty

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress he has made in arranging for exemption from stamp duty in designated disadvantaged areas; when he plans to publish the list of qualifying areas; and if he will make a statement. [5310]

Tim Loughton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to publish a list of deprived areas which will qualify for stamp duty reductions announced in the Budget. [5941]

Mr. Boateng: The Government have been working closely with the devolved authorities to determine how best to target the relief. The qualifying areas will be announced as soon as possible.

Economic Data (Scottish Borders)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if she will list in the *Official Report* sources of official data produced by *(a)* the Office for National Statistics and *(b)* other central and devolved Government agencies for (i) demographic changes, (ii) neighbourhood poverty in postcode areas and (iii) agriculture in the Scottish Borders area between 1991 and 2001. [5093]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Archy Kirkwood, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question on the sources of official data produced by (a) the ONS and (b) other central and devolved Government agencies for (i) demographic changes (ii) neighbourhood poverty in postcode areas and (iii) agriculture in the Scottish Borders area between 1991 and 2001 (5093). I am replying in his absence.

Statistics that are available on these topics are produced by the Scottish Executive:

i. Demographic changes

Components of population change are included in the annual mid-year estimates prepared by the Registrar General for Scotland. The latest estimates are for 2000 and are available from the General Register Office for Scotland Website, in Table 3 at www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/grosweb/grosweb.nsf/pages/mpe00.

ii. Neighbourhood poverty

There are two key indices for measuring neighbourhood poverty in postcode areas. Firstly, the long established Carstairs index, which is based on data from the 1991 Census. More recently the Arbuthnott index, which combines Census and updateable information, was developed to assess the deprivation related need for revenue allocations in the NHS in Scotland.

The current Scottish Deprivation index, which was revised in 1998, ranks postcode sectors by combining 1991 Census indicators with more recent non-Census indicators of deprivation. It is published by the Stationery Office (ISBN 0748078037).

iii. Agriculture

Sources are the Agricultural and Horticultural Census, from which results are available annually, and the European Union Farm Structure Survey, undertaken in 1995, 1997 and 2000.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the sources of official data produced by *(a)* the Office for National Statistics and *(b)* other central and devolved Government agencies for unemployment in the travel-to-work areas in the Scottish Borders area between 1991 and 2001. [5092]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Archy Kirkwood, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question on the sources of official data for unemployment in travel-to-work areas in the Scottish Borders area between 1991 and 2001 (5092). I have been asked to reply in his absence.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces statistics of unemployment by travel-to-work areas from two main sources.

The first is the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which provides the Government's preferred measure of unemployment based on the internationally recognised International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition. A person is classified as ILO unemployed if:

they are out of work, want a job, have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks or

they are out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks.

Figures for travel-to-work areas are available on an annual basis, from 1996 to 1999. The data are held on the LFS Local Area Database (LADB). 2000 Data are not yet available.

The other source is the Claimant Count, which is the count of claimants of unemployment-related benefits—currently the Jobseeker's Allowance and National Insurance credits. Figures for travel-to-work areas have been available on a monthly basis for the Claimant Count since it was introduced in 1983.

Both the LFS LADB and Claimant Count data are available on the Nomis database in the House of Commons Library.

The Scottish Executive uses only ONS sources of data on unemployment.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the sources of official data produced by *(a)* the Office for National Statistics and *(b)* other central and devolved Government agencies for (i) economic development, (ii) manufacturing industry and (iii) financial assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises in the Scottish Borders area between 1991 and 2001. [5091]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Archy Kirkwood, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question on the sources of official data produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other Government agencies, for economic development, manufacturing industry and financial assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises in the Scottish Borders area, between 1991 and 2001 (5091). I am replying in his absence.

ONS produces data relating to the manufacturing industry broken down into regions, including the Scottish Borders. Between 1991 and 1997 the financial data relating to the manufacturing industry was a part of the Annual Census of Production (ACOP). Data for 1998 and 1999 will be published in the Annual Business Inquiry (part 2) results in the autumn 2001. Data on annual inquiries into distribution and service (1991 -1997) were not broken down into regions. Employment data relating to the manufacturing industry in the Scottish Borders was available in the Annual Employment Survey for 1991 to 1997, and in the Annual Business Inquiry (part 1) for 1998 and 1999. The data for 2000 will be released in December 2001. These ONS publications are available in the House of Commons Library. (Data at sub regional level, such as the Scottish Borders, are available from the ONS on request). ONS is not a source of data for financial assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises statistics for the Scottish Borders area.

The Scottish Executive holds data on the Scottish Borders on the Scottish Production Database, the Scottish Services Database and the Scottish Corporate Database. Information at the Scottish Borders level is published from all of these sources, and they all contain data collected within the Annual Census of Production, and the Annual Inquiries into Distribution and Services from 1991–1997 and for 1998 from the Annual Business Inquiry. The source of information for official data for the Regional Selective Assistance, Invest for Growth, SMART and SPUR grant schemes is the SAMIS database. This database is DTI owned.

Jobless Households

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of people of working age were living in households where no one worked in the spring quarter of 2001. [5234]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Frank Field, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question concerning people living in households where no-one worked. I am replying in his absence. (5234)

In autumn (September - November) 2000, the estimate of the proportion of working age people living in households where no-one worked was 11.8 per cent.

This estimate is derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). It defines workless households as households with no-one in employment, consisting of those who are unemployed and/or inactive. Working-age households, are defined as households including at least one person of working age, i.e. a man aged 16 to 64 or a woman aged 16 to 59. The data above relates to autumn 2000, which is the latest available (Spring 2001 household data will be released on 25 July 2001).

Mortality Rate

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the mortality rate per 100,000 adults of working age from suicide and undetermined injury in England was in *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 2000. [5223]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Frank Field, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question on what the mortality rate per 100,000 working age adults from suicide and undetermined injury in England was in (a) 1997, (b) 1998, (c) 1999 and (d) 2000. I am replying in his absence. (5223).

Figures from 1997, 1998 and 1999 are given in the table below. Figures for 2000 are not yet available.

Annual age-standardised suicide[1] rates per 100,000 for males and females at working ages[2], England, 1997–99

Year	Males	Females
1997	18.5	5.8
1998	19.6	5.4
1999	18.9	5.7

[1] Deaths are coded according to the WHO International Classification of Disease, Ninth Edition (ICD9). They are regarded as resulting from suicide if the underlying cause is classified to either suicide or undetermined intent, ICD9 codes E950-E959, E980-E989 excluding E988.8

[2] Working age is classified as between 16 and 64 for males and 16 and 59 for females

Teenage Parents

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of teenage parents was not in education, employment or training in England and Wales in January to July 2001. [5232]

Mr. Boateng *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Frank Field, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question concerning the proportion of teenage parents not in education, employment or training in England and Wales. I am replying in his absence. (5232)

Estimates of the economic activity status of the population are available from the Labour force Survey (LFS). You should note that the estimate below has been restricted to those aged 16 and 19 only as the LFS does not collect information regarding economic activity for persons aged under 16 years. The data relate to spring 2001, the latest available.

In spring (March - May) 2001, the estimate of the proportion of parents aged 16 to 19 who were not in education, employment or training in England and Wales was 72.1 per cent.

Drug-related Deaths

Paul Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of drug-related deaths that occurred in each year since 1997. [5761]

Mr. Boateng: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about what estimate he has made of the number of drug related deaths that occurred in 1998; and what estimates he has made for each subsequent year. I am replying in his absence. (5761)

The number of deaths in England and Wales certified as being due to drug related poisoning was 2922 in 1998 and 2943 in 1999. Figures for 2000 are not yet available.

Deaths are coded according to the International Classification of Diseases Ninth Revision (ICD-9). Deaths are regarded as resulting from drug related poisoning if the underlying cause is classified to ICD-9 codes 292, 304, 305.2–305.9, E850-E858, E950.0-E950.5, E980.0-E980.5, E962.0. The figures are obtained from 'Deaths related to drug poisoning: England and Wales, 1995–1999' *Health Statistics Quarterly No 9, p70–7.*

Energy Efficiency

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much additional CHP has been installed as a result of the concessions given to CHP under the Climate Change Levy. [5182]

Mr. Boateng: The exemption for Good Quality CHP was announced in the PBR in November 1999—some 20 months ago. Large schemes take some three to five years to design, gain planning permission and DTI consents, and build, although smaller schemes can be installed in as little as 16 weeks. Only new small scale schemes will therefore have so far been affected since the announcement.

Debt Relief

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the percentage of countries eligible for additional relief under the HIPC initiative that reached their decision points by 1 January 2001; and if he will make a statement. [5402]

Mr. Boateng: By 1 January 2001, 22 countries had reached their Decision Point under the enhanced HIPC initiative. They have had $53 billion in debt relief agreed, which will reduce their debts to below the developing country average. These 22 countries represent 80 per cent. of the 27 HIPCs eligible for debt relief at that time, thus meeting and exceeding the Treasury/Department for International Development PSA target. Of the 41 countries on the list of potentially eligible HIPCs, four have debts which will be below the level requiring additional debt relief (Angola, Kenya, Vietnam, Yemen), two had not opted for debt relief (Laos and Ghana—though Ghana did then opt for debt relief later in 2001), and at least eight countries were conflict affected and hence not able to receive debt relief as the benefits of debt relief could not be shown to go to poverty reduction rather than war (Burma, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia—note that Ethiopia has since signed a peace agreement to end its conflict—Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia and Sudan).

Pesticide Tax

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce a pesticide tax; and if he will make a statement. [5776]

Mr. Boateng: The Government have accepted industry proposals for a voluntary package of measures to minimise the environmental impact of pesticides. This will be kept under review in order to assess whether a voluntary approach is delivering significant environmental benefits, over and above those that would result from a pesticides tax.

Scottish Parliament Building

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the amount of revenue which will accrue to the Exchequer from VAT, national insurance contributions, income tax, and tax on constructors' fees arising from the construction of the Scottish Parliament; and if he will make a statement. [5395]

Mr. Andrew Smith: No such estimates exist.

Foreign Currency Reserves

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the cost of holding the Government's foreign currency reserves over the past three financial years; [5397]

(2) what estimate he has made of the profit his Department has made from the Bank of England's investment of the reserves in the last 12 months *(a)* net of management charges and *(b)* gross of management charges; and if he will make a statement. [5398]

Ruth Kelly: Performance in managing the United Kingdom's foreign currency reserves is measured for the financial years up to 2000–01 against a Public Services Agreement (PSA) target to

> "minimise the cost of holding the Government's foreign currency reserves, while reducing risk".

The target for years up to 2000–01 was zero. For the financial years 2000–01 onwards performance will be measured against a similar Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) target, where performance will be assessed against a target of average annual cost over the preceding three years no greater than zero.

Information on performance against the PSA for the financial years 1998–99 and 1999–2000 is provided in the Treasury's Departmental Report.

Information on the Bank of England's management charges in relation to the reserves is given in Note 7 of the annual accounts of the Exchange Equalisation Account for the relevant financial years.

Disabled Person's Tax Credit

Mr. Bacon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many disabled people would be entitled to payment of the Disabled Person's Tax Credit if the rules governing receipt of an eligible disability benefit were the same as those of the Disability Working Allowance; [5423]

(2) if he will estimate the number of disabled people who would be entitled to the Disabled Person's Tax Credit if it was subject to the same taper as the Disability Working Allowance. [5422]

Dawn Primarolo: One condition for entitlement of the Disabled Person's Tax Credit (DPTC) is that the applicant is receiving one of a number of qualifying benefits, or was receiving one of them up to 182 days prior to the date of application. This is more generous than Disability Working Allowance (DWA), where the time limit was 56 days. However, no reliable estimate exists of the extra number of people who are entitled to an award through the time limit being extended.

About 1,800 recipients of DPTC at January 2001 would not have been entitled to an award had the income taper rate been 70 per cent. (the taper rate for DWA) rather than 55 per cent.

Mr. Bacon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the level of take-up of the disabled person's tax credit; and what measures have been implemented by the Government to ensure that disabled people in work receive the support to which they are entitled; [5421]

(2) how many disabled people were in receipt of the disabled person's tax credit in June. [5424]

Dawn Primarolo: The numbers of recipients of the disabled person's tax credit (DPTC) are published in the DPTC Quarterly Enquiry. The latest Enquiry published includes information on awards at January 2001. Copies of the DPTC Quarterly Enquiries are available in the Library or on the Inland Revenue website www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk. Figures for April 2001 and July 2001 will be published in September and December, respectively.

On-going advertising and other activities continue to raise awareness of DPTC and have led to a 50 per cent. increase in the number of workers with a disability receiving in-work support compared with DWA.

Mr. Bacon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the disabled person's tax credit will interact with the proposed employment tax credit and integrated child credit. [5419]

Dawn Primarolo: The Chancellor announced in Budget 2000 that an employment tax credit and an integrated child credit would replace existing credits (the working families' tax credit, the disabled person's tax credit, and the children's tax credit) and the child-related payments in income support and income-based jobseeker's allowance.

On 19 July this year, the Inland Revenue issued a consultation document inviting comments on its proposals for implementing these new tax credits, which will be introduced in 2003.

Income Tax

Mr. Cameron: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what percentage of income taxpayers paid tax at each of the bands for *(a)* 1996, *(b)* 1997, *(c)* 1998, *(d)* 1999 and *(e)* 2000. [5624]

Dawn Primarolo: I refer the hon. Member to "Inland Revenue Statistics", table 2.1. The latest version is on the Inland Revenue website—www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats.

Mr. Cameron: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of income tax was taken from taxpayers paying tax at the 40 per cent. rate in each of the years 1997 to 2001. [5622]

Dawn Primarolo: I refer the hon. Member to "Inland Revenue Statistics", table 2.5. The latest version is on the Inland Revenue website—www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats.

Employment Tax Credit

Mr. Bacon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what age limits will be applied to the employment tax credit when it is introduced. [5420]

Dawn Primarolo: On 19 July, the Inland Revenue issued a consultation document inviting comments on its proposals for implementing the next generation of tax credits, the integrated child credit for families with children and the employment tax credit for low-income working households. Final decisions on the eligibility rules for the employment tax credit will be taken in the light of responses to that document.

Household Income

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of households facing marginal deduction rates in *(a)* 2001–02, *(b)* 2000–01, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 1998–99 over (i) 70 per cent., (ii) 60 per cent. and (iii) 50 per cent.; and if he will make a statement. [5400]

Dawn Primarolo: Historical estimates from 1997–98 to 1999–2000 of the number of households facing marginal deduction rates in excess of 50 per cent. are contained in the Social Security Departmental Report—The Government's Expenditure Plans 2000–01 to 2001–02. Forward-looking estimates, which include the impact of the tax and benefit changes in the last four Budgets, are contained in the table. The effect of the tax and benefit changes is to reduce the number of households facing marginal deduction rates in excess of 70 per cent. by around half a million.

Marginal deduction rate	*Before Budget 1998*[1]	*After Budget 2001*[1]
Percentage		
100 or more	5,000	0
90 or more	130,000	40,000
80 or more	300,000	210,000
70 or more	748,000	255,000
60 or more	760,000	900,000
50 or more	760,000	1,100,000

[1] The numbers in the table are cumulative and show the numbers of households in receipt of either income related benefits or the WFTC where at least one person works 16 hours or more.

International Financial Organisations (Transparency)

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of his Department's progress towards achieving more openness in the operations of the international financial institutions; and if he will make a statement. [5399]

Ruth Kelly: The Government believe that greater openness in the operations of the international financial institutions can play a key part in improving effectiveness in all aspects of their business, in increasing accountability to members, and in contributing to a greater public understanding of their role of the world economy. Recent positive steps have included the creation of an independent evaluation office at the IMF.

Two publications in particular detail the Government's current policy towards openness and transparency. These are the Treasury's annual report to Parliament "The UK and the IMF 1999–2000" (available online at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pdf/2001/imf–2201.pdf), and the Government White Paper on International Development "Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor" (available online at www.globalisation.gov.uk). In addition, the G7 Finance Ministers agreed a report on progress in the reform of the international institutions and the multilateral development banks at their meeting in Rome on 7 July (available online at www.g7–2001.org/en/roma/call_frame_rapporto-1.htm).

Departmental Electronic Publishing

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what aggregate measure of performance has been developed to monitor electronic publishing of material hitherto published on paper by his Department; and if he will publish the results of this measure for the last three financial years. [5401]

Ruth Kelly: The majority of official documents produced for external distribution by HM Treasury are now published simultaneously in hard copy and electronic form. Use of the Treasury's website has increased by about 20 per cent. a year in each of the last three years. The department now has more than 4,000 individual visitors to the website each day, rising to more than 50,000 individual visitors around the Budget period.

Census

Norman Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the discovery of bags containing census forms outside St. Hilda's East Community Centre, London. [5559]

Mr. Boateng: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Norman Baker, dated 20 July 2001:

As National Statistician and Registrar General for England and Wales, I have been asked to reply to your recent question on the discovery of census forms in bags outside St. Hilda's East Community Centre, London (5559).

The Census forms were allegedly found in waste bags adjacent to St. Hilda's Community Centre, Old Nichol Street, London E2 by a local resident.

A room within this Community Centre was used as a secure local field office for three Census District Managers and their teams to help with the enumeration of four Census Districts in the area. Setting up local offices in this way was part of the Census 2001 strategy for city areas particularly.

The work carried out at the Centre involved the handling of completed census forms returned by the Royal Mail or otherwise collected by field staff. It was an established collection point for the transfer of census forms to the national processing centre at Widnes.

Waste census material was placed in bags in an alleyway adjoining the Centre ready for collection by an authorised contractor as arranged by the local census field staff. All staff working in the office were aware of the importance of the confidentiality of the materials and of the explicit instructions given by Census HQ for the transfer of spoilt or unused forms to HQ under separate cover.

During the closedown stages of the Census in late June, a household telephoned the Regional Management Team at Census HQ to say he had been complaining to the local staff about waste material being placed in the alleyway outside the flats because he viewed this is a fire hazard. Census field staff had tried to resolve this issue locally.

The householder was clearly not satisfied by this and subsequently retrieved and opened a bag containing completed census material and retained it. Despite efforts by the local Census field staff, the householder refused to hand back the material. It was finally retrieved without incident by one of the Census District Managers with the assistance of a senior officer from the Metropolitan Police in attendance.

A local inspection by the Census District Manager revealed that the material included census forms, some of which were completed. The material was subsequently securely transferred to ONS Titchfield whereupon a detailed examination is being carried out.

There are 190 forms, some of which contain personal information. Many are torn in half or have various notations on them. A full analysis is being carried out, including inspection of other boxes of completed forms at the processing centre, to determine exactly the status of those that have been retrieved. From what I have learned so far, it is possible that these forms which appear to have been put aside for return to HQ as spoilt forms, had been accidentally put out as waste for special collection.

The confidentiality of information provided on census forms is of paramount importance to me and to all of my staff who have been working on the Census. The ONS has an extremely high and well-deserved reputation for protecting confidential information and I regret any breach that has occurred here. The circumstances of the case are unusual and the evidence I have suggests that this is an isolated incident.

Census information is strongly protected by law and I will commission a thorough investigation to establish the facts and make recommendations to me about any further action that might need to be taken. When I have my report I will make it available to the Data Protection Commissioner to the Minister for National Statistics.

I am deeply concerned about any possible breach of census confidentiality, and I am treating this particular incident very seriously. I will write to any individuals whose information may have been revealed to explain the situation and the actions that have been taken.

Government Information

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish his guidance to Government Departments and other Crown bodies on where Government information should be free or for payment; and, where charges are made, how those charges should be determined. [6461]

Mr. Andrew Smith: I am placing on the Treasury's website a document "Charges for Information: When and How" (Guidance for Government Departments and Other Crown Bodies). It is intended to help Government Departments and other Crown bodies decide whether particular information should be free of charge, charged at a subsidised rate, charged to recover the full costs involved, or (where the private sector produces similar information products and services) charged to recover a profit in the interests of fair competition. Copies of the document are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Comprehensive Spending Review

Mr. Laws: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to announce the results of the comprehensive spending review for financial years 2003–04 to 2006–07. [5832]

Mr. Andrew Smith: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mrs. Lawrence) on 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, columns 38–39W.

Centenarians

Mr. Cox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women over the age of 100 there are in the United Kingdom. [6384]

Ruth Kelly: As part of the process of making national population projections, the Government Actuary's Department produces estimates of the population aged 100 and over. The latest set of national projections were based on the estimated population at mid-1998. The estimated numbers aged 100 and over in the United Kingdom at mid-1998 were *(a)* 1,000 men and *(b)* 7,000 women.

Pensions Legislation

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to amend legislation on pensions to take account of the recent judgment of the High Court in re Venables. [6538]

Ruth Kelly: The Inland Revenue is seeking to appeal in the case of Venables following the High Court judgment of 14 June 2001.

Tax Benefit Reference Manual

Barbara Follett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the next edition of the Tax Benefit Reference Manual will be published. [6460]

Dawn Primarolo: Copies of the 2001–02 Edition of the Tax Benefit Reference Manual are today being deposited in the Library of the House.

Financial Services and Markets Act

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what transitional arrangements will be put in place as part of the entry into force of the main provisions of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000. [6537]

Ruth Kelly: I announced on 12 July that the date, known as "N2", on which the main provisions of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (FSMA) will

come into force will be Saturday 1 December. Regulation of financial services by a single statutory regulator, the Financial Services Authority (FSA), operating under a single body of law will bring substantial benefits to financial services firms and consumers.

A large number of firms are already authorised to carry on financial services under existing legislation; a small number of firms and individuals will require authorisation for the first time at N2. For all financial services firms and individuals the Government seek to minimise the disruption arising from the introduction of the new framework for financial services regulation, while maintaining the appropriate degree of consumer protection.

A number of transitional issues arise from the replacement by FSMA of existing regulatory frameworks. The Government have made or expect to make transitional orders covering the treatment of misconduct by firms which was committed before N2; applications for authorisation to existing regulators which are partly completed by N2; complaints about financial services firms to the ombudsman which will be replaced by the Financial Ombudsman Service; and a significant number of other issues.

Today the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Transitional Provisions)(Authorised Persons etc.) Order 2001 has been laid before Parliament. This Order provides, in summary, that if a firm is authorised by one of the existing financial services regulators that firm is from N2 to have equivalent authorisation under FSMA.

The Order generally requires the FSA to use its best endeavours to provide by N2 firms' scope of permission under FSMA. Where the FSA is unable to provide this, firms will not have contravened, for those activities which they were carrying on prior to N2, the requirement that they carry on only regulated activities for which they have permission from the FSA.

A small number of firms are expected to require authorisation for the first time at N2. As I also announced on 12 July, these firms will be able to apply for authorisation by the FSA under FSMA from 3 September. We will legislate to ensure that new applications for authorisation received before N2 for activities currently carried on lawfully will have, where appropriate, interim authorisation under FSMA until the application has been determined.

Property Seizures

Bob Spink: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will review his policy on the permanent seizure of a vehicle used for the illegal importation of goods when the vehicle owner is unaware of such a use; and if he will make a statement; [5828]

(2) in what circumstances property used for the illegal importation of goods will be returned to its owner when the owner was found to be unaware of that use and is innocent of wrongdoing; [5829]

(3) if he will make it his policy to enable property belonging to a third party, which has been used without their knowledge for illegal importation of goods, to be restored to its rightful owner. [5664]

Mr. Boateng: The decision whether to restore a seized vehicle to the registered owner and the terms of that restoration will depend upon the circumstances of each case. Anyone who has consented to the use of their vehicle by others accepts a variety of risks by doing so and should take all reasonable steps to ensure that it will not be used for smuggling. Customs will look sympathetically at any claim where the vehicle has clearly been taken without the permission of the owner, eg the vehicle was stolen and reported to the police prior to the seizure.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Tim Loughton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his proposals for using tax credits for neighbourhood renewal in deprived areas. [5940]

Mr. Boateng: I refer the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham to the answer given to the hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor) on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 183W.

Ophthalmic Dispensing

Mr. Heath: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the application of VAT to ophthalmic dispensing. [5797]

Mr. Boateng: VAT was introduced at the standard rate on hearing aid and spectacles in 1988. There have been no changes to this treatment since May 1997.

Whisky

Angus Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of trends in sales of whisky in the *(a)* UK and *(b)* overseas over the last five years; and what assessment he has made of the impact of levels of whisky duties on these trends. [5700]

Mr. Boateng: Trends in sales of Scotch whisky are affected by many factors; of which duty is just one. For example, consumer preferences and pre-tax pricing play a major part. The spirits duty rate has now been frozen for four consecutive Budgets to strengthen both the international competitiveness and the domestic base of the UK spirits industry. In absolute terms this means that a standard bottle of spirits is some 60p cheaper than it would otherwise have been.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of whisky duty levels on employment in the Scotch whisky sector; and if he will make it his policy to bring duties on whisky into line with duties on other types of alcohol; and if he will make a statement. [5699]

Mr. Boateng: The Government appreciate the importance of the Scotch whisky industry and the significant contribution it makes to employment in local and regional economies. Judgments on the appropriate level of alcohol duties are made on a Budget by Budget basis and, as is sensible, take account of a wide range of factors which include the Government's expenditure priorities.

Objective 1

Adam Price: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many sustainable full-time jobs were created by the Objective 1 programme during the 2000–01 financial year in each UK Objective 1 region. [6402]

Mr. Boateng: The current Objective 1 programme runs from 2000–06 and many projects have only just begun. They will be evaluated on an on-going basis, and part of this evaluation will be to gauge projects' effectiveness in promoting economic prosperity, social inclusion and employability.

The Objective 1 programme is aimed at promoting the development and structural adjustment of the EU regions most lagging behind in development. It is not intended to create jobs: successful businesses create jobs.

Qualifications

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of working age people did not have a qualification in spring 2001 according to the Labour Force Survey. [5955]

Mr. Boateng: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Frank Field, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question concerning working age people with no qualifications. I am replying in his absence. (5955)

According to the Labour Force Survey, in spring (March to May) 2001, the estimate for the proportion of working age people in the United Kingdom who did not have a qualification was 16.3 per cent.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of working age people were in work in the spring quarter of *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999, *(c)* 2000 and *(d)* 2001 according to Labour Force Survey data. [5956]

Mr. Boateng: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Frank Field, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question concerning employment rates of working age people. I am replying in his absence (5956).

People aged 16 or over are classed as in employment by the Labour Force Survey (LFS) if they have done at least one hour of paid work (as an employee of self-employed) in the week prior to their LFS interview or if they have a job that they are temporarily away from. People who do unpaid work in a family business and people on Government-supported training and employment programmes are also included according to the International Labour Organisation convention.

The table overleaf gives the LFS estimates of the proportion of working age people who were in employment in the spring quarter of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001.

Proportion of working age people in employment in the United Kingdom spring (March to May) 1998 to spring 2001; not seasonally adjusted

	Percentage
Spring 1998	73.1
Spring 1999	73.6
Spring 2000	74.3
Spring 2001	74.6

Source:
ONS Labour Force Survey

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the employment rates are, on Labour Force Survey data, of *(a)* people over 50 years of age, *(b)* ethnic minorities, *(c)* lone parents and *(d)* those with an illness or disability, for each of the past four years. [5954]

Mr. Boateng: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from John Kidgell to Mr. Frank Field, dated 20 July 2001:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question about employment rates of various groups (5954). I am replying in his absence.

The table overleaf gives estimates of employment rates for autumn 1997 to autumn 2000. Estimates of employment rates of people with a long-term disability are not available for autumn 1997 as disability status using the Disability Discrimination Act definition is only available on a consistent basis from 1998.

Employment rates of various groups: United Kingdom; autumn (September-November) 1997 to autumn 2000; not seasonally adjusted

Percentage

	People aged over 50	Ethnic minorities	Lone parents with dependent children	Long-term disabled[1]
Autumn 1997	30.5	52.3	45.9	[2]—
Autumn 1998	32.0	53.4	47.0	45.2
Autumn 1999	32.6	53.9	48.5	46.8
Autumn 2000	33.3	53.1	50.0	46.9

[1] Rates are for men aged 16–64 and women aged 16–59
[2] Data not available

Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals contribute to *(a)* defined benefit occupational pension schemes, *(b)* defined contribution occupational pension schemes, *(c)* group personal pension schemes, *(d)* additional voluntary contributions and *(e)* free-standing additional voluntary contributions. [1141]

Mr. McCartney *[pursuant to his reply, 5 July 2001, c. 304]:* I have been asked to reply.

The latest information available is in the table:

Million

Type of pension provision	Number of active members
Defined benefit schemes	8.8
Defined contribution schemes	1.1
'Hybrid' schemes (mixed defined benefit/defined contribution)	0.3
Group Personal Pensions	1.4
Additional Voluntary Contributions	0.9
Free Standing Additional Voluntary Contributions	1.1

Notes:

1. Active members are those currently accruing pension rights.
2. The information on occupational pension schemes is drawn from the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) Survey of Occupational Pension Schemes (1995). The number of members will include those whose scheme does not currently require member contributions. It is estimated that the number of members contributing are 8.2 million for defined benefit and 0.8 million for defined contribution schemes.
3. The information on Group Personal Pensions is drawn from the New Earnings Survey (2000).
4. The information for Additional Voluntary Contributions covers private sector schemes only.
5. The information on Free Standing Additional Voluntary Contributions is drawn from Inland Revenue Statistics (2000). Individuals can have more than one Free Standing Additional Voluntary Contribution scheme.
6. All figures are rounded to the nearest 0.1 million

Electronic Procurement

Barbara Follett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will quantify value for money gains achieved by Government as a result of applying electronic techniques to their procurement activities. [6536]

Mr. Andrew Smith: There has been £100 million in value for money gains over the last three years as a result of applying modern electronic techniques to central civil Government procurement. Our objective was to purchase 90 per cent. of low-value goods and services electronically by March 2001. Recent measurements by the Office of Government Commerce indicate that at present approximately half of low-value transactions are conducted electronically. Work is continuing to realise additional benefits through means such as increased use of the Government procurement card and the replacement of antiquated IT systems with more modern ones.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Urban Regeneration

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grants have been made from central Government or their agencies for urban regeneration in Bradford and Oldham since May 1997. [5939]

Ms Keeble: I have been asked to reply.

Since May 1997 the following grants from Government and their agencies have been made for urban regeneration in Bradford and Oldham.

£

Nature of funding	*1997–98 to 2001–02*
Bradford	
European Regional Development Fund	22.5m
New Deal for Communities	1.2m
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	4.9m
Community Empowerment Fund	179k
Single Regeneration Budget	63.7m
Land and Property Programme	13.5m
Housing Allocation	88.4m
Oldham	
European Regional Development Fund	21.6m
New Deal for Communities:	
Revenue	670k
Capital	66k
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	2.3m
Community Empowerment Fund	137k
Single Regeneration Budget	23.7m
Housing Investment Programme	48.9m
Lottery	2.1m

Departmental Grants and Loans

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what employment-related limitations her Department attaches to grants and loans administered *(a)* by her Department and *(b)* through other agencies on her behalf; what systems are in place to monitor the fulfilment of such conditions; what remedies are available to deal with breaches of such conditions; and if she will make a statement. [2109]

Ms Hewitt: There are a variety of possible interpretations of the term "employment-related limitations" and it is not clear from my hon. Friend's question which of these he has in mind. If he would care to clarify his question, I shall write to him with a full answer and have a copy placed in the Library of the House.

Higher Education

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to review the workings of higher education establishments in relationship to the DTI review of delivery to business. [1686]

Ms Hewitt: The reviews which I have announced of DTI priorities, ways of working and structure and DTI support for business will consider, among other things, the resources and mechanisms which the DTI uses to promote scientific and technological research, knowledge transfer and higher education/business links as appropriate.

Marconi

Annette Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to assist the Marconi employees in Mid-Dorset and North Poole: and if she will take action to assist those due to be made redundant. [3159]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* The Employment Service has held discussions with the company and will be in touch with the affected employees to offer advice and assistance. They will continue to work closely with Marconi and other local partners to do everything possible to help workers get new jobs and provide retraining if necessary. The hon. Member will be invited to attend a local meeting of the partners to discuss this on 2 August.

Chapelcross

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the recent accident at the Chapelcross nuclear power plant; and when she was first informed of the incident. [3473]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 12 July 2001]:* In the early hours of Thursday 5 July, an incident occurred at Chapelcross nuclear power station. Reactor 3 at Chapelcross was shut down for off-load refuelling. During refuelling operations, a basket containing 24 irradiated fuel elements, which had just been removed from the reactor, became dislodged inside the de-fuelling machine. Initial investigations by BNFL, the operator of the site, indicated that the basket containing the fuel had fallen approximately two feet (later revised to 1.6 metres) on to the doors of the hoist well, which is part of the route to transfer fuel to the fuel storage ponds. I was first informed of the matter at lunchtime on the day of the incident.

On Thursday 12 July, remote inspection of the de-fuelling machine showed that only 12 of the fuel elements remained in the basket.

Following further investigation it became clear on 12 and 13 July that the other 12 fuel elements had fallen through the hoist well doors. On 13 July following discussion between BNFL and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), BNFL decided progressively to shut down the three operational reactors at Chapelcross in order that the station's resources could be concentrated on the fuel recovery programme. On 15 July one of the operational reactors at Chapelcross was shut down.

Over the weekend of 14–15 July, BNFL confirmed, using remote cameras, that 12 elements had fallen around 25 metres down the hoist well and were believed to be in a water filled fuel flask at the bottom of the hoist well.

On 16 July, HSE confirmed that nine substantially complete fuel elements could be seen under water in the fuel flask together with the three other fuel elements in several pieces. HSE confirm that the damaged fuel elements are safe and stable as long as they remain submerged. The hoist well is part of the fuel discharge route and, as such, has features that would mitigate any release of radioactivity. BNFL used gamma radiation monitors in the fuel discharge route to detect radioactivity levels, which HSE confirmed were consistent with the understanding of the situation.

In the evening of 17 July, BNFL were able to move the fuel flask from the bottom of the well to the fuel pond area. Remote inspection of the flask has confirmed that it contains nine intact fuel elements and the pieces of the other three. Now that all the fuel elements have been located the site incident has been declared closed and the progressive shut down of the remaining two operating reactors at Chapelcross has been suspended. A project plan is now being developed to recover the 12 fuel elements in the defuelling machine. BNFL estimate that this may take one or two weeks.

Any incident at a nuclear power station is treated very seriously and HSE and BNFL are carrying out investigations into the incident of 5 July. HSE will not allow BNFL to resume fuelling operations at any of Chapelcross's four reactors or at Calder Hall, which has similar re-fuelling system, until they are satisfied that it is safe to do so. Other Magnox stations use different equipment and are not affected by this incident. I am receiving daily reports on developments at Chapelcross from both HSE and BNFL.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at what time the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate were informed of the accident at Chapelcross nuclear power station on 5 July. [5952]

Mr. Wilson: I understand that the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate was notified of the incident at 07:00 on 5 July.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what enforcement action has been taken under the relevant legislation in respect of Chapelcross nuclear power station; and on what dates. [5953]

Mr. Wilson: In relation to the recent incident at Chapelcross, I understand from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that no enforcement action has been taken to date and that HSE's investigation into the incident continues.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what enforcement notices have been issued in respect of Chapelcross nuclear power station; for what reasons; and what timescales have been attached to them. [5951]

Mr. Wilson: In relation to the recent incident at Chapelcross, I understand from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that no enforcement notices have been issued to date and that HSE's investigation into the incident continues.

Credit

Tony Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if she will make a statement on her Department's policies for lowering the cost of credit for those without a bank account; [3060]

(2) how many cases have been brought to court under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 in each of the past 10 years; and what penalties were imposed. [3056]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* I will write to my hon. Friend shortly and place a copy of that letter in the Libraries of the House.

Export Credits Guarantees (Defence)

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will provide a breakdown of the amount of outstanding ECGD guarantees by value of defence equipment by country. [3813]

Ms Hewitt: The breakdown of the total exposure on ECGD Guarantees for defence equipment is as follows:

Position as at 11 July 2001

Country	*Total exposure (£ million)*
Algeria	95
Brazil	22
Brunei Darussalam	282
Chile	18
Egypt	43
Greece	63
India	10
Indonesia	658
Italy	4
Jordan	253
Kenya	11
Korea Republic of	39

Position as at 11 July 2001

Country	*Total exposure (£ million)*
Kuwait	53
Lithuania	1
Malaysia	159
Oman	367
Qatar	65
Saudi Arabia	1,000
Singapore	4
South Africa	864
Spain	23
Sweden	5
Thailand	1
Turkey	267
United States	58

Energy

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to implement the proposals set out in February in the Department of Trade and Industry's 'Responses to Consultations and Final Proposals' document concerning 'Exemptions from the Requirement for a Licence to Generate, Distribute or Supply Electricity'. [3739]

Mr. Wilson: The Government plan that an Order implementing these proposals should be made in the next few weeks.

Mr. Alan Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment she has made of the performance of *(a)* electricity and *(b)* gas suppliers in relation to door step selling; [4263]

(2) if she will monitor and publish the names of companies against which complaints have been received in relation to the selling of gas and electricity supplies to domestic consumers. [4264]

Mr. Wilson: The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM) is responsible for monitoring the performance of gas and electricity suppliers in all areas of marketing and sales, including doorstep selling. Where necessary it will take formal action against individual suppliers. OFGEM publishes details of complaints by domestic consumers about the direct selling practices of individual suppliers.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the annual expenditure has been on research, demonstration and development, since 1991, on *(a)* active solar power, *(b)* passive solar power, *(c)* wave power, *(d)* tidal power, *(e)* geothermal powers, *(f)* onshore wind powers, *(g)* offshore wind powers, *(h)* biomass energy, *(i)* hydrogen conversion technologies, *(j)* fuel cells, *(k)* nuclear fission, *(l)* nuclear fusion, *(m)* clean coal, *(n)* combined heat and power and *(o)* combined-cycle gas by (i) his Department and (ii) relevant publicly owned utilities; and what annual payments have been made in each year since 1991 to (A) Euratom, (B) the European Commission's joint research centres and (C) the International Atomic Energy Agency. [3954]

Mr. Wilson: Available information is set out in the tables. The Government have allocated some £260 million over the next three years to support renewable energy, including an expanded research and development programme. This is an addition to the new Renewables Obligation and exemption for renewables electricity from the Climate Change Levy.

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Solar										
Active (including PV)	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.7	1.7
Passive	2.8	2.6	2.9	2.2	1.6	1.5	1.3	0.5	0.1	0.0
Wave	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.5
Tidal	2.4	2.1	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Geo Thermal	2.0	1.5	1.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wind										
Onshore	8.1	10.6	9.0	4.0	4.2	2.9	1.6	1.3	1.1	0.9
Offshore	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.4
Biomass	1.5	2.4	3.0	3.4	3.2	2.6	1.9	1.8	2.2	1.8
Fuel Cells	0.4	0.5	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.6	1.8
Nuclear[1]	93.6	85.5	76.9	28.4	21.7	21.4	17.6	14.2	16.8	16.8
Clean Coal	7.4	6.8	12.0	8.0	7.8	6.9	3.1	2.9	2.5	4.3
Combined Heat and Power	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.9	2.5

[1] Of DTI's total spend on nuclear R&D given in the table, about £15 million annually is fusion research; there is also some additional expenditure in support of Meteorological Office emergency response arrangements. Expenditure by public sector bodies is set out in their annual reports and accounts, and could not be provided in the manner requested without disproportionate cost

Notes:

1. Separate research programmes do not yet exist for hydrogen conversion technologies or combined-cycle gas
2. The table sets out identified Government spend and excludes, for example, spending by Research Councils, which could not be separated in the manner requested without disproportionate cost
3. DEFRA has lead responsibility within Government for combined heat and power. Figures include funds from the Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme and from the Energy Savings Trust
4. DTI's sustainable energy R&D programme also includes support for activities which are not technology specific, for example, export commercialisation, marketing and international activities

Payment appropriations from EC Budget to Euratom and to the European Commission's joint research centre 1991–2000

Million euros

Year	*JRC*	*Euratom*
1991	261	—
1992	257	—
1993	257	—
1994	269	—
1995	240	156
1996	234	235
1997	232	261
1998	236	176
1999	243	426
2000	261	173

Notes:

1. Figures shown are for total EC budget payments to Euratom and to the European Commission's Joint Research Centre.
2. In 2000, the UK contributed around 15 per cent. after abatement, of the total EC payments.
3. EC budget payments to Euratom began in 1995.

UK payments to the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1995–2001

Year	*£*
1995	
Regular Budget Subscription	8,048,512
Technical Co-operation Fund	1,870,134
1996	
Regular Budget Subscription	9,061,670
Technical Co-operation Fund	2,205,414
1997	
Regular Budget Subscription	7,670,799
Technical Co-operation Fund	2,249,969
1998	
Regular Budget Subscription	5,950,148
Technical Co-operation Fund	2,516,139
1999	
Regular Budget Subscription	6,143,449
Technical Co-operation Fund	2,267,527
2000	
Regular Budget Subscription	6,291,197
Technical Co-operation Fund	2,386,354
2001	
Regular Budget Subscription	6,561,613
Technical Co-operation fund	2,577,181

Note:

Comparable figures for years before 1995 are unavailable.

Mr. Alan Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment she has made of the adequacy of procedures adopted by the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority, and its predecessor bodies, for the purposes of commissioning consultancy contracts related to the joint programme of work on the changes to the electricity market, overseen by the joint DTI/OFFER/OFGEM steering committee; [4261]

(2) what the formal arrangements have been for the control of costs of implementing the changes to the electricity trading arrangements overseen by the joint committee of the DTI and OFGEM since October 1998; [4259]

(3) which consultants were used to *(a)* develop and *(b)* implement the work overseen by the joint DTI/OFGEM committee introducing changes to the electricity market; [4262]

(4) what estimates the DTI has made in its regulatory impact assessment of the costs of developing and implementing the joint programme of work undertaken by his Department and OFGEM and its predecessor bodies for *(a)* the companies involved, *(b)* OFFER and *(c)* OFGEM in relation to electricity trading. [4260]

Mr. Wilson: I have, of course, drawn my hon. Friend's questions to the attention of the Chairman of the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the value was of Government investment and subsidy for *(a)* the production of nuclear power, *(b)* development, planning and construction of nuclear power stations, *(c)* production of wind, wave, solar and other renewable energy sources and *(d)* development, planning and construction of wind, wave, solar and other renewable power stations in each year since 1997; and what her estimates are for each year until 2005–06. [3933]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* No Government investment or subsidy has been paid in the years since 1997 toward the production of nuclear power or to the development, planning or construction of nuclear power stations. There is no current expectation that there will be any in the period to 2005–06.

Payments for production and development of power from renewable sources under the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation (England and Wales), the Scottish Renewables Order and the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation (Northern Ireland) for each year from 1997–98 are shown in the table. The cost of these payments is met by the electricity consumer.

£ million

Year	*England and Wales*	*Scotland*	*Northern Ireland*
1997–98	115.9	4.8	6.8
1998–99	113.7	6.6	7.9
1999–2000	41.9	7.7	8.2
2000–01	52.1	9.9	7.8
2001–02[1]	111.0	10.0	9.1

[1] Estimate

Support for renewable energy in years from 2002–03 will depend upon the detailed terms of the Renewables Obligation, on which I will be consulting shortly.

In addition to support to be provided under the Renewables Obligation, the Government have pledged over £260 million over the next three years in direct support for the production and development of renewable energy. Renewables will also be helped indirectly through exemption from the Climate Change Levy.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will assess trends in energy provision supplied on a local level. [5432]

Mr. Wilson: Information on energy supply and consumption within local areas is not currently available centrally.

Information on energy which is produced and used within the same location, such as electricity generated and used on site and heat generated on site from a local source such as renewables, is available in the Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics. The Digest for 2001 will be published on 26 July 2001 and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

The Digest for 2001 will show that electricity generated by companies other than major power producers and not transferred to the public distribution system increased at a rate of 9 per cent. a year between 1996 and 2000.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when her Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee; on what dates meetings are planned to take place; and if she will make a statement. [4014]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

Premium Credit

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with Premium Credit about the compliance of their instructions to policyholders of Independent Insurance Company to continue payments with the terms of the Consumer Credit Act 1974. [4493]

Miss Melanie Johnson: None. I understand Premium Credit have discussed this issue with the Provisional Liquidator. Premium Credit have now written to individual policy holders saying they will not be required to make further direct debit payments when they assign their right to a premium refund from the Policyholders Protection Board in respect of the remainder of the policy year.

Departmental Legal Advice

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the costs and outcome of the advice given by departmental lawyers in respect of the allegations made in the *Daily Mail* on 19 March. [4301]

Ms Hewitt *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Legal advice is sought and received in confidence. All such advice is covered by legal professional privilege and is therefore exempt from disclosure. Information on the costs of any advice given by departmental lawyers in respect of these allegations is not available.

Nuclear Material

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 477–79W, what her estimate is of the costs of decommissioning radioactive waste from decommissioned Russian nuclear submarines in and around the Kola Peninsula and in the rest of the Russian Federation. [4095]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The problems associated with decommissioning Russian nuclear submarines are huge. The sums of money involved in tackling the problems are expected to be equally large. Russian estimates for NW Russia range in the £100 millions. The scale and nature of the problems are still emerging and UK assistance is being directed at priority projects.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many days on average were lost per employee in her Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from her Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5059]

Ms Hewitt: The information requested is as follows:

Average number of staff days lost per staff year through sick absence in the DTI Group

Year	*Average*
1993	8.9
1994	10.0
1995	8.9
1996	8.8
1997	8.2
1998	8.0
1999	7.8

The DTI Group, in addition to DTI HQ, consists of: ACAS, Companies House, Patent Office, Insolvency Service, National Weights and Measures Laboratory, Employment Tribunals Service, and The Radiocommunications Agency.

The figures are taken from the annual reports on public sector sick absence commissioned by the Cabinet Office each year since 1993; there are no comparable figures available for previous years. Various adjustments are made to the figures to take account of factors such as flu epidemics that may occur in any given year.

The figure for the year 2000 is not yet available.

We are currently collating the information of early retirements and will write to the right hon. Member shortly.

Trade in Services

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how she will respond to the International Development Committee's recommendation on the establishment of a commission on trade in services. [5334]

Nigel Griffiths: We do not believe that a commission on trade in services is necessary.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on what impact assessment the Government have undertaken on commitments that it has made under the general agreement on trade in services. [5336]

Nigel Griffiths: None, as there were no impacts to measure. The UK already has a substantially open market for the provision of services by foreign service suppliers and most GATS commitments made by the UK during

the Uruguay Round reflected actual levels of open market access or non-discriminatory national treatment. In subsequent negotiations on telecommunications and financial services, commitments were in line with the liberalisation in the single European market. In the area of movement of natural persons, the elimination of economic needs tests and the establishment of a special GATS application process for work permits in certain professional services has resulted in only a handful of new applications, which would have been granted under previous arrangements.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement about the commitments the Government have scheduled under the general agreement on trade in services in the health and education sectors. [5335]

Nigel Griffiths: The supply of health and education services by the public sector is excluded from the scope of the GATS by virtue of Article I:3.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will ensure that an assessment, independent of the WTO, is carried out of the likely impact of the extension of the general agreement on trade in services on the provision of key services. [5337]

Nigel Griffiths: We agree that there should be an assessment of the services negotiations now taking place in the WTO. Article XIX of the GATS provides that for each round, negotiating guidelines and procedures shall be established; and that the Council for Trade in Services shall carry out an assessment of trade in services with reference to the objectives of this Agreement.

Trade Agreements

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has for ensuring that an impact assessment of existing trade agreements has taken place before the Government develops its position on the fourth ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Qatar; and if she will make a statement. [5333]

Nigel Griffiths: The previous 'round' of Trade negotiations, the Uruguay Round, has been the subject of a number of prospective assessments based on economic modelling. For instance,

A 1993 study by the OECD estimated that the global gains from the liberalisation in industrial products and agriculture to be around $274 billion p.a. by the year 2002, with the EU benefiting by around $71 billion p.a.[1]

A 1995 study by WTO economists estimated that the agreement on industrial products and agriculture could boost global incomes by up to $214 billion (0.94 per cent. of GDP) p.a. and EU incomes by up to $32 billion (0.48 per cent. of GDP)[2].

Since the Uruguay Round a number of additional liberalisation agreements have been concluded which promise to bring further economic gains to the world, the EU and the UK. For example, the WTO Telecommunications Agreement came into force in February 1998. According to an estimate by US economists, the agreement could save consumers world-wide more than $150 billion per year by the year 2010 in lower charges, better service and improved technology[3].

[1] OECD: "Assessing the Effects of the Uruguay Round"—1993

[2] J Francois, B MacDonald and H Nordstrom: "The Uruguay Round: a numerically based assessment"

[3] Ben Petrazzini: (1996) "Global Telecom Talks: A Trillion Dollar Deal" Institute of International Economics

Petrol Stations

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies she has carried out on areas of the UK that are disadvantaged through the recent closure of large numbers of retail petrol stations; and if she will make a statement. [5306]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department has not carried out any studies. The Government are committed to ensuring that a free and open market between fuel suppliers operates within the UK petrol retail sector to the benefit of consumers. The Director General of Fair Trading continues to monitor the market to ensure that anti-competitive behaviour does not occur.

Road Fuels

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if her Department monitors the market share of retail transport fuels of *(a)* major oil suppliers and *(b)* hypermarkets. [5307]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department collects and collates data from the individual companies that supply petroleum products into the UK market. This information is provided under strict commercial confidentiality constraints, and as such details for individual companies cannot be published. However, the Department publishes aggregated data giving total retail petrol and diesel sales data for the hypermarket sector. The latest information is in the June 2001 edition of "Energy Trends".

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies are being carried out by the National Weights and Measures Laboratory on temperatures of road transport fuels delivered to retail filling stations by supply companies; and if she will make a statement. [5305]

Miss Melanie Johnson: A study has been carried out by the National Engineering Laboratory for the National Weights and Measures Laboratory. This has been the subject of wide consultations, and discussions with interested parties are continuing.

Car Pricing Order

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to monitor the implementation and impact of the car pricing order; and if a progress report will be published. [5309]

Miss Melanie Johnson: In the year to the end of May 2001 the average of prices fell by 7.9 per cent., according to figures published by the Alliance and Leicester in association with *What Car?* magazine. This decrease reflects the effects of the monopoly inquiry into the supply of new cars and the Supply of New Cars Order 2000.

The Director General of Fair Trade is monitoring the new car market and compliance with the Order.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events her Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5034]

Ms Hewitt: Information on the Department's participation in awareness events is not held centrally and could not be produced without disproportionate cost.

Miners' Compensation

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many respiratory specialists work on the medical assessment process for compensating former miners. [5447]

Mr. Wilson: Healthcall, the company responsible for carrying out the Medical Assessment Process, currently employs 250 respiratory specialists. A further 49 people are currently undergoing training on the MAP and will commence work shortly.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment her Department has made of the total number of former miners in Merseyside potentially eligible for the compensation schemes for *(a)* vibration white finger and *(b)* respiratory diseases. [5446]

Mr. Wilson: Nationally, over 1,300 new claims are being initiated each week across both schemes, and it is difficult to estimate the eventual total number of claims in Merseyside. The total number of claims registered to date in Merseyside is 778 in relation to vibration white finger (VWF) and 1,383 in relation to respiratory disease. To date 55 per cent. of VWF claimants and almost 45 per cent. of claimants for respiratory disease have attended for a medical assessment.

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many compensation claims by former miners living in the *(a)* Leigh constituency and *(b)* Wigan metropolitan authority have yet to be settled. [4524]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* IRISC, the Department's claims handlers, advise me that, in the Leigh[1] constituency, 1,995 claims have been registered in respect of respiratory disease. To date, 426 interim payments and 134 payments in full and final settlement have been made. With regard to vibration white finger, (VWF), 969 claims have been initiated, 270 interim payments have been made and 172 claims have been settled.

In the Wigan metropolitan authority[2], 3,214 claims have been registered in respect of respiratory disease. 683 interim payments and 134 final settlements have been made to date. In relation to VWF, 1,456 claims have been initiated and 415 interim payments and 243 final settlements have been made so far.

[1] Leigh constituency as defined by all postcodes with prefixes WN2–4,6,7

[2] Wigan metropolitan authority as defined as all postcodes with prefixes WN 1–7, WA3, M28–29, 46

Paddy Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the compensation payments for *(a)* chronic bronchitis and emphysema and *(b)* Vibration white finger made to recipients in Nottinghamshire. [5898]

Mr. Wilson: As at the end of June 2001, IRISC, the Department's claim handling agents, have made 1,235 final and 3,328 interim payments, in respect of respiratory disease, amounting to £17.7 million in Nottinghamshire. In addition IRISC have made 3,818 final and 5,474, interim payments amounting to £52.3 million to vibration white finger claimants in Nottinghamshire.

"Your Britain, Your Europe, Your North West"

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how EU structural funding has helped over 50,000 small and medium sized enterprises, according to her Department's document, "Your Britain, Your Europe, Your North West". [4326]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* EU Objective 1 and 2 funding in the north-west region for 2000 to 2006 totals £1.33 billion. Of this, £499 million is specifically for business support. This support is delivered principally through the Small Business Service (SBS). The SBS works with a range of other recognised business support agencies throughout the region to deliver business advice, training for employees, provision of accommodation and provision of finance to enable growth.

Combined Heat and Power

Mrs. Brinton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures the Government will take to ensure that the new electricity trading arrangements do not penalise combined heat and power and renewable generators. [5773]

Mr. Wilson: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on 18 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 263–64W.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many CHP plants that have been given section 30 consent in the last two years are now under construction; and what installed capacity these represent. [5183]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* This information is not readily available at present. Developers generally have five years in which to commence development. It is a commercial decision for them when to do so.

Mrs. Brinton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many CHP plants that have been given section 10 consent in the last two years are under construction; and what installed capacity these represent. [5774]

Mr. Wilson: This information is not readily available at present. Developers generally have five years in which to commence development. It is a commercial decision for them when to do so.

Mr. Colman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action she proposes to take to ensure that the new market arrangements in the electricity industry do not *(a)* act to increase carbon emissions and *(b)* deter new investment in CHP and renewables. [5290]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Thomas) on 16 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 40W.

Linda Gilroy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she will announce her decision on the proposal for combined heat and power schemes at the British Salt works at Middlewich, the Sudbrook Paper Mill Caldicot and the iXguardian site at Hounslow. [6463]

Mr. Wilson: Today, I have given clearance under section 14(1) of the Energy Act 1976 to three combined heat and power schemes at the British Salt works at Middlewich, the St. Regis Paper Company, Sudbrook Paper Mill at Caldicot and the iXguardian site at Hounslow.

Combined heat and power plants are designed to produce both electricity and usable heat in a single process. Therefore they have environmental benefits due to their high levels of energy efficiency and also help business reduce their costs and stay competitive.

The decision demonstrates the Government's continuing commitment to promote CHP and reduce carbon emissions.

Copies of the Press Notice and the decision letter are being placed in the Library of the House.

Lackenby to Shipton Transmission Line

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations she has received in respect of the granting of wayleaves to facilitate the construction of the Lackenby to Shipton overhead transmission line; and what steps are being taken to ensure that landowners will be able to reach a negotiated agreement before construction of the line commences. [5428]

Mr. Wilson: The National Grid Company recently sought clarification of access rights under compulsory wayleaves and a copy of the Department's response has been seen by the objector's group, REVOLT. Given that the crucial development decision has been taken, in March 1998, and compulsory wayleaves covering access granted after due consideration, parties should already be co-operating in the implementation of the development decision.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will take steps to ensure that the NGC respects the legal entry onto farmland in connection with the Lackenby to Shipton overhead transmission line. [5427]

Mr. Wilson: The National Grid Company has been granted compulsory access to land in certain places along the route of the North Yorks power line and I would expect all parties to behave lawfully in the exercise of that right.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations she has received on the proposal for the Lackenby to Shipton overhead transmission line; and if she will make a statement. [5431]

Mr. Wilson: The Department receives continued representations on the subject of the North Yorks power line. Development consents for that line were granted in March 1998 and there is no machinery for now reviewing those consents.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will take steps to ensure that no further work will continue on the Lackenby to Shipton overhead transmission line until foot and mouth has been eradicated. [5429]

Mr. Wilson: The National Grid Company is in touch with the county council and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and will be consulting them before re-starting any of its site-based works.

Free Trade

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what targets have been set by her Department to reach global free trade by 2020. [5510]

Nigel Griffiths: Global free trade by 2020 is not an explicit target of the Government.

Pylons (Skin Cancer)

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of evidence suggesting a potential link between pylons and skin cancer. [5430]

Mr. Wilson: The potential link between skin cancer and overhead power lines is one of several ill health effects that have been attributed to the electromagnetic fields that are produced by electrical equipment.

The Government obtain advice on the possible health implications of exposure to electromagnetic fields, including those associated with power lines, from the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB). In a report[1] published on 6 March the NRPB's Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation reviewed the potential risks of types of cancer from extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields. Their conclusion, based on laboratory experiments and epidemiological studies, is that there is no evidence that extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields are capable of producing cancer.

Some evidence has been suggested that the electric fields associated with the higher-voltage power lines are responsible via indirect effects for a range of illnesses including skin cancer. These effects have been considered to arise from changes in the concentration and deposition of particles and other environmental pollutants in the presence of corona ions found in the vicinity of power lines. The physical principle for particle deposition in large electric fields is well understood. However, the NRPB has concluded that it has not been sufficiently demonstrated whether any such enhanced deposition will increase human exposure in a way that will result in adverse health effects. The difficulties with this hypothesis in relation to naturally occurring radiation have

been examined in detail earlier by the NRPB and others in peer-reviewed journals. The NRPB's Advisory Group had already identified that further consideration needs to be given to the possible effects that might result from the dispersal of corona ions and the way such effects may be assessed. This work will start shortly.

[1] Documents of the NRPB Vol. 12, No. 1, 2001) and copies have been placed in the Library. Information can be found on www.nrpb.org.uk

Agriculture and Textiles

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions she has had with her European Union counterparts on reducing tariffs on *(a)* agriculture and *(b)* textiles in the context of World Trade Organisation negotiations. [5511]

Nigel Griffiths: The Department is working closely with the European Commission to ensure that a new WTO trade round includes negotiations on industrial tariffs, including textile tariffs, aimed at liberalising and where possible eliminating duty rates on all industrial products. We are also working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to influence the European Commission's position at the on-going agriculture negotiations in Geneva, including discussions on tariffs.

Patent Office

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what steps she is taking to ensure that external bids are subject to competition from benchmarking against a detailed in-house bid in relation to the current contract held by W. S. Atkins and Hays in her Department's Patent Office when the contract is reviewed; [5872]

(2) if she will make a statement on her use of the partnership agreement between the unions and his Department in regard to the review of contacts at her Department's Patent Office. [5871]

Miss Melanie Johnson: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of that letter in the Libraries of the House.

Clean Coal Technologies

Jeff Ennis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the development of clean coal technologies in assisting the Government in achieving its Kyoto environmental targets. [5546]

Mr. Wilson: In the October 1998 White Paper "Conclusions of the Review of Energy Sources for Power Generation", the Government stated that cleaner coal technology had a major role to play in sustainability world wide. The paper supported the continuation of a research programme into cleaner coal technology and recommended that a review of the case for a demonstration plant be undertaken before 2003. I announced this review on 25 June 2001, which will include consideration of the environmental benefits of such plant and the contribution it can make towards meeting our Kyoto targets.

Jeff Ennis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what incentives are provided by her Department to assist in the development of clean coal technologies; and if she is intending to review the existing arrangements. [5545]

Mr. Wilson: The Government's policy on cleaner coal technologies was set out in Energy Paper 67: "Cleaner Coal Technologies—Future Plans for research, development, and export promotion", published in April 1999, copies of which are available in the Libraries of the House and on the DTI website www.dti.gov.uk/ent/coal. Activities in the six-year programme include a portfolio of research and development activities in collaboration with UK industry and universities. The DTI website is used to help promote UK capability in this area as well as providing up-to-date information on developments in the DTI programme.

As I announced on 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, columns 28–29W, the Government are currently undertaking a study to determine the case for supporting a cleaner coal technology demonstration plant. The Review will be examining the case for Government support for the development of demonstration plant(s). We expect to publish the consultation document on this issue imminently.

GM Crops

Mr. Alan Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the contracts his Department has had with the National Institute of Agriculture and Botany in connection with GM crops or foods. [5655]

Miss Melanie Johnson: None, so far as I am aware.

"It's Time for Justice"

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations she has received in relation to the CAFOD "It's Time for Justice" campaign; and if she will make a statement. [5509]

Nigel Griffiths: My Department has received a number of representations on trade issues from CAFOD under their campaign banner "It's Time for Justice", arguing for changing trade rules to eradicate poverty. Forty nine letters from MPs were received by my Department on behalf of constituents who supported this campaign.

The Government agree with CAFOD that trade should work in the interest of all people. We see liberalised trade, governed by rules which are fair and inclusive, as one effective means of promoting sustainable development worldwide and contributing to the eradication of poverty. A new round of trade negotiations should provide a significant opportunity to advance these objectives.

Social Network Payment

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what the level of the social network payment was in the year to 31 March; what plans she has to vary that level; and if she will make a statement; [5403]

(2) what plans she has to continue the social network payment; and if she will make a statement. [5404]

Mr. Alexander: In line with the Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit report on the post office network, there are no plans for such payments to be made to support the rural network until the migration of benefit payments to ACT begins in 2003.

Regulation

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to reduce the level of regulation for small businesses. [6221]

Nigel Griffiths: The Government are committed to minimising the burden of regulation as one way to realise our ambition of making the UK the best place in the world to start and grow a business.

The Government also have a responsibility to ensure basic protection and rights to all of society.

However, this Government have taken some key steps to ensure that regulation is used sensibly and sensitively for the benefit of all.

In relation to reducing red tape, the Government have:

Established the Better Regulation Task Force—with members drawn from all sectors of community to advise the Government on action which improves the effectiveness and credibility of Government regulation.

Established the Ministerial Panel for Regulatory Accountability to provide strategic overview of the Government's regulatory plans and to discuss regulatory performance with Departmental Ministers.

Issued a revised "Guide to Regulatory Impact Assessments" so the costs and benefits of proposed regulations are properly analysed.

Launched a "Code of Practice on Written Consultation" in November 2000—ensuring that consultation periods will be at least 12 weeks. "Guidance on Implementation Periods" was released at the same time, requiring that guidance on new legislation be issued at least 12 weeks before the legislation comes into force.

Passed the Regulatory Reform Act that will make possible the reform of outdated, overlapping and over-burdensome legislation.

Established the Small Business Service with one of its aims to minimise regulatory burdens by working with small business and other Government agencies to ensure that small firms' interests are properly considered.

Future steps

The Government will build on the initiatives we took in the last Parliament to ensure we have "intelligent regulation".

We recently announced in "Enterprise for All" that Patrick Carter is examining payroll services for small firms—to make the system more effective and less costly.

The small business manifesto outlined a number of commitments designed to further minimise the burden on business.

The Operational Targets for the Small Business Service in 2001–02 include a target to "put in place a set of actions for reforming the regulatory environment for small business by March 2002".

These measures show our continuing commitment to reduce the burden of regulation.

Small Businesses

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her target is for the current financial year for reducing the tax and regulatory compliance costs of small businesses. [6342]

Nigel Griffiths: The Small Business Service was established on 3 April 2000 as an Executive Agency. It has had a successful first year and the first Annual Report is available in the Library of the House.

The vision of the SBS is for the UK to be the best place in the world to start and grow a business. Its purpose is to build an enterprise society in which small businesses thrive and achieve their potential. The objectives of the SBS are to:

Be a strong voice for small business at the heart of Government—ensuring that Government are aware of, and responsive to, the needs of all small businesses;

Strive for a regulatory framework which minimises the burdens on business;

Develop and maintain a world-class business support service to enhance businesses' competitiveness and profitability; and

Champion the importance of entrepreneurship across society, particularly in under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

In relation to the 2001–02 year the SBS has a target to:

Put in place a set of actions for reforming the regulatory environment for small businesses by March 2002.

Icelandic Trawlermen (Compensation)

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will provide a breakdown by constituency of the number of *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful claims by former Icelandic waters trawlermen; and if she will make a statement. [5705]

Nigel Griffiths: Following are the number of compensation payments for each port at 13 July 2001. At the same date the total number of claims identified as unsuccessful was 3,344. I regret that there is not a breakdown of unsuccessful claims of figures for constituencies.

Compensation payments made to claimants

	Number
Hull	854
Grimsby	216
Fleetwood	174
Blackpool	27
Cleethorpes	55
Newcastle	153
West Yorkshire	88
Aberdeen	19
Others	149
Total	1,735

All claims received have now been scrutinised and entered into the special computer system established to administer the scheme. Claims still undecided comprise categories subject to representations and those where further information is awaited, mainly from claimants themselves.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many fishermen have received compensation from the Government's compensation scheme for former Icelandic trawlermen; how much money has been paid out; what the average payment was; how many claims are still outstanding; how many successful claimants went inshore mackerel fishing after fishing in Icelandic waters; how many of the claims outstanding are those where the fishermen went inshore mackerel fishing after fishing in Icelandic waters; and what estimate she has made of the time when all the claims will have been concluded. [5190]

Nigel Griffiths: At 13 July 2001, 1,735 former Icelandic water trawlermen or their families had received compensation under the scheme. The total compensation paid is £18,846,765, an average of £10,863 per claim. There are no statistics about claimants who went mackerel fishing. All claims received have now been scrutinised and entered into the computer system established for the scheme. Letters to unsuccessful applicants who have not yet been notified will be despatched within the next few days. There are 2,996 claims which cannot be decided at present, mainly because they are awaiting a decision on representations about those who continued fishing on former Icelandic water trawlers after 1979 or because further information is awaited from the applicants themselves.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information she has requested from Icelandic authorities to verify claims for compensation made by UK former Icelandic water trawlermen; and if she will make a statement. [5706]

Nigel Griffiths: The Icelandic authorities provided a list of fishing vessels permitted under certain conditions to fish within defined Icelandic waters from June 1976 to December 1976. The Department has checked a range of sources of information to identify Icelandic water trawlers.

UK Telecoms

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact of third generation licensing costs on growth and employment in the UK telecoms sector. [6278]

Mr. Alexander: We believe that the medium and long-term prospects for the UK Telecoms sector remain strong. The current down-turn is part of a global phenomenon and not limited to countries in which there have been auctions of third generation mobile licences. UK mobile operators are continuing to work towards launch of third generation services as rapidly as is practicable, but they are constrained at present by the availability of handsets.

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what financial assistance she has given to the expansion of the UK telecommunications network in each year since 1997; and what proportion of the UK broken down by nation and region, has access to *(a)* ISDN, *(b)* ADSL and *(c)* broadband connection. [6310]

Mr. Alexander: There have been no schemes of financial assistance directed specifically at the expansion of the UK telecommunications network in this period although telecommunications companies are able to receive funding from other, general business support schemes as appropriate.

We are collating the relevant information for the national and regional access to ISDN, ADSL and Broadband as part of the work announced in 'UK online: the broadband future' which was published alongside the White Paper.

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will place in the Library a map showing the geographical extent of access to *(a)* ISDN, *(b)* ADSL and *(c)* broadband; what steps she proposes to ensure increased access for small businesses in rural areas to these connections; and what proportion of businesses in each nation and region of the UK (i) have and (ii) do not have access to (A) ISDN, (B) ADSL and (C) broadband connections. [6311]

Mr. Alexander: The Government are committed to working to ensure that broadband access is available in all parts of the country. A map showing the predicted geographical extent of access for different broadband technologies for 2003 was published in 'UK online: the broadband future' a copy of which has been placed in the Library. As part of the ongoing work developing this strategy we are collating the relevant information for the geographical access to ISDN, ADSL and Broadband.

In May, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced a major new project to determine how to speed up the roll-out of broadband services to individuals and businesses in rural and other areas that individual suppliers currently see as uncommercial. The project will establish how, by aggregating the public sector's demand for broadband services, we can best encourage telecommunications companies to roll out broadband infrastructure to these 'hard to reach' areas.

Renewable Energy

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment her Department has made of the Generic Wave Energy Device, ETSU proposal number 254/1; and if she will make a statement. [5855]

Mr. Wilson: All proposals for DTI funding to support the development of renewable energy technologies are assessed under the same rigorous assessment process involving independent advisers with relevant professional background. The Generic Wave Energy Device proposal was so assessed and was not recommended for DTI support.

Comprehensive details of the assessment process are available to any interested party via DTI's website or, for those without easy access to the internet, a paper version can be obtained from DTI's programme manager.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money her Department has allocated to the National Assembly for Wales since 1 July 1999 for the development of the renewable energy industry. [6399]

Mr. Wilson: None.

My Department's research and development programme for renewable and sustainable energy is a UK-wide programme. Funds are assigned to projects in Wales but not to the National Assembly.

The Non Fossil Fuel Obligation supports projects across England and Wales, but again with no direct allocation to the National Assembly.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with her colleagues in the National Assembly concerning the future development of the renewable energy industry in Wales. [6400]

Mr. Wilson: Consultations between Minister, including National Assembly Ministers, are currently under way on the terms of the Renewables Obligation, covering England and Wales, which is to be laid before Parliament in the autumn. The Obligation represents the key policy instrument towards the achievement of our renewable energy targets.

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the proposals *(a)* received and *(b)* approved under the new and renewable energy programme number 354 water technologies, indicating how many did not use oscillating water columns. [5854]

Mr. Wilson: I have asked the DTI's Renewable and Sustainable Energy Programme Manager to provide the information requested including details of the types of technology requesting support.

A copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Universal Banking

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with the Halifax, Nationwide, Alliance and Leicester and Euronet Worldwide banks about making the universal banking system free of charge in rural areas. [6398]

Mr. Alexander: I will write shortly to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Post Offices

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many post offices have *(a)* opened and *(b)* reopened in each of the last 20 years. [5481]

Mr. Alexander: I understand from Post Office Network that, while they have records of post office closure figures net of openings and reopenings, they do not have separate historic data showing figures for post office openings and reopenings. In the financial year 2000-01, 169 post offices opened or reopened.

Huntingdon Life Sciences

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the actions taken to help provide banking facilities for Huntingdon Life Sciences; and if she will make a statement. [5693]

Ms Hewitt: DTI has maintained regular contact with Huntingdon Life Sciences plc, as part of its industry sponsorship function. It was agreed at the time of the re-funding of the company that the Department would, if necessary, provide basic banking facilities. The Government considered a number of options regarding provision of banking facilities to HLS. Owing to intimidation of bank staff by animal rights extremists, Huntingdon Life Sciences has not yet been able to find a commercial bank to provide banking services.

My Department has, therefore, undertaken to operate basic banking facilities for Huntingdon Life Sciences while negotiations with banks continue. It is not providing overdraft facilities or other financial support. My Department will be recovering the direct costs of providing this service from the company.

Share Dealings (Daily Mirror)

Mr. Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive his Department's report on the alleged share dealings by the editor of the *Daily Mirror*; and if he will make a statement. [5900]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department's long-established practice is to neither confirm nor deny the existence of such investigations, nor discuss the affairs of individual companies or persons involved.

Plutonium and Uranium

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will publish figures for the United Kingdom's stocks of civil plutonium and uranium as at 31 December 2000. [6454]

Nigel Griffiths: I have today placed in the Library of the House figures for the United Kingdom's national holdings of civil plutonium and uranium as at 31 December 2000. In accordance with our commitment under the "Guidelines for the Management of Plutonium", I have today also sent the figures to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who will be circulating them to member states in due course.

Employment Disputes

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the consultation document on employment dispute resolution will be published; and what it will contain. [6453]

Alan Johnson: My Department is publishing "Routes to Resolution: Improving Dispute Resolution in Britain" today. The document sets out proposals for reform which will create a modern system of employment dispute resolution, fit for the future.

The consultation document sets out a radical programme for reform, underpinned by the fundamental principles of access to justice, fair and efficient tribunals, and a modern, user-friendly, public service. Its starting point is that many disagreements in work can be successfully resolved without recourse to litigation through better procedures in the workplace. Equally, it is designed to achieve a tribunal system which promotes conciliation and is equipped to cope with increasing caseloads.

Claims to employment tribunals have tripled over the last decade and the Government believe that the interests of tribunal users and the taxpayer are better served by a system which promotes the amicable settlement of disputes where possible.

The consultation paper seeks views on a number of proposals including:

increasing awards at employment tribunal where a new basic dispute resolution procedure has not been used by the employer. This provision is aimed at the minority of firms with no, or inadequate, procedures, without impacting on the majority of businesses with effective dispute resolution procedures. Awards will be reduced where an employee has not used grievance procedures before applying to an employment tribunal;

the introduction of charges for use of the employment tribunal system to provide investment funding for the system so that it can improve the service it offers its clients. Exemptions would apply to those on benefits and cases of genuine need;

better enforcement and other improvements to the existing statutory requirement for employers to provide a written statement of employment terms to employees;

limited extensions to the time limits for lodging employment tribunal claims where dispute resolution procedures are in process;

measures to promote the amicable settlement of disputes, and timely conciliation through ACAS;

a new employment tribunal fast-track system for more technical claims;

a limited amendment to unfair dismissal legislation to allow employment tribunals to disregard minor procedural errors by employers provided that such errors have made no difference in practice and the dismissal is otherwise fair;

new powers for the Presidents of the Employment Tribunals to issue practice directions;

The Government have not put forward any proposals to introduce cost recovery as a general principle, nor does it intend to do so.

Copies of "Routes to Resolution: Improving Dispute Resolution in Britain" have been laid in the Library of the House. The deadline for responses is 8 October.

Employment Tribunal Claims

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many employment tribunal claims were reported in each year since 1997. [6276]

Alan Johnson: The information is as follows:

Employment tribunal applications for Great Britain

	Number of registered applications
1996–97	88,910
1997–98	80,435
1998–99	91,913
1999–2000	103,935
2000–01	130,408

Support Packages

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much public money is set aside to provide support packages for industries in difficulty. [5452]

Ms Hewitt: The Department has many schemes to support British Industry in adjusting to change and improving its competitiveness. it is currently reviewing its support to ensure it is best targeted on raising productivity and encouraging an entrepreneurial culture.

Although it is not our policy to provide support packages for failing businesses, support is available to help businesses invest, modernise and diversify.

For example £129 million was set aside in March 2000 for measures to deal with the consequences of the decision by BMW to sell its Rover plant at Longbridge.

The UK Coal Operating Aid Scheme provides for up to £170 million to be paid to the industry over the period between April 2000 and July 2002.

In June 2000 the Government announced a package for UK textiles and clothing to promote competitiveness in areas such as innovation and new technology for which over £6 million has so far been committed.

Export and Non-proliferation Bill

Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the draft secondary legislation relating to the draft Export and Non-Proliferation Bill will be published. [6389]

Nigel Griffiths: Draft dummy orders (i.e. draft outline secondary legislation) relating to the Export Control Bill will be made available before Parliament resumes in the autumn.

Royal Mail

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what reports she has received of job losses proposed by Royal Mail in London. [5384]

Mr. Alexander: While Ministers have met both the Consignia management and the unions to discuss a variety of issues, operational matters, such as the restructuring of Royal Mail's sorting offices, are a matter for the company.

Energy Review

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which nuclear experts are to be *(a)* seconded and *(b)* invited to participate in the energy review being carried out by the Energy Minister for the Performance and Innovation Unit; and on what basis they were selected. [6254]

Mr. Wilson: The Performance and Innovation Unit will be carrying out the review with a team consisting of civil servants, private and public sector and experts in the field of energy. Members of the team and their backgrounds are detailed in the Project Management Plan which will be posted shortly on the PIU website www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation.

The review will be carried out in an open and inclusive way and is happy to receive contributions from all interested parties. The review team will be holding a series of workshops with key stakeholders covering all interests of energy policy. The invitees to the first workshop on 20 July include the British Nuclear Industry Forum. A full list of invitees is on the PIU website.

BNFL

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with BNFL over proposals to build new reactors at sites on which BNFL currently operates nuclear power plants. [6251]

Mr. Wilson: None. No such proposals have been put forward. BNFL have stated clearly that they have no plans for new nuclear plant in the UK, reflecting their view that there is, at present, no economic case for such investment.

Sellafield

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evaluation has been made of the robustness of security arrangements in place to protect the Sellafield nuclear power plant from attack or other illegal intrusion; and what plans she has to increase security arrangements for plutonium stored at Sellafield. [6252]

Mr. Wilson: Security arrangements at Sellafield are kept constantly under review and are revised in the light of changing circumstances. The Director for Civil Nuclear Security, the Government's Regulator, is satisfied that existing procedures are adequate and effective.

Mixed Oxide Plutonium Fuel

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will provide a breakdown of the moneys to be paid to the Japanese authorities, as a result of the agreement reached in July 2000, in respect of the return of the improperly exported mixed oxide plutonium fuel; what change there has been to the costs since the agreement; and when the return shipment of the mixed oxide plutonium fuel will commence. [6253]

Mr. Wilson: No money is to be paid to Japanese authorities. BNFL's published annual report and accounts for 2000 state that BNFL has agreed with its relevant Japanese customer, the Kansai Electric Power Company, a compensation package including £40 million to be paid in compensation and return of the fuel to the UK at BNFL's expense. The accounts show that BNFL has made a financial provision of £113 million to cover the costs associated with dealing with the fuel. It is the intention of the companies involved to be as open about the plans and arrangements for transporting the fuel to the UK as normal security considerations allow and they plan to make available relevant information in advance of the transport. The July 2000 UK-Japan inter-governmental agreement specified that the intention is for BNFL to return the fuel within 2–3 years. This remains the case.

Fireworks

Linda Gilroy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will publish the fireworks injuries statistics for the 2000 bonfire night period; and if she will make a statement. [6462]

Nigel Griffiths: The total number of persons recorded as attending hospital casualty departments in Great Britain during the 2000 bonfire night period was 972. This represents a decrease of 8 per cent. on the previous year's total of 1,056. However, there were two deaths in the 2000 bonfire period; these are the first firework related deaths since 1996.

There are some encouraging trends within the statistics. Sparkler injuries fell from 134 in 1999 to 104 in 2000 a decrease of 22 per cent. Rocket injuries also fell to 135 from 211 a decrease of 36 per cent.

Injuries in the 16–20 age group fell from 119 in 1999 to 93 in 2000 a 22 per cent. decrease and injuries to under 13s also fell by 10 per cent. from 391 in 1999 to 350 in 2000.

However injuries to 13 to 15-year-olds rose by 8 per cent. from 142 in 1999 to 154 in 2000. We will further target this age group as part of the 2001 firework safety campaign.

I am arranging for draft copes of the injury figures together with the analytical and regional tables to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses as well as on the DTI website www.dti.gov.uk.

Departmental Efficiency

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what *(a)* plans and *(b)* targets she has to increase the operational efficiency of her Department. [6341]

Ms Hewitt: The Department's plans and targets to improve its operational efficiency are set out in its Service Delivery Agreement which is available on its website.

Sub-post Offices

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many sub-post offices closed in the first quarter of the current financial year. [6345]

Mr. Alexander: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the right hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 106W.

Consumer Rights

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on her plans for reforming consumers' rights. [6344]

Miss Melanie Johnson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend for Plymouth, Sutton (Linda Gilroy) on 12 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 623W.

Climate Change Levy

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact of the climate change levy on productivity in the manufacturing sector. [6343]

Mr. Wilson: The climate change levy has been designed to avoid damaging the competitiveness of UK manufacturing. The levy's impact on individual businesses will depend on the extent to which they take advantage of the various levy exemptions, the new scheme of enhanced capital allowances for energy efficiency, the energy efficiency advice and support from the new Carbon Trust, and whether their sites qualify for a discount from the levy. The Government are giving an

80 per cent. discount to energy intensive industries exposed to international competition in return for delivery of challenging energy saving targets.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the private finance initiative; and if she will make a statement. [5727]

Ms Hewitt: In the past five years, no penalties have been imposed on private sector firms for failure to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the private finance initiative.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many PFI transactions have been overseen by her Department in each of the last 10 years; what her estimate is of the cost savings made in each of these transactions in comparison with the public sector alternative; what are the outstanding payments to be made in relation to these transactions for each of the next 15 years; and if she will make a statement. [5726]

Ms Hewitt: The Department of Trade and Industry has overseen six PFI projects in the last 10 years as follows:

The ELGAR IT Project;

The Radiocommunications Agency's Strategic IT Partnership;

The Rebuilding of the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington;

The Coal Authority's Data Project;

OST/EPSRC High Speed Computing Project; and the

OST/NERC Antarctic Supply Vessel.

The estimated cost savings made in each of these transactions over the public sector alternative are as follows:

The Elgar IT Project: £20.5 million;

The Radiocommunications Agency's Strategic Partnership: Between £4.9 million and £8.00 million;

The Rebuilding of the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington: £4.3 million;

The Coal Authority's Data Project: Information not centrally available;

OST/EPSRC High Speed Computing Project: £13 million; and

OST/NERC Antarctic Supply Vessel: £4 million.

Published guidance on Public Sector Comparators notes that:

"Accounting Officers should not rely solely on a straight comparison of a PSC bid to its PSC, which should never be regarded as a pass/fail test but instead as a quantitative way of informing judgment."

(Treasury Taskforce Technical Note No. 5: How to construct a public sector comparator).

As agreed with the National Audit Office, payments to Contractors under PFI contracts are commercially confidential. Aggregate figures of estimated payments under all PFI contracts for the years 2000–01 to 2025–26 were published in Table C18 of the Budget 2001 "Red Book".

Regional Development Agencies

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the directors of RDAs who have announced their resignations or intention to leave since their inception. [5938]

Alan Johnson: Since the Regional Development Agencies in England were set up in 1999 the following board members have resigned or announced their intention to resign:

RDA	*Board members*
One NorthEast	None
North West Development Agency	Lord Terry Thomas of Macclesfield has announced his intention to retire from the board in March 2002
Yorkshire Forward	Paul Shepherd resigned in 1999 and Sir Gareth Roberts resigned in 2002
Advantage West Midlands	Edward Roberts CBE resigned in 2000 and Councillor Mike Bird resigned on 14 May 2001
East Midlands Development Agency	None
East of England Development Agency	Sal Brinton resigned on 7 June 2001, Peter Dawe announced on 12 July 2001 his intention to resign
London Development Agency	None
SEEDA	None
South West of England RDA	Ewan Cameron resigned in 1999

The London Development Agency was established in 2000 and is the responsibility of the Mayor of London. Appointments to its board are made by him.

The devolved Administrations are responsible for development agencies outside England (e.g. Scottish Enterprise, Welsh Development Agency).

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action each regional development agency is taking to encourage the growth of credit unions in their region. [5991]

Alan Johnson: I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible and place a copy of that letter in the Libraries of the House.

Objective 1

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if she will list the Objective 1 project applications *(a)* approved and *(b)* refused European funding; and how much funding has been awarded to each during the past year; [6317]

(2) what the cost was of administering the Objective 1 programme within the individual Objective 1 regions in the last year. [6397]

Alan Johnson: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of that letter in the Libraries of the House.

Trade, Tourism and Inward Investment (Scotland)

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has for promoting Scottish trade, tourism and inward investment; if she will list the events or activities she has specifically arranged for the next six months in *(a)* the UK, *(b)* Europe and *(c)* the rest of the world for such promotion; and if she will list the documents her Department has produced, and the events her Department has organised over the last three years which specifically and exclusively promote Scottish trade, tourism and inward investment. [5707]

Ms Hewitt: My Department—through British Trade International—promotes the whole of the UK as a location for inward investment and delivers export advice and support to companies throughout the UK. It works closely with Scottish Trade International and Locate in Scotland both within the UK and overseas. The promotion of the UK as a destination for tourism is primarily a matter for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Employment Regulations

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the cost to the private sector of new employment regulations introduced since May 1997. [6277]

Alan Johnson: Regulatory Impact Assessments have been prepared in support of all new employment legislations that have involved significant costs to business. The annual costs to employers for those provisions that can be quantified is £4.8 billion. This includes recurring administration costs of £25 million to £29 million and one-off administration costs of £37 million to £45 million. The remainder has involved direct benefits to workers through higher pay, more annual leave and better treatment in the workplace.

These are the costs to all employers. It is not possible to separate costs between private sector employers and public sector employers. The Government's employment legislation also brings benefits to employers.

Petroleum Licensing

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she will announce further petroleum licensing opportunities in Great Britain and on the UK continental shelf. [6459]

Mr. Wilson: I am today launching the 10th Round of Landward Petroleum Licensing and issuing an invitation for companies to apply for three blocks in the North sea.

The Landward Round will, as in recent licence offers, invite applications for Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences over all unlicensed acreage in Great Britain above the Mean High Water Mark. While there are still prospects for conventional oil and gas discoveries, I anticipate that a large number of applications will be made from companies keen to exploit the potential of coal bed methane, either through direct drilling or by tapping into the gases released from abandoned coal workings.

The invitation to apply for landward licences fulfils commitments given by Ministers in the past to hold annual rounds and satisfies a demand from industry for further licensing opportunities.

The three blocks in the North sea—30/24, 42/25 and 43/21—are being offered through the 'out of round' process because of the benefit that early activity might bring. One of the blocks contains the abandoned Argyll Field and I hope that it will be possible for the eventual licensees to re-activate the field and bring it back into production, thus ensuring that the valuable petroleum resources still trapped in the ground can be extracted.

The formal notices for each of these licensing opportunities will appear in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* in the near future. Applications for both the onshore and offshore must be submitted to the Department on 31 October.

Electronic Signatures

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on progress on the implementation of the European electronic signatures directive. [6458]

Mr. Alexander: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State announced on 28 March 2001, *Official Report*, columns 652–53W, that we were issuing a consultation document on the implementation of those parts of the directive which had not been implemented by the Electronic Communications Act 2000. We received 54 responses to the consultation and a number of issues were raised. Some respondents thought that these were of sufficient weight to require further discussion. Points were raised about the data protection requirements which I believe could only be resolved by a further discussion on how they should be implemented. I will therefore issue in the next few weeks a summary of the consultation, a note of the conclusions we have drawn from the consultation and a draft of the regulations. We will seek comments on the implementation of data protection elements. I believe that this process will enable us to introduce regulations in the near future which will best take into account the views of those most directly impacted by this directive. We will also publish the responses to the consultation on the DTI's website.

Ferry Services (Isle of Wight)

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what powers she has to investigate competition in ferry fares and services to the Isle of Wight; what plans she has to use such powers; and if she will make a statement. [5555]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Under UK competition law in the first instance it is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading to investigate allegations of anti-competitive behaviour and possible abuses of a dominant position. I understand that the Office of Fair Trading has initiated inquiries under the Competition Act into the activities of Isle of Wight ferry companies.

Departmental Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the top 10 companies to which her Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6416]

Ms Hewitt: The list of companies is as follows:

A. Davies & Co.
Firmco Ltd.
Crown House Engineering
Protec Fire Detection Plc
Link Integrated Security Systems
Withey Building Services Ltd.
Dalkia Energy & Technical Services Ltd.
Raynor Roofing Ltd.
Belfor-Relectronic (UK) Ltd.
Interface Europe Ltd.

Nuclear Power

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the Government's targets for the proportion of electricity to be produced by nuclear power in the next *(a)* 10 years and *(b)* 20 years; and if she will make a statement. [6312]

Mr. Wilson: The Government have no targets for the proportion of electricity to be produced from any source other than the renewables for which a target of 10 per cent. by 2010 has been set.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Groundwater Regulations

Colin Burgon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what help and advice has been given to farmers to help them to comply with the requirements of the Groundwater Regulations when dipping sheep. [6512]

Mr. Meacher: A groundwater protection code for sheep dipping is currently being printed for publication by my Department shortly. The code gives advice on what to do before, during and after dipping to protect groundwater and to comply with the Regulations. The advice covers matters such as training, maintaining and siting dip baths, managing sheep when dipping, washing equipment, and disposing of used dip safely. Copies of the code will be available on request, free of charge, and a copy will also be placed in the Library of the House. Copies of a checklist and a poster will be sent to all sheep farmers and dippers. Farmers dipping sheep also continue to benefit from the waiver of annual charges for groundwater authorisations which was introduced last year under the Prime Minister's Action Plan for Farming.

Funding

Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of money available in *(a)* local government, *(b)* county councils, and *(c)* West Sussex county council can be switched between budgets by council decisions. [4792]

Dr. Whitehead: I have been asked to reply.

According to statistical returns submitted to my Department, local authorities in England have budgeted for £61,158 million of general revenue expenditure in 2001–02. That is funded from general and ring fenced grants from central Government, council tax income, and reserves. Of that total amount, £6,470 million is budgeted by authorities responsible for only a single service such as police or fire; by definition, that money cannot be switched to spend on a different service. For other authorities, all these sources of funding except for ring fenced grants can be switched between service budgets. The proportions that can be switched between service budgets are:

(a) for local government as a whole (other than single service authorities), 91 per-cent.;

(b) for county councils, 91 per-cent.;

(c) for West Sussex county council, 93 per-cent.

Fishmeal

Sir Robert Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations he has made to the EU regarding the ban on fishmeal being fed to livestock. [439]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 28 June 2001]:* As a result of representation from the UK fishmeal has not been banned from feeding to non-ruminant livestock. The UK has raised the possibility of a relaxation of the ban on feeding fishmeal to ruminants in the Standing Veterinary Committee and the Council. In the Agricultural Council of 19 June the Commission promised to review this ban once a test has been validated capable of differentiating between animal and fish protein in feed. The UK uses an ELISA to test compound animal feedingstuffs for the presence of mammalian protein, but this test has not yet been validated. Until this problem can be resolved we have no option but to implement the Community ban.

Departmental Restructuring

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the estimated administrative cost is of the recent changes to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. [1428]

Mr. Morley: The Government expect no overall increase in public spending to result from any machinery of Government changes, most of which were designed to increase efficiency and improve service delivery.

Foot and Mouth

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs upon what scientific evidence the Government based their decision to implement a 3km cull strategy around infected premises. [2172]

Mr. Morley: On the advice of the Chief Veterinary Officer, the Government decided to implement a 3km cull strategy around infected premises in certain areas (Dumfries and Galloway and Cumbria). In giving this advice, the CVO took into account the following factors among others:

The existing weight of infection;
The speed of spread of the virus;
The species of animals involved;
The manner of disease spread for those species;
Generally, where the animals were kept;
Generally, local movement patterns of people and vehicles.

On the basis of these factors the epidemiological assessment was that susceptible animals in the areas in question had been exposed to disease.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many animals are awaiting slaughter on British farms under the over-30-months scheme due to foot and mouth restrictions. [2574]

Mr. Morley: It is not possible to make an accurate assessment of the number of animals which producers may be waiting to enter into the over-30-months scheme. Taking account of the normal pattern of activity on the scheme and the slaughtering which has taken place due to foot and mouth disease it is thought likely that the number of animals is between 100,000 and 200,000.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the availability of vaccine as the basis for an eradication policy of foot and mouth disease. [2579]

Mr. Morley: Vaccination remains an option under continuous review, to be used in conjunction with the culling policy. We have placed a reserve on 125,000 doses of antigen held in the European Vaccine Bank. We are also establishing a bank of commercial antigen, which currently holds 1.9 million doses.

At the start of the outbreak we had access to 500,000 doses of the relevant antigen held for the UK in the International Vaccine Bank at Pirbright. However, this antigen was used to produce vaccine in readiness for possible use in Cumbria and Devon, the shelf life of which has now expired.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information she has collated on the possibility of foot and mouth disease false negatives arising from slaughtered animals because of contamination from disinfectant. [2744]

Mr. Morley: It is not possible to identify which negative results may be caused by contamination by disinfectant. However, it is well known that disinfectant, by killing off the virus, can contaminate samples taken from slaughtered animals and therefore all those working within the State Veterinary Service have access to specific instructions relating to the taking and handling of samples. These instructions can be seen at the Department's library at Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HH.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment the Government have made of the total cost of the disinfecting operation in relation to foot and mouth disease as a result of *(a)* infected premises culls and *(b)* contiguous premises culls. [2549]

Mr. Morley: The estimated total cost (as at 17 July) of cleansing and disinfection is around £877 million. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of the total estimated cost between infected and contiguous premises, as estimates for the cleansing and disinfection of all individual premises are not available. However, of the 8,777 affected premises (all of which will require cleansing and disinfection), 21 per cent. are infected premises and 33 per cent. are contiguous premises.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment the Government have made of the level of infection of foot and mouth disease in the national flock of sheep. [2576]

Mr. Morley: The assessment of the level of infection of foot and mouth disease in the national sheep flock is an on-going process, and is influenced by the number of cases that occur, their geographical distribution and the time scale within which they occur. In addition serological surveillance is now under way in the 3 km radius protection zones around infected premises, and other epidemiological inquiries are resulting in serological sampling in many areas of the country. Concerns now are centred mainly on Cumbria and north and west Yorkshire which were predicted to contribute to the tail of the epidemic. Confidence is growing cautiously in other parts of the country through the results of sampling in protection zones prior to the lifting of restrictions.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many *(a)* sheep and *(b)* cattle have been slaughtered for foot and mouth disease control on welfare reasons, broken down into (i) breeding stock and (ii) prime/fat stock. [2734]

Mr. Morley: As of 10 July, the total number of animals slaughtered on welfare grounds is approximately 619,091. These can be broken down as follows:

	Number
Breeding sheep	232,593
Prime/fat stock	319,455
Total sheep	552,048
Breeding cattle	59,103
Prime/fat stock	7,940
Total cattle	67,043

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many people on her Department's controlled or contracted premises since 26 February *(a)* have been illegally killed, *(b)* committed suicide and *(c)* died as a result of an accident. [2736]

Mr. Morley: The Department is aware of two deaths on such premises since 26 February: a young man died after falling from a roof on a farm in Warwickshire and another man died following a shooting incident on a farm in Gt. Orton. It is not for DEFRA to determine the nature of these deaths. DEFRA does not hold data on suicides.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make available for inspection by the farmers concerned or representatives of them all paperwork relating to the valuation, counting, collection and disposal of sheep taken in the voluntary cull in Cumbria. [3247]

Mr. Morley: Under the Data Protection Act, farmers are entitled to request personal information that the Department holds about them. All such requests will be considered in accordance with the legislation.

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the speed of payment of compensation

to farms and businesses in Wales suffering lost revenue as a result of the foot and mouth crisis; and if she will make a statement. [2850]

Mr. Morley: Statutory compensation is payable only for livestock slaughtered because they were infected or suspected of being infected with foot and mouth disease, or for items such as animal feed which are seized to prevent the spread of disease. Compensation should now be paid within three weeks of receipt of correct documents. However, at the peak of the outbreak payments may have taken some weeks longer due to the large volume of claims handled.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the ranks, position and qualifications of her Department's officials were who supervised the loading/unloading and counting of sheep taken in the voluntary cull in Cumbria. [3246]

Mr. Morley: The haulage contractors counted the sheep as they were loaded. Unloading was under the supervision of a Temporary Veterinary Inspector (TVI), while the counting of the animals coming off the wagons was performed by drovers employed by the DEFRA Contractors responsible for the collection and delivery of animals.

A TVI is a fully qualified veterinary surgeon who is appointed on a daily or a half-daily basis by DEFRA.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what research she has commissioned on the possible link between United Kingdom animal welfare practices and the spread of foot and mouth disease; [3451]

(2) what assessment she has made of the impact of the United Kingdom's *(a)* sustainable and *(b)* welfare-friendly farming practices on the spread of foot and mouth disease. [3560]

Mr. Morley: No specific research has been commissioned so far, beyond the epidemiological investigations that follow every confirmed outbreak of foot and mouth disease. The effect of different farming practices on disease spread is an issue that can be considered in more detail once the current outbreak has been eradicated.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will permit vaccination to save *(a)* rare breeds and *(b)* pigs through which foot and mouth infection could spread. [3470]

Mr. Morley: The Government would be prepared to authorise vaccination against foot and mouth disease on the advice of the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser. In the spring their advice was to vaccinate cattle in north Cumbria, provided the campaign had the substantial support of farmers, consumers, veterinarians and the food trade. That level of support was not there, and, as the numbers of new cases fell, the signs were that it would not be achieved. Our advisers have not made any further recommendations for a vaccination campaign in the current situation. Vaccination remains an option, and is continually reassessed in the light of changing circumstances and knowledge of the disease.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to bring the foot and mouth outbreak under control. [3466]

Mr. Morley: The key priority remains to eradicate foot and mouth disease as quickly as possible and all the necessary resources are being deployed to do that. Based on scientific and veterinary advice, the chief mechanisms for bringing the outbreak under control are:

(i) culling all animals in affected flocks/herds within 24 hours;

(ii) culling all animals on neighbouring farms within 48 hours (with limited exceptions);

(iii) rigorous tracing and culling of other dangerous contacts;

(iv) the thorough cleaning and disinfection of all infected premises; and

(v) controls over the movement of livestock.

We also continue to place great emphasis on the need for strict high standards of bio-security and my Department has recently announced details of a public information campaign to re-emphasise this message.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what representations she has received on the effects of early stock valuations; and what plans she has to change them to standard valuations; [3449]

(2) if she will estimate the cost of moving all pre-22 March stock valuations to standard valuations. [3448]

Mr. Morley: My Department has received representations from 212 farmers (as at 16 July) relating to valuations carried out before 22 March (when standard values were introduced). A number of other letters have been received from farmers which, after investigation, may also relate to pre-22 March valuations. My Department has also received representations from farming organisations.

Officials have conducted only very preliminary considerations of the potential cost of converting all pre-22 March valuations to standard value rates. However, initial indications are that such a move could cost around £25 million.

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in how many cases in *(a)* Cumbria and *(b)* the rest of the UK animals have been slaughtered during the current foot and mouth outbreak by means of a marksman with a rifle. [3436]

Mr. Morley: The use of rifles and trained marksmen is not a routine part of foot and mouth disease slaughter procedures. Suitably qualified and licensed marksmen are used only in exceptional and carefully controlled circumstances under direct veterinary supervision, and only after the approval of the Divisional Veterinary Manager.

To date, marksmen have been used in 96 cases in Cumbria and in 368 cases in the rest of the UK.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the scope of the environmental monitoring programme established to oversee burial pits and pyres built to dispose of slaughtered animals as part of the foot and mouth mitigation programme. [3964]

Mr. Morley: In addition to the monitoring of individual burial and pyre sites being undertaken by DEFRA and the Environment Agency, the Government published an overall monitoring strategy for the protection of public health in the light of issues arising from carcase disposal. This programme focuses upon the key issues of human health, air quality, water supplies and the food chain and involves all the relevant Government Departments and Agencies.

The Public Health Laboratory Service Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC) has co-ordinated a nation wide search for cases of diseases that might affect people as a result of activities associated with the handling and culling of animals and the disposal of carcases.

DEFRA, the Department of Health, the Environment Agency, the Drinking Water Inspectorate, the Ministry of Defence, the Food Standards Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities have carried out monitoring of air pollution from pyres and incinerators, foods, soil and herbage, public and private water supplies, rivers and streams and occupational health.

The monitoring strategy is available on the website at: www.doh.gov.uk/fmdguidance/.

Monthly reports of results of monitoring are to be published on the Department of Health's website and other Departments will be publishing details of their results on their own websites. The first report of the results of the monitoring is available on the website at: www.doh.gov.uk/fmdguidance/monitoring1.htm.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if pigs caught under the 10km restriction zone from infected premises will be eligible for the animal welfare scheme. [4051]

Mr. Morley: Animals suffering welfare problems due to foot and mouth disease restrictions which cannot be resolved in any other way remain eligible for entry to the Livestock Welfare (Disposal) Scheme. In most cases healthy livestock within 10km of an infected premise may still be marketed for food.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what compensation will be payable to farmers who are unable to move their *(a)* pigs, *(b)* lambs too big for sale and *(c)* cattle over 30 months which are caught in an infected premises zone. [4052]

Mr. Morley: There is no statutory provision for compensation to be paid to farmers who are unable to move their stock. There are no plans to make such payments but the matter will be kept under review.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress her Department is making in repealing the limit on the number of people able to participate in shooting and stalking activities on land outside foot and mouth disease-infected sites. [5670]

Alun Michael: Discussions on these issues are being made on the basis of veterinary assessments of risk. Grouse shooting will be able to go ahead in most parts of England from August 12 under a licensing scheme which we announced earlier this week.

Rights of Way (Closures)

Paddy Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the local authorities that have made representations to maintain the blanket closure of the rights of way network. [3175]

Alun Michael *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* My Department received applications for full, or partial exemption from revocation from the following local authorities:

Bedfordshire county council
Blackburn with Darwen borough council
Bradford metropolitan district council
Cumbria county council'
Devon county council'
Durham county council'
East Riding of Yorkshire council
Gloucestershire county council'
Hartlepool borough council
Herefordshire council'
Kent county council
Lancashire county council'
Leeds city council
Lincolnshire county council
Sheffield city council
Somerset county council'

' My Department's officials wrote to local authorities on 13 July approving applications from those authorities.

We also received a letter from North Yorkshire county council seeking exemption from revocation but closures in that county were imposed under different powers from those which are being revoked.

We also received letters from Cheshire county council, Newcastle-under-Lyme borough council and Allerdale borough council.

MAFF *v.* TT Smith (Mink) Ltd.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if the costs awarded to MAFF following the case of MAFF *v.* TT Smith (Mink) Ltd. (1999) have been paid by the defendant. [3141]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* On 11 March 1999 at Lyndhurst magistrates court TT Smith (Mink) Ltd. was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £15,000. £5,000 has been paid and the magistrates court is enforcing payment of the remainder.

End of Life Vehicles

Margaret Moran: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what recent discussions she has had with motor manufacturers regarding recycling of end of life vehicles; [3826]

(2) what plans she has to introduce incentives to assist recycling of end of life vehicles. [3827]

Mr. Meacher: The Government are planning to issue a consultation paper on options to implement the End of Life Vehicles Directive 2000/53/EC in the near future. Views from all parties will be welcomed.

Waste Management

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to monitor progress in implementing the Government's waste strategy; and if she will make a statement. [3897]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* A Waste Strategy Monitoring Group has been set up to monitor the implementation of the Government's waste strategy in England. As announced in "Waste Strategy 2000", we intend to review progress towards achieving the strategy goals regularly to ensure that we are on course to meet our international obligations and that the targets that have been set are realistic. The National Assembly is currently reviewing the strategy in Wales.

Fuel Poverty

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what definition her Department uses of fuel poverty; what the level is of household fuel poverty in Great Britain; what timetable has been set for implementing a strategy to eradicate fuel poverty; and if she will make a statement. [3986]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The draft UK Fuel Poverty Strategy set out our proposal to display the number of fuel poor households in England on the basis of both main definitions:

(a) A household is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it would be required to spend more than 10 per cent. of its income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use.

(b) A household is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it would be required to spend more than 10 per cent. of its income (excluding Housing Benefit and ISMI) on all household fuel use.

On the basis of the definitions at (a) and (b), we estimate the number of fuel poor households in Great Britain in 1999 to be either 4.3 million or 5.3 million respectively.

The Government's overall goal is to seek an end to the problem of fuel poverty, with the first objective being to take all those most vulnerable to cold-related ill-health (older people, families with young children, the disabled and those with long-term illness) out of fuel poverty by 2010. The individual programmes set out in the draft strategy are already under way, with the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) in England already substantially improved and offering grants of up to £2,000 compared to the £315 available under the previous scheme that had run since 1991. Since its launch in June 2000, HEES has already assisted over 100,000 vulnerable households and has a target of reaching 800,000 homes by 2004.

We are currently considering the responses to the consultation on the proposed strategy. Our intention is to publish the final strategy in the autumn.

Incinerators

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to introduce a moratorium on the building of new incinerators; and if she will make a statement. [3898]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Green) on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 47W.

Pollution

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what rules are used to ensure that companies take responsibility for pollution under the integrated pollution control system and the integrated pollution prevention and control system; and if she will make a statement. [3995]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* In Great Britain, both the integrated pollution control and integrated pollution prevention and control regimes require operators to be issued with permits before they can undertake polluting activities. They give the regulator discretion to issue enforcement notices requiring compliance and provide for criminal prosecution in a range of circumstances.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to increase protection of sites of special scientific interest; and if she will make a statement. [4015]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* We have provided significantly increased protection for sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) in England and Wales, through measures in part III of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The first wildlife legislation for 20 years, the Act gives the conservation agencies new powers to refuse consent for damaging activities and to tackle neglect on SSSIs. It also imposes new duties on public bodies to further the conservation and enhancement of SSSIs and new procedures where such bodies are undertaking or considering consents for activities which may damage the features of SSSIs.

Air Quality

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to change the targets of the Government's air quality strategy; and if she will make a statement. [3996]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The air quality strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, published in January 2000, sets policy objectives for reducing levels of the eight air pollutants which are thought to pose the greatest risk to human health and the environment. The objectives are all subject to regular review, in the light of new scientific and policy documents.

The Department plans to consult shortly on possible new objectives for three of the eight pollutants (particles, carbon monoxide and benzene). At the same time, we will also consult on a policy objective for a ninth pollutant

(polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons). Thereafter, we intend to consult on a possible new objective for nitrogen dioxide, and on new objectives for the protection of ecosystems and vegetation from nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide, during the course of 2002. We have no immediate plans to revise the objectives for the other pollutants covered by the strategy (sulphur dioxide, lead, ozone and 1,3 butadiene).

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the air monitoring stations operating in Gloucestershire. [4285]

Mr. Meacher: There are currently no automatic air quality monitoring sites in Gloucestershire that form part of the UK national air pollution monitoring network. However, I understand that the Forest of Dean district council and Cheltenham borough council have set up their own monitoring stations at Cinderford and Montpellier respectively. I also understand that all the Gloucestershire authorities have used diffusion tubes at a number of locations across their areas for monitoring levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and levels of sulphur dioxide (SO_2) for the purposes of their air quality reviews and assessments.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on how many occasions since 1997 air monitoring stations in Gloucestershire have reported pollution above recommended health levels. [4286]

Mr. Meacher: Within the UK as a whole, there has been a steady decline since 1997 in the number of days of poor air quality recorded at urban sites. In rural areas, the number of days when air pollution is recorded as moderate or higher has fluctuated over the same period because of the variability in levels of ozone. There are, however, no air quality monitoring stations in Gloucestershire that supply data to the UK automatic monitoring networks, so we are unable to provide any validated data to indicate on precisely how many occasions since 1997 air pollution was reported above recommended health levels in Gloucestershire.

The local authorities in Gloucestershire have been reviewing and assessing the current, and likely future, air quality in their region as a requirement under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. I understand from Gloucestershire Pollution Group that while there have been a number of days where the air pollution has been recorded as moderate or higher, they are not aware that the annual objectives have been exceeded for any pollutant.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress has been made towards meeting the targets of the Government's air quality strategy; what measures she intends to monitor future progress; and if she will make a statement. [3997]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* Air pollution in the UK's towns and cities is on a steady downward trend, as a result chiefly of the progressively tighter controls over industrial and vehicle emissions that have been introduced in recent years. Current modelling suggests that the UK is broadly on track to meet the objectives for most of the pollutants covered by the air quality strategy. It is likely, however, that three of the objectives (those for particles, nitrogen dioxide and ozone) will not be met in some parts of the UK without some additional national and/or local policy measures.

In the case of particles and nitrogen dioxide, the air quality action plans that many local authorities will be developing over the months ahead will have a key role to play in helping us to achieve the objectives. In the case of ozone, concerted action at a European level is likely to be the best way of delivering the necessary reductions in levels across southern England. The forthcoming Ozone and National Emissions Ceilings Directives will help us to achieve this.

We will monitor future progress towards these objectives by means of the national air quality monitoring network, and by a programme of reviews of the objectives for individual pollutants. We will also look to the results of the reviews and assessments of local air quality carried out be local authorities under Part IV of the Environmental Act 1995.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to increase air monitoring stations in Gloucestershire. [4287]

Mr. Meacher: The number and location of the air monitoring stations that form part of the UK air pollution monitoring network are predominantly determined by the need to meet the ambient air pollution reporting requirements laid down in the EU Air Quality Framework Directive and the Air Quality Daughter Directives. Other monitoring sites have been chosen to provide input into the development of proposed legislation and to improve the understanding of sources and effects of air pollution.

The national monitoring network is constantly evolving. New sites have recently been installed to measure sulphur dioxide, particles and nitrogen dioxide in order to meet the requirements of the First Daughter Directive. Additional monitoring sites are also being installed to meet the requirements for benzene and carbon monoxide required for the Second Daughter Directive. There is also an extended monitoring programme for polyaromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals to inform understanding of the sources and levels of these pollutants. Other developments to the network are also under consideration, although, at present, there are no definite plans for new sites in Gloucestershire.

Local authorities will also continue to have to monitor their local air quality from time to time as a requirement under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. It will be up to them to continue monitoring the air quality in their region to assess whether or not the air quality objectives will be met by the relevant deadlines.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions

she *(a)* has had and *(b)* plans with local authorities in Gloucestershire on the subject of air quality; and if she will make a statement. [4288]

Mr. Meacher: My officials have been in regular contact with all the local authorities in Gloucestershire over the past few years, while they have been undertaking their local air quality reviews and assessments. Gloucestershire Pollution Group is represented at the Regional Air Quality Co-ordinators' meetings which are organised by my officials and take place every six months or so. The local authorities in Gloucestershire, along with all other English authorities, also have a duty to consult the Secretary of State on their review and assessment reports.

Out of the six district/borough authorities in Gloucestershire, only Stroud district council and Tewkesbury borough council have identified potentially significant air pollution problems. These two authorities have therefore had to designate a joint air quality management area (AQMA) in respect of levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) adjacent to the M5 motorway, and they will now have to undertake a further review and assessment of air quality in the affected areas. They will also have to draw up an air quality action plan setting out the measures they intend to take in working towards the air quality objective for NO_2.

Renewables

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what role her Department intends to play in increasing the percentage of energy supplied from renewables in the United Kingdom by *(a)* 2010 and *(b)* 2040; and if she will make a statement. [3998]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The Department works closely with the Department of Trade and Industry on delivering renewable energy generation objectives. The Government have set a target of 10 per cent. renewables electricity by 2010, subject to the cost being acceptable to the consumer. DEFRA promotes renewables through a variety of initiatives, including the Energy Crops Scheme to provide establishment grants for growers of energy crops and the Community Renewables initiative that will build community-based partnerships to develop renewable energy in their localities.

Longer-term policy will be considered in the light of the current Performance and Innovation Unit review. This will set out the objectives of energy policy and develop a strategy to ensure current policy commitments are consistent with longer-term goals. Targets for future decades will need to be developed in the light of this analysis.

Recycling

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent assessment she has made of the extent of availability of doorstep recycling and participation in such recycling; what timetable she has for introducing doorstep recycling to all households; and if she will make a statement. [3990]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* Results from the 1999–2000 Municipal Waste Management survey indicate that the proportion of households served by kerbside or doorstep collection schemes remained unchanged since 1998–99 at 43 per cent. However, the amount of waste collected for recycling through such schemes has increased by 18 per cent. since 1998–99 to 756,000 tonnes in 1999–2000.

The choice of waste facilities is a matter for local authorities to take in consultation with their local communities. The Government do not require authorities to introduce kerbside recycling, although it is expected that the setting of statutory targets for recycling is likely to lead to an increase in the availability of kerbside recycling.

Targets in the national waste strategy "Waste Strategy 2000" are based on the assumption that by 2020 up to 80 per cent. of households nationally can realistically be served by kerbside collections, and that 80 per cent. of households provided with the service will actually use it.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much household recycling was done in Great Britain in the last 12 months; what targets her Department has set for recycling of household waste by *(a)* 2005, *(b)* 2010 and *(c)* 2015; and if she will make a statement. [3999]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* In 1999–2000, the latest year for which data are available, 10.3 per cent. of household waste in England and Wales was recycled or composted. One of the key objectives in the Government's Waste Strategy, set out in "Waste Strategy 2000", is that where the creation of waste cannot be avoided, recycling and reuse should be maximised. The Government have set targets for England and Wales, for at least 25 per cent. of household waste to be recycled or composted by 2005, 30 per cent. by 2010 and 33 per cent. by 2015. These targets are not "ceilings" but realistic minima that will be revised upwards if experience indicates that higher levels are achievable. The National Assembly for Wales is currently consulting on revised targets for composting and recycling as part of a review of the waste strategy for Wales. Recycling in Scotland is a matter for the Scottish Executive.

Pitsea Tip

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what investigations have been carried out regarding the deposit of poisonous or toxic waste at Pitsea tip; if he will list the agencies concerned; and when reports of these investigations will be available; [3890]

(2) if she will publish the inquiry findings into waste at Pitsea tip, with particular reference to findings by the Environment Agency. [3885]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I am advised that the waste management licence for the Pitsea landfill site authorises the disposal of both non-hazardous and hazardous waste—defined in our national legislation as "special waste". The Environment Agency has a legal duty to supervise and inspect all licensed sites. No investigation or inquiry separate from the fulfilment of this duty has been carried by the Agency in relation to the Pitsea landfill site.

The Environment Agency is required by section 64 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to maintain a public register of licences. The information which the Agency is required to keep on the public register is set out in section 64 of the 1990 Act and regulation 10 of the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994. It includes (a) the licence for each site; (b) reports produced by the Agency in the discharge of its functions under section 42 of the 1990 Act; and (c) any monitoring information relating to the carrying on of any activity under the licence. The consignment and disposal of special waste is also subject to the requirements of the Special Waste Regulations 1996.

The Environment Agency is carrying out a thorough investigation into the destinations of ash from municipal waste incinerators and a report will be published by the Agency on completion of its investigation. The Agency has no evidence that ash accepted at the Pitsea landfill site was subsequently consigned from the site for use elsewhere. However, the Agency will address this possibility in the context of its current investigation.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what action will be taken to clean up Pitsea tip and make the environment safer for residents of Castle Point; and if she will make a statement; [3886]

(2) what assessment she has made of the public safety and environmental implications of the poisonous waste deposited at Pitsea tip on the communities and land at Benfleet and on Canvey Island; [3888]

(3) what the radius is of the area at risk from poisonous waste deposited at Pitsea tip. [3887]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* Landfill sites operate under the terms of waste management licences and are subject to the controls set out in Part II of the Environment Protection Act 1990 and the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994. The purpose of licences is to ensure that waste is disposed of in ways which protect the environment and human health. Failure to comply with a licence condition, or the disposal of waste in a manner likely to cause environmental pollution or harm to human health, is a criminal offence.

The Environment Agency has a legal duty to inspect all licensed sites and section 42 of the 1990 Act requires the Agency to take the steps needed to ensure that (a) the activities authorised by a licence do not cause environmental pollution, harm to human health or serious detriment to local amenities; and (b) the conditions of a licence are complied with.

It is the responsibility of the Environment Agency to assess whether any steps are needed to ensure compliance with these provisions; I am advised by the Environment Agency that the Pitsea landfill site is currently being operated within the terms of its licence; and that the Agency has no plans to take enforcement action under Part II of the 1990 Act either in relation to the disposal of waste, including poisonous waste, at the site or the implications of its disposal outside the site's boundaries (i.e. within any radius of the site).

The Environment Agency will continue to inspect and supervise the site under section 42 of the 1990 Act and will take any steps necessary to ensure that the licence conditions are fulfilled and that waste, including poisonous waste, is not disposed of in ways which cause environmental pollution or harm to the health of any communities living within any radius of the site.

Fishing

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate her Department has made of the level of *(a)* black fish landed and *(b)* discards of over quota or otherwise unlandable fish for each (i) fishing area, (ii) sector and (iii) species in each of the last five years. [4359]

Mr. Morley: None. However, account is taken of undeclared landings and all forms of discards by scientists in the assessment of some fish stocks.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many fishing vessels were registered on 1 January. [4361]

Mr. Morley: There were 7,242 British fishing vessels registered in the UK by the Registry of Shipping and Seaman at 1 January 2001. In addition the authorities in the States of Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man registered a further 578 British fishing vessels on that date.

Sea Defences

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much spending on sea defences was authorised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for each of the last four years; and how much was provided by *(a)* the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and *(b)* local authorities. [4117]

Mr. Morley: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food approved in each year coastal defence capital works meeting specified criteria for grant aid. The speed at which such works are constructed and hence expenditure incurred and grant claimed, is a matter for the operating authorities. The table shows *(a)* the actual outturn on the grant eligible capital programme for coastal defences by category of operating authority, and *(b)* the amount of grant paid by the Ministry. For local authorities grant can be paid in advance one year for work to be undertaken early in the next, whereas actual outturn will record the work completed in the year, so comparisons may be misleading.

£ million

	1997–98		1998–99		1999–2000		2000–01	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Sea defence								
Environment Agency	29.9	21.9	18.1	12.4	20.3	14.0	'17.9	12.5
Local authorities	2.5	0.7	0.5	—	1.2	0.7	2.6	1.3
Local authorities coast protection	42.2	24.2	43.6	24.1	35.4	24.7	33.1	11.9
Total	74.6	46.8	62.2	36.5	56.9	39.4	53.6	25.7

' Estimated

The net of grant costs of the programme are largely met (i) in the case of the Environment Agency by levies on local authorities, and (ii) in the case of local authorities' own works by the provision of Supplementary Credit Approvals for borrowing cover. Both are reflected in the calculation of Standard Spending Assessments and Revenue Support Grant.

Inland Waterways

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the total Government investment was in inland waterways in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley in the last five years; and what the forecast is for the next three years. [4394]

Mr. Meacher: Local information is not collated centrally. However, total expenditure by British Waterways over the past five years has been £163 million. They anticipate spending another £191 million over the next three years.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the total Government investment in inland waterways was in *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 2000. [3748]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* This information is not available. However, the grant in aid paid to British Waterways, and the element of grant paid to the Environment Agency towards the funding of its navigation responsibilities, were as follows:

£ million

	British Waterways[1]	Environment Agency	Total
1997–98	51.9	2.3	54.2
1998–99	53.6	3.1	56.7
1999–2000	59.0	3.1	62.1
2000–01	64.9	4.5	69.4

[1] Figures include grant in aid paid towards Scottish waterways

Droitwich Barge and Junction Canals

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the viability of the re-opening of the Droitwich Barge and Junction Canals; and if she will make a statement. [4134]

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State looks to the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC) to provide advice on waterway restoration projects. IWAAC's "Waterway Restoration Priorities" report published in 1998 identified the Droitwich Barge and Junction Canals as being of national importance and ready for main funding in the short team. A recent study carried out by British Waterways confirmed the feasibility of the project and the benefits it would be likely to deliver. The next step will be for the interested parties to raise the necessary funding.

Horticulture

Hugh Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what plans she has to increase the number of nationals from countries seeking to join the EU eligible to work in the horticultural industry under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme; [4545]

(2) what plans she has to relax the restrictions on employing seasonal workers in the horticultural industry. [4539]

Mr. Morley: The United Kingdom has a long-standing Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Scheme (SAWS) which enables non-European Economic Area students between the ages of 18 and 25 who are in full-time education to enter the United Kingdom to do seasonal agricultural work. The annual quota was raised with effect from the 2001 season from 10,000 to 15,200. This increase was not specifically aimed at nationals from those countries seeking to join the EU.

Despite the increase in the quota the Government are aware that certain sectors of the agricultural and horticultural industries have called for further increases in the quota. In the light of those representations the Government are actively considering whether further changes are needed. A decision on any change to the scheme is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department to make.

GM Crops

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what criteria are to be used in the risk assessments for the autumn-sown farm scale evaluations for GM crops. [4471]

Mr. Meacher: The criteria used in assessing risks from genetically modified (GM) plants released to the environment are set out in schedule 1 of the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations (1995), which implement European Commission Directive 94/15/EC.

For the assessment of sites notified to the authorities for research releases the criteria (set out in Part V of the schedule) include: locations and sizes of the sites, the description of the site ecosystem including evaluation of

flora and fauna, details of any sexually compatible wild relatives or cultivated plant species present at the site and its proximity to sites of special scientific interest.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farm scale evaluation sites for GM crops were planted for each crop type. [4469]

Mr. Meacher: The Farm Scale Evaluations is a three-year research programme now in its second full year. The Scientific Steering Committee overseeing the programme has recommended that data be gathered at between 60 and 75 sites for each crop type (winter oilseed rape, spring oilseed rape, beet and maize) over the three years of the study. To date 24 winter oilseed rape, 43 spring oilseed rape, 50 beet sites and 37 maize sites have been sown.

Mr. Breed: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the meetings she has had with *(a)* Aventis and *(b)* the Crop Protection Association to discuss access to information on experimental approvals for glufosinate ammonium. [3755]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* No such meetings have been held.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the antibiotic marker genes and the antibiotics to which they convey resistance, that have been used in the genetic modification of plant crops. [4606]

Mr. Meacher: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 22 February 2000, *Official Report,* column 916W.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the tests or trials on the *(a)* distinctness, uniformity and stability and *(b)* value for cultivation and use of the GM fodder maize variety, Chardon LL, which have been commenced in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) elsewhere since October 2000. [4465]

Mr. Meacher: No tests for distinctness, uniformity and stability or trials for value for cultivation and use on the GM fodder maize variety Chardon LL have been commenced in the United Kingdom since October 2000. The French testing authorities have advised us that they entered the variety for a second year of official distinctness, uniformity and stability tests in France in spring 2001.

Biosafety

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the United Kingdom will ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. [4472]

Mr. Meacher: Ratification of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety by the United Kingdom is partly dependent on legislative action at the European Community level. The European Commission has indicated that it intends to publish proposals for such legislation in autumn this year. Depending on progress with this legislation, the United Kingdom may therefore expect to ratify the Protocol before the end of 2002.

Flooding (Vale of York)

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what funding she will make available for a flood elevation scheme in Rawcliffe, York. [4435]

Mr. Morley: Emergency works by the Environment Agency have reduced the risk of defences being outflanked at Rawcliffe. An application from the Environment Agency for grant on a flood alleviation scheme at Rawcliffe will be considered against the normal technical, economic and environmental criteria and priority score arrangements. The current rate of grant for such schemes is 65 per cent., but the Environment Agency grant rates are reviewed on an annual basis.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has received requesting a comprehensive review of the flood management system in the Vale of York, with particular reference to a flood elevation scheme at Rawcliffe, as part of flood defences. [4436]

Mr. Morley: Following the severe flooding in late 2000, the Department has been made aware of the concerns of a number of communities in the Vale of York through both correspondence and the Adjournment debate which the hon. Member secured on 7 November 2000. I also met her and representatives of Rawcliffe on 30 April 2001. Operational responsibility for flood management systems rests with the local operating authorities (the Environment Agency, local authorities and Internal Drainage Boards). Inter alia, the agency has reassessed its flood warning arrangements and is undertaking a strategic study for the River Ouse catchment.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress has been made to repair damage to the flood defences in the Yorkshire and Humber region during the November 2000 floods. [4437]

Mr. Morley: The Department is making contributions towards the exceptional costs incurred by the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards on emergency response and repairs following the flooding in late 2000. I understand that the agency inspected all of its flood defence assets as soon as possible after the flooding and has undertaken major emergency works inter alia at Gowdall, Selby, Barlby, Wressle, Rawcliffe and the Foss Barrier. The agency has also undertaken local repairs elsewhere as part of its maintenance programme.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what contingency plans she has to prevent flooding in the Vale of York on a scale similar to that experienced in November 2000. [4432]

Mr. Morley: The Government announced increased funding for flood and coastal defence capital works last November as part of their response to the severe flooding. It is now for the operating authorities to consider the need for schemes and develop proposals within an overall strategy for catchment areas. The Government also announced exceptional funding for emergency repairs and response and the authorities are undertaking emergency

works; for example the Environment Agency has undertaken works to reduce the risk of defences being outflanked at Rawcliffe.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what progress has been made in the co-ordination of functions and tasks by the relevant agencies to prevent flooding in the Vale of York; [4433]

(2) what discussions her Department has had with *(a)* the Environment Agency, *(b)* Kyle and Upper Ouse Internal Drainage Board, *(c)* City of York Council, *(d)* Yorkshire Water and *(e)* other agencies and on floods management since November 2000. [4434]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency's "Lessons Learned" report on the floods has helped to further clarify the roles of the different agencies. In addition to the regular meetings with the organisations responsible for emergency response, I understand the Agency has held several meetings with the City of York council, Rawcliffe parish council, Kyle and Upper Ouse Internal Drainage Board and Yorkshire Water to discuss and plan flood management issues. The Department's Regional Engineer is liaising with the operating authorities with regard to plans for capital flood defence works and associated studies.

Kyoto Protocol

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with the Environment Committee of the Council of Europe on the Kyoto Protocol. [4780]

Mr. Meacher: None.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what action her Department has taken since 14 March to tackle delays experienced by householders under the home energy efficiency scheme. [4768]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The delays in the installation and repair of central heating systems under the home energy efficiency scheme are due to the national shortage of qualified gas heating engineers. The Department continues to encourage the two scheme managers—the Eaga Partnership Ltd. and Eastern HEES Ltd.—in their efforts to recruit additional installers as an interim measure. These efforts have led to substantial improvements in the rate of work with over 2,800 boiler installations in June 2001, compared to 590 in January.

But the longer-term solution to the problem is to increase the pool of trained engineers. Over the next 12 months my Department is funding training courses that will provide 800 additional qualified engineers to work under the scheme. The first batch will join the scheme in November. This is currently the largest gas engineer training programme in the UK.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many boiler repairs and replacements have so far been completed under the home energy efficiency scheme in Dorset; and what the current average time clients have to wait for the installation and repair of heating systems is. [4769]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The table identifies the number of boiler repairs and replacements completed since June 2000 in Dorset. Following the completion of works installers typically take between 6–8 weeks to submit an invoice for payment. It is likely that work has already been completed in some of these households. The time taken should significantly decrease following the recent appointment of nine further heating companies taking the total number for Dorset to 12:

	Number fitted and invoiced	*Number with installers*	*Average time taken in months*[1]
Boiler repairs	230	80	3.3
Boiler replacements	19	109	9
New boilers	60	223	9

[1] Boilers are only replaced once an attempt to repair has failed. The average time shown therefore includes the period taken to attempt a repair.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects the applications by *(a)* Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths of Burton, Dorset, *(b)* Mrs. Donovan of Ferndown, Dorset and *(c)* Mrs. Deary of St. Leonard's, Dorset, under the home energy efficiency scheme in June 2000 to be actioned; and if she will make a statement. [4763]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The home energy efficiency scheme is managed in the south-west of England by the Eaga Partnership Ltd. I have asked it to report on these three applications and will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what measures she is taking to examine the progress of EAGA in delivering the Government's home heating policy. [4577]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The Department maintains a close watch for the performance of both the home energy efficiency scheme managers—Eaga Partnership Ltd. and Eastern HEES Ltd. This includes both regular management reports and the use of an external contractor—White Young and Green—to audit the systems operated by the two scheme managers to ensure their effectiveness. This audit includes physical inspections of work as well as sample surveys of HEES clients and is designed to identify measures to improve the quality of service to householders applying to the scheme.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many people in each of the four areas of England established for the purpose of administering the home energy efficiency scheme have had *(a)* new boilers fitted and *(b)* boilers repaired since June 2000; and how many are waiting for (i) boiler repairs and (ii) new boilers. [4765]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The table sets out the number of households that have had work completed and those where orders have been placed.

Scheme Manager	Number of households that require new heating systems including boiler: Fitted and invoiced	Order with installer	Number of households that required repairs to existing heating systems: Repairs completed and invoiced (of which require replacement boiler)	Those awaiting repair[1]	Those awaiting replacement boiler[1]
Lot 1—London and south east	1,461	1,877	3,230 (111)	1,726	1,207
Lot 2—Eastern, east midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber	5,594	3,940	3,419 (120)	3,211	113
Lot 3—South west and west midlands	4,162	4,747	3,102 (182)	2,061	1,620
Lot 4—North west and north east	6,974	5,633	4,284 (437)	2,645	2,063

[1] Following the completion of works installers typically take between 6–8 weeks to submit an invoice for payment. it is likely that work has already been completed in some of these households.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what has been the total value of work carried out since June 2000 by contractors in each of the four areas of England established for the purposes of administering the home energy efficiency scheme. [4764]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The table identifies the total value of work completed and invoiced in each of the four lot areas (described in the table) in England. Following the completion of works installers typically take between 6–8 weeks to submit an invoice for payment. It is likely that the value of works is higher than the figures identified. The figure excludes the material value of new gas central heating systems, which are paid for by a separate lease agreement:

£ million

Scheme manager	Total value of work from 1 June 2000 to 30 June 2001
Lot 1—London and South East	6.81
Lot 2—Eastern, East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber	17.70
Lot 3—South West and West Midlands	14.96
Lot 4—North West and North East	22.84
Total	62.31

Pollution (Edmonton)

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will list the types of dioxins which have been present, in each of the past 10 years, in fly ash from waste incinerators *(a)* nationally and *(b)* from the Edmonton incinerator. [4865]

Mr. Meacher *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* There are 210 types (congeners) of dioxins—only 17 of which are considered to be significant cause for concern because of their toxicity—and these are listed. All combustion processes including waste incinerators produce a mixture of dioxin congeners which will be detected in the fly ash but monitoring usually focuses on the 17 congeners of concern which are reported as Toxic Equivalents (TEQ). Fly ash from the Edmonton incinerator would similarly contain a mixture of the 210 dioxin congeners.

Annex A

The 17 dioxin (and furan) congeners which are considered to be significant cause for concern because of their toxicity.

Dioxins

2,3,7,8-TCDD—tetra chloro dibenzo-para-dioxin

1,2,3,7,8-PeCDD—penta chloro dibenzo-para-dioxin

1,2,3,4,7,8-HxCDD—hexa chloro dibenzo-para-dioxin

1,2,3,6,7,8-HxCDD—hexa chloro dibenzo-para-dioxin

1,2,3,7,8,9-HxCDD—hexa chloro dibenzo-para-dioxin

1,2,3,4,6,7,8-HpCDD—hepta chloro dibenzo-para-dioxin

OCDD—octa chloro dibenzo-para-dioxin

Furans

2,3,7,8-TCDF—tetra chloro dibenzo furan

1,2,3,7,8-PeCDF—penta chloro dibenzo furan

2,3,4,7,8-PeCDF—penta chloro dibenzo furan

1,2,3,4,7,8-HxCDF—hexa chloro dibenzo furan

1,2,3,7,8,9-HxCDF—hexa chloro dibenzo furan

1,2,3,6,7,8-HxCDF—hexa chloro dibenzo furan

2,3,4,6,7,8-HxCDF—hexa chloro dibenzo furan

1,2,3,4,6,7,8-HpCDF—hepta chloro dibenzo furan

1,2,3,4,7,8,9-HpCDF—hepta chloro dibenzo furan

OCDF—octa chloro dibenzo furan.

New Forest

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what the timetable is for reviewing and reappointing the Forestry Commission as the agency for managing the Crown Lands of the New Forest; and if she will make a statement. [3758]

(2) if she will make a statement about the ownership of the New Forest. [3759]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The Crown Lands of the New Forest were transferred from the Commissioners of Woods to the Forestry Commissioners in 1924. Ownership was then passed to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by the Forestry Act 1945, which also placed the Crown Lands at the disposal of the Forestry Commissioners. The Commissioners have therefore managed the Crown Lands continuously since 1924 and there is no need to reappoint them. We have no plans to review this.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will make a statement on the powers available to the Forestry Commission to restrict and impose conditions upon access to the New Forest and the statutory provisions which govern their use. [4099]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The Forestry Commissioners manage the New Forest using the powers granted by the Forestry Act 1967, Countryside Act 1968 and the New Forest Acts of 1870, 1879, 1949, 1964 and 1970. These Acts also give the Commissioners powers to restrict and impose conditions upon access to the New Forest.

Evesham

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the Market Towns Initiative as it affects Evesham. [5750]

Alun Michael: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Market Towns Initiative

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will extend the Market Towns Initiative to Chorley. [6209]

Alun Michael: Following publication of the Rural White paper Regional Development Agencies are taking forward a programme of revitalisation of rural towns in or near Rural Priority Areas. It is for RDAs and their partners to decide on priorities.

Hunting

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has in respect of the Government's policy for legislation on hunting. [5697]

Alun Michael: Consideration is being given to the best way of dealing with this issue.

Tyres

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what consultation the Government have had with the tyre industry in order to implement the EU Landfill Directive; and if the requirements of the Directive will be complied with by the dates specified. [4497]

Mr. Wilson: I have been asked to reply.

The Government expect shortly to issue a consultation document and draft regulations which will set out the Government's views on the implementation of the tyre bans required by the Landfill Directive. The Government maintain regular dialogue with the tyre industry on this issue through the Used Tyre Working Group and we remain confident that sufficient tyre recovery capacity will be developed to enable the disposal of tyres to landfill to cease by the specified dates.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps the Government *(a)* has taken and *(b)* plans to take to ensure that additional tyre recovery and recycling facilities become available in the next three years. [4556]

Mr. Wilson: I have been asked to reply.

The key date in the Landfill Directive for tyres is expected to be 2006, when shredded tyres should be banned from landfill (whole tyres are due to be banned in 2003). The Government will continue to develop the framework necessary and provide support to help enable the tyre industry to achieve the required diversions of tyres away from disposal to landfill.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if the Government will introduce legislation requiring tyre manufacturers to take back tyres at the end of their life. [4498]

Mr. Wilson *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Government's preferred approach to meeting the requirements of the Landfill Directive for tyres is through a voluntary framework. However, statutory Producer Responsibility is an option, and we will consider later this year whether to issue a consultation document setting out proposals for such arrangements.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what conclusions the Used Tyre Working Group has reached with regard to necessary steps to improve the United Kingdom's scrap tyre recovery performance to a target of 100 per cent.; and if she will make a statement. [4555]

Mr. Wilson: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have asked the industry side of the Used Tyre Working Group to set out in its forthcoming Annual Report how the transition away from landfill is to be managed. That report is due to be submitted at the end of July and we will consider the way forward in light of this information.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if the Used Tyre Working Group has completed the collection of statistics regarding used tyre disposal for 1999; how many waste tyres were produced in the United Kingdom in that year; by what means they were disposed of; and what other information was collected by the working group in respect of that year. [4531]

Mr. Wilson: I have been asked to reply.

The Used Tyre Working Group (UTWG) estimated that around 430,000 tonnes (45 million tyres) were disposed of in 1999. The table shows recovery routes, rounded to the nearest percent.

Used tyres	*Tonnes*	*Percentage*
Total	427,000	—
Recovered	311,000	—
Recovery rate	—	73
Reuse	61,000	14
Retreading	66,000	15
Recycling	83,000	19
Landfill engineering	31,000	7
Energy recovery	70,000	16

The majority of the balance was landfilled, and some will have been stored or illegally dumped. The UTWG holds regular meetings and gathers information during the course of the year. Much of this information is contained in the UTWG's Annual Reports, the latest of which is held on its website at www.tyredisposal.co.uk.

German Atomic Law

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent communications she has had with her German counterpart, and what exchanges have taken place at official level, in respect of those amendments to the German atomic law which have implications for the United Kingdom. [3947]

Mr. Wilson: I have been asked to reply.

Amendments to German legislation are a matter for the Government of Germany. My Department has continued to press the German Government to ensure that any changes to legislation implemented in order to facilitate the phase-out of nuclear power in Germany do not prevent the effective fulfilment of BNFL's reprocessing contracts with German utilities.

Nuclear Safety

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will request from her German counterpart papers produced on *(a)* the BMU Radiation Safety Commission and *(b)* Reactor Safety Commission relating to environmental safety matters concerning British Radioactive waste and nuclear facilities handling imported German nuclear materials. [3948]

Mr. Wilson: I have been asked to reply.

I do not intend requesting such documents. The Department is not aware of these papers and would not expect to receive documents produced by or for German regulatory authorities. The UK's independent nuclear regulators meet with their German counterpart organisations in a number of international fora and bring to each others' attention issues of mutual interest.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Abductions

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been abducted from the UK in the last three years; and what action is taken to ensure the welfare of such children.

Ms Rosie Winterton: I have been asked to reply.

Between 1998 and 2000, 431 cases involving children allegedly abducted from England and Wales were processed by the Child Abduction Unit for determination under the 1980 Hague Convention on Child Abduction. Of these cases, 252 were concluded either by the foreign court ordering the return of the child or by the abducting parent returning voluntarily to this jurisdiction. In 27 cases the foreign court refused to return the child; 15 cases were resolved by the court graning the left behind parent contact; 79 cases were withdrawn and the remaining cases are pending. Some cases involve more than one child.

As far as Scotland is concerned, between 1998 and 2000 the Central Authority in Edinburgh dealt with 22 cases of children who had been abducted. It has not been possible, in the time available, to obtain figures from Northern Ireland. These are being collected and I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as they are available.

The Child Abduction Unit ensures that the child's welfare is protected by requesting its counterpart abroad to contact child protection authorities to investigate any concerns.

In addition, the Consular Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides consular services in cases in which children have allegedly been abducted from the United Kingdom to countries which are not party to the 1980 Hague Convention.

Police Retirement

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of each police force in England and Wales retired in each of the last five years for which figures are available, broken down by the reason for retirement; and if he will make a statement about his plans to reduce the number of medical retirements from the police. [162]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* Tables setting out the requested data on retirements from police forces in England and Wales for the years 1995–96 to 1999–2000 will be placed in the Library.

The level of medical retirements from the forces in England and Wales has fallen from 46 per cent. of all retirements in 1995–96 to 31 per cent. in 1999–2000. I am, however, currently considering what steps need to be taken in order to ensure that all forces deal with medical retirements effectively.

Police Divisions, (Cheshire)

Derek Twigg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Cheshire on *(a)* the resources allocated to, and *(b)* the level of crime, broken down by standard category in, each police division in Cheshire since 1997. [1135]

Mr. Denham: The allocation of resources to the territorial divisions and for other centrally provided operational units in any force is a matter for the professional judgment of the Chief Constable and his senior command team.

The Chief Constable has provided the information in the tables about the allocation of officers to each division, and the level of crime in each of the divisions between 1997–98 and 2000–01.

Since 1997 Cheshire Constabulary has civilianised a significant number of operational support roles. This has contributed to the reduction in police numbers and the increase in civilian numbers. The structure of the force is periodically reviewed and changes are made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the force. Changes in recent years have resulted in the centralisation of officers deployed on armed response vehicles and the creation of a Central Traffic Enforcement Unit. These changes have reduced the number of officers in the territorial divisions. I understand that the Constabulary plan to recruit 156 officers including 77 under the Crime Fighting Fund by March 2002.

Cheshire constabulary: resources

Police officers	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Chester and Ellesmere Port	380	360	353	346
Congleton and Vale Royal	272	257	258	271
Halton	275	261	250	240
Warrington	317	311	318	316
Macclesfield	267	249	245	242
Crewe	186	174	166	182
Central Operational and Support functions	345	459	421	405
Total Police Officers	2,042	2,071	2,011	2,002
Civilian Support Staff	781	785	823	833
Total Personnel	2,823	2,856	2,834	2,835
Force Budget (£ million)	102.4	106.7	111.1	115.1

Cheshire constabulary: crime figures

	1997–98	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Total crime				
Chester and Ellesmere Port	13,527	15,806	15,065	14,792
Congleton and Vale Royal	9,256	11,349	10,906	10,160
Halton	8,475	9,233	8,759	9,242
Warrington	13,471	13,335	14,286	13,412
Macclesfield	8,481	8,929	8,370	8,587
Crewe	6,245	6,467	7,142	7,095
Cheshire Constabulary	59,455	65,119	64,528	63,288
Violent Crime				
Chester and Ellesmere Port	909	2,111	1,651	1,676
Congleton and Vale Royal	624	1,140	906	914
Halton	804	1,154	1,019	1,013
Warrington	1,192	1,481	1,475	1,370
Macclesfield	586	911	850	799
Crewe	628	826	744	718
Cheshire Constabulary	4,743	7,623	6,645	6,490

Burglary Dwelling	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Chester and Ellesmere Port	1,280	1,185	1,095	1,138
Congleton and Vale Royal	972	1,066	850	969
Halton	595	624	612	576
Warrington	1,493	1,027	1,018	984
Macclesfield	1,122	1,110	1,028	960
Crewe	791	913	776	822
Cheshire Constabulary	6,253	5,925	5,379	5,449

Vehicle Crime	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Chester and Ellesmere Port	2,782	3,127	2,378	2,606
Congleton and Vale Royal	2,174	2,298	2,212	2,018
Halton	1,928	1,889	1,731	2,015
Warrington	3,069	2,737	3,242	2,810
Macclesfield	1,743	1,542	1,453	1,640
Crewe	1,070	854	1,160	1,164
Cheshire Constabulary	12,766	12,447	12,176	12,253

Special Constables

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to amend the conditions of service of special constables. [2951]

Mr. Denham: Revisions to the conditions of service for the Special Constabulary have been circulated to forces.

The changes to the conditions of service focus on improving provisions for "unemployed" Special Constables and introduce mandatory payment of certain allowances and expenses.

We have also introduced a dedicated legal representation scheme and are working with the Association of Police Authorities and Association of Chief Police Officers to improve the local management of Special Constables.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend to special constables the same entitlements to free travel on London Transport as applies to regular officers; and if he will make a statement. [5108]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 19 July 2001]*: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that since 20 June 2001, members of the Metropolitan police special constabulary have been allowed to travel free of charge on all London Bus Services while on duty. Other travel operators have not made available similar concessions. There are currently no plans to extend free travel facilities to members of the Metropolitan special constabulary while travelling off duty.

Police Recruitment (Medical Standards)

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce national medical criteria for the police initial recruitment standards. [2128]

Mr. Denham: In accordance with the Dismantling Barriers Action Plan (issued July 1999), the Home Office plans, in consultation with Association of Chief Police Officers and other police interests, to deliver the new national medical and eyesight standards for police recruitment next year. These will be researched to ensure they are job related, defensible and non-discriminatory, and take account of the proposed extension of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to police officers.

Police Misconduct

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers who were serving within the Metropolitan police and were dismissed from the service because of misconduct in each of the last three years, are now in receipt of a police pension. [2529]

Mr. Denham: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that of 31 May 2001 the Metropolitan police employed a total of 25,615 officers. The breakdown of police officers who were dismissed or required to resign from the Metropolitan police because of misconduct in each of the last three years and are now in receipt of a police pension, is as follows:

Year	*Dismissed*	*Required to resign*
1998–99	9	39
1999–2000	15	25
2000–01	10	21
Total	34	85

Under Regulation K5 of the Police Pensions Regulations 1987, a police authority can seek a certificate for forfeiture of pension, although the courts have ruled that the pension may be forfeited by no more than 75 per cent., the remainder reflecting a pensioner's own contributions. In respect of those officers dismissed or required to resign from the Metropolitan police since 1998, the Metropolitan Police Authority has submitted one request for forfeiture of pension, for which a certificate was issued in November 2000. However, the Metropolitan Police Authority are currently considering a further 12 cases for forfeiture of pension.

The Home Secretary's statement of 23 March 1998, in response to the Home Affairs Committee Report on police disciplinary and complaints procedures, made it clear that police authorities should look at all cases of police officers who have been convicted of criminal offences connected with their police service with a view to forfeiture of their pensions. Further to that statement, Home Office circular 56–1998, which was sent to the chair/clerk of all police authorities in December 1998, indicated that they should ensure, in co-operation with their police force, that systems should be in place to identify cases to which the forfeiture provisions apply so that appropriate action may be taken. The total number of applications submitted is restricted by the strict criteria that need to be met.

Secretary of State (Appointment)

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if *(a)* police officers and *(b)* patrol cars were taken off active duty for the photo opportunity to announce his appointment as Secretary of State for the Home Department; and if he will make a statement. [2480]

Mr. Denham: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that two police officers and one police vehicle were in attendance at the photo-opportunity outside the Home Office on 9 June. These resources remained available for redeployment to security patrol elsewhere in the area.

Police (Homosexual Officers)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his Department's policy is on encouraging homosexual people to join the police force in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement. [2844]

Mr. Denham: The Home Office is currently developing national recruitment standards that are fair and non-discriminatory, and which will give access to a wider pool of applicants through the removal of unnecessary barriers to recruitment. Chief Constables are currently considering guidance about sexual orientation which has been drafted by the Association of Chief Police Officers with the help of the Lesbian and Gay Police Association. The draft guidance states among other matters that police forces' recruitment advertising should aim to attract lesbian and gay people as it would any other minority group, and that current arrangements concerning recruitment and promotion should be reviewed to ensure that they do not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation.

Immigration and Nationality Directorate

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the performance of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate in meeting its objectives in its Business Plan for 2000–01 in respect of the processing of asylum support claims. [3298]

Angela Eagle: For 2000–01, the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) had two main targets:

(i) to support single adults within a unit cost of £150 per week and families within a unit cost of £220 per week; and

(ii) to process 70 per cent. of support applications within two days of receipt and 100 per cent. within seven days of receipt.

NASS met the first of these targets in respect of the unit cost for single adults but not in respect of that for families. NASS did not meet its second target. This was due to a combination of factors but in particular due to the failure to predict the number of changes of circumstances

leading to changes in the type of support requested and a higher than planned for failure to comply with the arrangements to travel to dispersal accommodation. This led to the completion of processing of applications taking longer than expected.

Racial Strife

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to tackle racial strife in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley; and if he will make a statement. [2588]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* Shortly after the recent disturbances in Oldham, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary met representatives from a number of local communities and agencies to discuss the situation in the town. As a result, an action plan for recovery, to be prepared in Oldham by local fora including leaders of the Asian and White communities, police authorities and business leaders, is to be prepared within the next four months. We have made it clear that the Government, across all Departments, stand ready to offer support and independent advice as needed to help towns such as Bradford, Oldham and Burnley begin to heal their divisions and build a better future.

I visited Oldham to meet local people and learn about the town's problems at first hand. We welcome the fact that community leaders and the police are discussing what happened in Burnley and why. We are of course ready to work with local communities to ensure the safety and peaceful co-existence of people that live there. I remain convinced that the primary job of tackling the root causes of the complex social and specific problems that give rise to divisions and disturbances of this kind must be done at local level. We do of course welcome any local initiatives that help to address these issues in a constructive manner. In a statement to the House of Commons the Home Secretary announced the establishment of a ministerial group with a dedicated review team to undertake further work within communities over the summer. It will provide a direct link between Ministers and these communities. The review team will seek views from people on the ground, working closely with local people to identify further what needs to be done. This team will work in areas that have suffered violence as well as similar areas that have not.

The review team will provide a clear link between local communities and Ministers, reporting regularly over the summer and producing a final report and recommendations in September. It will be an important way of helping local people provide local solutions, while drawing out issues for policy consideration at national as well as local and community levels.

We have made available funding for additional sporting and leisure and cultural activities for young people over the summer months.

Witness Protection

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are under a formal witness protection programme; how many people in each of the last five years on average have entered formal witness protection programmes; and if he will make a statement. [1516]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* Witness protection is the responsibility of individual chief constables and I understand that figures relating to the numbers of people under protection are not available.

Speed Cameras

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money was raised from speed cameras in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999, *(c)* 2000 and *(d)* 2001. [3836]

Mr. Denham: Available information is given in the table. Automatic camera devices provided evidence from 1995–98 and all camera types for 1999. Data for 2000 will be available in the autumn, with data for 2001 due at the end of 2002.

All revenue received went directly into the Treasury's Consolidated Fund. However from April 2000, eight areas have been taking part in the piloting of arrangements for netting off fine revenue from cameras. This income can be used only for recovering the costs directly involved with camera operation, and there are strict financial controls, with an audit, to ensure that they are not diverted for other purposes. Section 38 of the Vehicles (Crime) Act 2001 now provides for court areas, subject to detailed conditions, to net off fine revenue from fixed penalty notices to fund speed limit and red light enforcement only.

Fixed Penalty and Court Proceeding data for offences of speeding detected by cameras[1,2]—England and Wales 1998–99a

	1998	*1999*
Fixed Penalties		
Number of tickets[3]	338,800	423,000
Estimated revenue (£ million)[4]	13.6	16.9
Court Proceedings		
Number of fines	25,500	32,300
Total amount of fine (£ million)	2.9	3.4
Average fine	£115	£106

[1] Automatic cameras until 1998, all camera types for 1999.
[2] Offences under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Motor Vehicles (Speed Limits on Motorways) Regulations 1973.
[3] Paid i.e. no further action.
[4] 'Estimate' based on £40 fixed penalty charge from 1995–99.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was raised from speed camera fines in the last five years in Lancashire. [4292]

Mr. Denham: Available information is given in the table. Data for 2000 will be available in the autumn.

Fixed penalty and court proceedings data for speed offences detected by cameras[1,2] in Lancashire police force area 1995–99

	1995	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*
Fixed penalties					
Number of tickets[3]	1,196	4,028	5,620	14,723	22,315
Estimated revenue (£000)[4]	47.8	161.1	224.8	588.9	892.6
Court proceedings					
Number of fines	131	302	477	879	1,195
Total amount of fine (£000)	8.6	19.9	37.1	96.0	120.2
Average fine (£)	66	66	78	109	101

[1] Automatic cameras until 1998, all camera types for 1999
[2] Offences under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Motor Vehicles (Speed Limits on Motorways) Regulations 1973
[3] Paid i.e. no further action
[4] 'Estimate' based on £40 fixed penalty charge from 1995 to 1999

Passports

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports mailed from the UK Passport Authority to addresses in the UK went missing in the post in each year since 1995. [3845]

Angela Eagle: The United Kingdom Passport Service (UKPS) only has records for passports reported missing in the post for the calendar years 1999 and 2000 as shown:

2000: 3,851

1999: 2,359.

It is clear to UKPS and the Royal Mail that the majority of passports reported as lost have in fact been stolen and that these thefts are systematic and targeted. The figure for losses in 2000 is significantly higher than that for 1999 (2,359) and this is of some concern to us.

The new digital passport has enhanced security features. These features would make it extremely difficult for someone who is in possession of a stolen passport to alter the document for use under a false identity.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints were received from customers in 2000–01 about inaccuracies in the passport received. [4949]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The United Kingdom Passport Service (UKPS) received 281 written complaints about inaccuracies in passports received by customers during the financial year 2000–01.

The UKPS issued 5.5 million passports over the same period.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what international agreement would be needed to allow the introduction of a passport card. [4952]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* A passport card is recognised as a form of travel document in the international standards developed by International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The use of a card form of passport would be by bilateral agreements between issuing states. A United Kingdom passport card will need acceptance within the European Union if it is to be a viable business proposition.

Ministerial consideration will be given to any issues arising from our agreements with the European Union.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fraudulent applications for passports were detected in *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01. [4943]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Incidents of fraud have decreased because the new Passport Application Support System (PASS) acts as a deterrent because it includes electronic security checks and the new digital machine readable passport incorporates new and improved security features.

For the calendar year 1997, 1,880 fraudulent applications were detected, this represents 0.042 per cent. of passports issued.

Calendar year 1998, 1,368, which represents 0.030 per cent. of passports issued.

In 1999 the records changed to financial years.

1999–2000, 1,568 fraudulent applications were detected, which represents 0.027 per cent.

2000–01, 1,484 fraudulent applications were detected, which represents 0.028 per cent.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the uses and purpose will be of the passport card referred to in paragraph 2.13 of the Passport Service's Corporate and Business Plan 2001–2006. [4948]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* A passport card, if approved by Ministers, would provide users with a convenient travel document which can be kept in a wallet or purse. If a passport book is lost or stolen abroad, the card would provide an alternative document that can either be used to facilitate return to the United Kingdom or to present to the nearest British Consulate to support an application for a replacement passport book.

In addition a card form of a passport would provide a suitable platform for electronic innovations. The International Civil Aviation Organisation is developing standards for card-based travel documents incorporating electronic data storage. These documents could offer greater security, could be used as automated border controls and offer a route to speedy passport renewal.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce a passport card; and in which year he intends to introduce it. [4947]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The United Kingdom Passport Service plans to introduce a passport card subject to gaining acceptance for the document in the European Union and subject to adequate funding and business case and subject to ministerial approval. The earliest that a passport card could be introduced is the financial year 2003–04.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision he has made to cope with the expected demand in the summer of 2001 from people whose passports were exceptionally extended for two years in 1999. [4941]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The Demand Forecast for the period October 2000 to September 2001 included an allowance for the expected demand in the summer of 2001 from people whose passports were exceptionally extended for two years in 1999. This has been supported by our market research, and our production capacity has allowed for this.

Asian Police

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women police officers are of Asian heritage in each police force in England. [3843]

Mr. Denham: On 31 March 2000, the most recent date for which figures are available, the number of full-time equivalent Asian female officers in England and Wales was 140. This breaks down between forces as follows:

Force	Asian women officers
Avon and Somerset	0
Bedfordshire	5
Cambridgeshire	1
Cheshire	0
City of London	2
Cleveland	0
Cumbria	1
Derbyshire	5
Devon and Cornwall	0
Dorset	0
Durham	1
Dyfed-Powys	1
Essex	3
Gloucestershire	0
Greater Manchester	6
Gwent	0
Hampshire	2
Hertfordshire	2
Humberside	0
Kent	5
Lancashire	2
Leicestershire	8
Lincolnshire	1
Merseyside	0
Metropolitan police	26
Norfolk	0
Northamptonshire	0
Northumbria	0
North Wales	0
North Yorkshire	0
Nottinghamshire	2
South Wales	0
South Yorkshire	5
Staffordshire	2
Suffolk	2
Surrey	3
Sussex	1
Thames Valley	8
Warwickshire	2
West Mercia	0
West Midlands	34
West Yorkshire	10
Wiltshire	0
Total	140

Hertfordshire Police

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the recruitment targets were for, and how many officers were recruited to, the Hertfordshire police force in each year since 1997. [3628]

Mr. Denham: I am advised by Hertfordshire constabulary that the force set no target for recruitment in 1997–98 or 1998–99. The force has advised me that the number of new recruits and the number of transfers in to the force in each year from 1997–98 to 2000–01, and the recruitment targets for 1999–2000 and 2000–01 were as follows:

	1997–98	1998–99	1999–2000	2000–01
Recruitment target	[1]—	[1]—	160	250
Number of police officers recruited[2]	63	67	147	111
Number of transfers in	15	12	28	31

[1] None set
[2] Excluding transfers in from England and Wales

Under the Crime Fighting Fund (CFF) recruitment initiative, Hertfordshire constabulary has been allocated a total of 107 additional recruits, over and above their existing recruitment plans for the three years to March 2003.

The force encountered some recruitment difficulties in the first year of the scheme (2000–01) and their bid to defer all 40 of their 2000–01 CFF allocation into 2001–02 was approved.

According to the latest recruitment profile received from the force, they intend to recruit all of their revised 2001–02 CFF allocation of 70 this year. The force has been allocated 37 CFF recruits in 2002–03.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers left the Hertfordshire police force other than through retirement in each year since 1997; and what these figures are expressed as a percentage of the total numbers of police officers in *(a)* Hertfordshire and *(b)* England and Wales. [3621]

Mr. Denham: The available information is given in the table:

Number of officers who left Hertfordshire Constabulary through resignation and other wastage

		Percentage of officers	
Financial year	Number of officers	Hertfordshire	England and Wales
1997–98	44	2.5	0.035
1998–99	46	2.7	0.036
1999–2000	48	2.7	0.039
2000–01	69	3.6	0.055

Hertfordshire Constabulary expanded on 1 April 2000 when it took over an area previously administered by the Metropolitan police, and consequently the 2000–01 figures are based on a larger number of officers.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many special police officers have been recruited to serve in *(a)* Hertfordshire and *(b)* Hertsmere in each year since 1997; and what the target for recruitment was in each case. [3631]

Mr. Denham: Recruitment statistics for the Special Constabulary are collected by force area. The figures available for Hertfordshire in each year since 1997 are set out in the table. I understand from the Chief Constable that the force can only provide data on Hertsmere following the boundary changes with the Metropolitan police on 1 April 2000. The Hertsmere figure is in brackets.

	Number
1996–97	61
1997–98	53
1998–99	33
1999–2000	31
2000–01	27 (6)

Source:
Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate

I am also told by the Chief Constable that Hertfordshire Constabulary has no set target for the recruitment of

Special Constables but is working towards increasing the number. The force had 198 Special constables on 31 March 2000.

District Police Forces

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the introduction of police forces at district level. [4389]

Mr. Denham: We have no plans to change the procedures in the Police Act 1996 for the alteration of police areas.

Police Vehicles

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to create central purchasing of *(a)* UK police vehicles and *(b)* UK European vehicles; [4390]

(2) how many police vehicles in current use were bought in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Europe and *(c)* outside Europe. [4391]

Mr. Denham: There are no plans to arrange central procurement of police vehicles in England and Wales. Since 1992 the Police Information and Technology Organisation, with the support of the National Association of Police Fleet Managers, has put in place a national framework for the purchase of vehicles by the police service. It delivers significant discounts on manufacturers prices. The current national framework was implemented on 1 April 2000 and runs for five years.

Although the arrangement is not mandatory, the framework has delivered value for money and is well used within the police service. As the arrangement was set up under European Commission (EC) Procurement Directives, forces who purchase from it are not required to undertake any additional tendering, thereby affording further savings to the police service.

Information on the number of vehicles owned by police forces in England and Wales and where they were purchased is not collected. The Scottish Executive are responsible for the police service in Scotland and the arrangements for motor vehicle procurement.

Antisocial Behaviour

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average cost is of an antisocial behaviour contract. [4295]

Mr. Denham: The acceptable behaviour contract was devised by Islington Council and, following its successful use there, has now been adopted in many other regions. Each area runs the scheme autonomously, and no information on the cost of concluding contracts is held.

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many antisocial behaviour orders have been obtained in each police division in England; and if he will make a statement. [4443]

Mr. Denham: Available information given in the table shows the number of antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) made by age group of subject and police force area. As the table shows, ASBOs have been applied for successfully in many parts of the country.

Antisocial behaviour orders made between 1 April 1999 and 31 March 2001 by age group and police force area within England

		Number made from 1 June 2000 to 31 March 2001[1]				
Police force area	*Number made from 1 April 1999 to 31 May 2000*[2]	*Age 10–17*	*Age 18+*	*Age unknown*	*Total*	*Total made from 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2001*
Avon and Somerset	9	2	2	—	4	13
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	5	—	—	—	—	5
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	1	3	—	—	3	4
Cumbria	1	—	—	—	—	1
Derbyshire	3	1	7	—	8	11
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	—	2	3
Dorset	—	2	—	—	2	2
Durham	—	3	2	1	6	6
Essex	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	1	—	—	1	1
Greater Manchester	10	1	2	—	3	13
Hampshire	1	—	—	—	—	1
Hertfordshire	1	—	4	—	4	5
Humberside	—	2	7	1	10	10
Kent	—	9	1	—	10	10
Lancashire	5	2	5	—	7	12
Leicestershire	1	—	—	—	—	1
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	8	—	—	—	—	8
Metropolitan Police Service[3]	9	4	7	1	12	21
Norfolk	6	3	1	—	4	10
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	8	2	2	—	4	12
North Yorkshire	4	—	—	—	—	4
Nottinghamshire	1	3	1	—	4	5
South Yorkshire	3	—	1	—	1	4
Staffordshire	—	—	2	—	2	2
Suffolk	3	—	—	—	—	3

Antisocial behaviour orders made between 1 April 1999 and 31 March 2001 by age group and police force area within England

Police force area	Number made from 1 April 1999 to 31 May 2000[2]	Number made from 1 June 2000 to 31 March 2001[1]				Total made from 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2001
		Age 10–17	Age 18+	Age unknown	Total	
Surrey	—	—	1	—	1	1
Sussex	3	1	—	—	1	4
Thames Valley	1	—	—	—	—	1
Warwickshire	—	—	1	—	1	1
West Mercia	5	2	5	—	7	12
West Midlands	11	6	1	—	7	18
West Yorkshire	4	4	1	—	5	9
Wiltshire	—	1	—	—	—	—
England	104	52	54	3	109	213

[1] Data collected centrally from Magistrates Courts Committees as from 1 June 2000 onwards
[2] Based on data collected from ACPO and GLA trawls covering period 1 April 1999 to 31 May 2000. Information on the age of recipients not available.
[3] Includes City of London

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the implementation of antisocial behaviour orders; and what the key obstacles are to proceeding with the necessary court action. [4981]

Mr. Denham: On 15 October 1999 the previous Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), wrote to the chief executive of each local authority asking what could be learned from their experiences in using antisocial behaviour orders and the other measures in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for combating unruly behaviour, and whether any good practice could be shared. As a result of the representations received a key issue for further guidance appeared to be better local inter-agency co-ordination.

The Home Office and the Local Government Association jointly held 10 regional seminars in March and April last year to help spread good practice in using antisocial behaviour orders. The seminars also served as a consultation exercise for the issue of a model agreement, or protocol, for effective local co-operation in tackling antisocial behaviour. This guidance was launched in June last year. Both the guidance and the seminars were well received, and indicated a widespread willingness to use antisocial behaviour orders.

We are currently conducting a comprehensive review of these orders, now that they have been two years in operation, to evaluate their effectiveness in dealing with antisocial behaviour and to identify best practice in how the legislation is being used. We expect the review to be completed later this year and we will consider the report carefully.

Black Police Association

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he and his predecessor last met representatives of the Black Police Association. [4349]

Mr. Blunkett: I plan to meet representatives of the National Black Police Association in the autumn. My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), last met representatives of the National Black Police Association briefly on 24 January 2001. His ministerial colleague, Lord Bassam, also met them substantively on his behalf, the same day.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has *(a)* received a copy and *(b)* received advice from Sir David O'Dowd on the letter dated 7 June from the Chair of the Black Police Association. [4348]

Mr. Denham: The letter dated 7 June from the Chair of the National Black Police Association was to the Permanent Secretary for the Home Department, copied to Sir David O'Dowd. I have now seen a copy of the letter. I have not received any advice on it from Sir David O'Dowd.

Police Service (Employment Claims)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers of police and civil staff of police services who have employment claims of unfair racial treatment outstanding. [4350]

Mr. Denham: This information is not held centrally although the Association of Chief Police Officers is currently gathering figures on employment claims, which will include the type of claim and ethnicity of claimant. It is for employment tribunals to decide the claims which are brought before them, and for Chief Constables to take whatever management action they consider appropriate in the light of the outcomes.

Metropolitan Police (Racism)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will invite the Commission for Racial Equality to examine whether the Metropolitan police is free of racism. [4357]

Mr. Denham: There are no plans to invite the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to undertake a formal investigation of the Metropolitan police at this time.

The CRE already works jointly in a number of areas with the police service both at a national level and with individual forces, including the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), to pursue the ministerial aim of

> "increasing trust and confidence in policing among minority ethnic communities".

The MPS is currently implementing a number of initiatives both to improve the service which it provides to the minority ethnic communities which it serves, and

to improve the way in which it treats its own officers from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although there is some way still to go, the signs are that the position is improving.

The MPS, in common with other police forces, will be covered by the provisions of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Operation Antler

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Operation Antler inquiry by Wiltshire police into experiments on service volunteers at Porton Down. [4588]

Mr. Denham: The Operation Antler inquiry is a continuing criminal investigation. Wiltshire police are in the process of interviewing a number of former Porton Down scientists and medical staff who were involved in conducting trials and experiments upon service personnel who attended Porton Down as part of the Service Volunteer Programme between 1939 and 1989. Wiltshire police will send comprehensive reports to the Crown Prosecution Service when these are completed.

As part of the inquiry, Wiltshire police have forwarded a report on the death of the serviceman Ronald Maddison to Her Majesty's Coroner for Wiltshire. The Coroner is in the process of seeking authority from the Attorney-General under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 to make an application to the High Court of Justice for an Order to have the original verdict of misadventure quashed and for a fresh inquest to be held.

Belgravia Police Station

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers, of sergeant rank and below were stationed at Belgravia police station, London in each year from 1996 to 2000; and what the numbers will be over the next three years. [4589]

Mr. Denham: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has provided the information which is set out in the table. Belgravia is part of the City of Westminster Division. It is not possible to indicate what these will be for the next three years.

Police numbers—Belgravia police station

	1996[1]	*1997*[1]	*1998*[1]	*1999*[1]	*2000*[1]	*2001*[2]
Sergeants	43	43	45.5	43.5	41	42
Constables	248.6	247.7	244.8	228.3	208.8	194
Total	291.6	290.7	290.3	271.8	249.8	236

[1] At the end of December
[2] June

Leave to Remain

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people *(a)* with exceptional leave to remain status and *(b)* whose exceptional leave to remain status has expired are awaiting a decision on an indefinite leave to remain application; [4744]

(2) what the average time is between applying for indefinite leave to remain following an earlier ELR decision and receiving a decision. [4745]

Angela Eagle: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Generally, the Immigration and Nationality Directorate has set targets in its Business Plan for 2001–02 of deciding 70 per cent. of non-asylum applications within three weeks. These targets are currently being met.

Asylum Seekers (Heathrow)

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what the estimated cost is of the construction of the proposed second detention centre for asylum seekers at Heathrow Airport; [4741]

(2) when he took the decision to construct a further detention centre for asylum seekers at Heathrow Airport; [4743]

(3) how many places for asylum seekers the planned detention centre at Heathrow Airport will contain; [4740]

(4) if he will make a statement on the plans for the construction of a further detention centre for asylum seekers at Heathrow Airport. [4742]

Angela Eagle: In addition to the new 550 bed immigration detention centre at Harmondsworth due to open next month the opportunities to provide up to a further 300 detention places on the remainder of the site is one of the options which we are currently considering as part of our plans to expand the detention estate.

The total cost of construction and the management and operation of the 550 bed centre under an eight year contract is about £180 million. The estimated costs for the option to provide up to a further 300 places will not be available until the completion of a feasibility study and appraisal is complete in the Autumn.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are being held in each prison in England and Wales. [4751]

Angela Eagle: The most recent information, relating to the number of persons detained under Immigration Act powers for each prison in England and Wales is given in the table. It is only possible to say how many of these had claimed asylum by examining individual case files at disproportionate cost. We have made it clear that the use of local prisons providing temporary spaces will end as soon as practicable.

Persons recorded as being held solely under Immigration Act powers as at 31 May 2001, in prison establishments in England and Wales[1]

Location	*Detainees*
Bedford	5
Belmarsh	48
Birmingham	4
Blakenhurst	6
Bristol	3
Brixton	20
Bullingdon	6
Canterbury	3
Cardiff	52
Chelmsford	7
Doncaster	13
Dorchester	2
Durham	2

Persons recorded as being held solely under Immigration Act powers as at 31 May 2001, in prison establishments in England and Wales[1]

Location	*Detainees*
Elmley	6
Feltham	10
Forest Bank	7
Glen Parva	3
Haslar	151
High Down	66
Holloway	35
Holme House	49
Leeds	10
Lewes	3
Lindholme	94
Liverpool	104
Manchester	6
Norwich	5
Pentonville	7
Rochester	183
Styal	3
Wandsworth	50
Winchester	39
Woodhill	2
Wormwood Scrubs	70
Other prison establishments	7
Total	1,081

[1] The figures for prison establishments may include some persons detained under dual immigration and other powers.
Source:
England and Wales data from the Offenders and Corrections Unit (RDS)

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reform the asylum dispersal system. [5785]

Angela Eagle: The dispersal arrangements are kept under review.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what date he will have established a full timetable for ending the use of prisons for detaining asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement. [5121]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The Government remain committed to its long-term strategy of reducing the use of prison accommodation to hold immigration detainees. However, even in the long-term, for reasons of geography, security and control, there may continue to be a need to hold small numbers of detainees in exceptional circumstances in prisons.

The temporary use of 500 additional places made available by the Prison Service in a number of local prisons will be reviewed during the next few months. The timing of the withdrawal of immigration detainees from these prison places will be the subject of discussions with the Prison Service. We have made it clear that Her Majesty's Prison Cardiff will cease to be used to hold immigration detainees by Christmas and that the use of the other local prisons providing temporary spaces will end as soon as practicable.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons hold asylum seekers; and in each case, how many and since which month. [5191]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The most recent information, relating to the number of persons detained under Immigration Act powers in each prison, is given in the table. Further information on what proportion of these persons have claimed asylum and how long they have been detained is not held centrally, and could be obtained only by examining individual case files at disproportionate cost. We have made clear that the use of local prisons providing temporary spaces will end as soon as practicable.

Persons recorded as being in detention in the United Kingdom solely under Immigration Act powers as at 31 May 2001, in prison service establishments[1]

Location	*Total detainees*
Bedford	5
Belmarsh	48
Birmingham	4
Blakenhurst	6
Bristol	3
Brixton	20
Bullingdon	6
Canterbury	3
Cardiff	52
Chelmsford	7
Cornton Vale	3
Craiginches	4
Doncaster	13
Dorchester	2
Durham	2
Elmley	6
Feltham	10
Forest Bank	7
Gateside	40
Glen Parva	3
Haslar	151
High Down	66
Holloway	35
Holme House	49
Leeds	10
Lewes	3
Lindholme	94
Liverpool	104
Maghabberry	4
Magilligan	12
Manchester	6
Norwich	5
Pentonville	7
Rochester	183
Styal	3
Wandsworth	50
Winchester	39
Woodhill	2
Wormwood Scrubs	70
Other prison establishments	7
Total	1,144

[1] The figures for prison establishments may include some persons detained under dual immigration and other powers.
Source:
England and Wales data from the Offenders and Corrections Unit (RDS), and Scotland and NI data from IS Glasgow.

Sir Brian Mawhinney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average weekly accommodation cost is being paid through NASS and other agencies, to accommodate *(a)* refugees and *(b)* asylum seekers who have settled in Peterborough in the past 12 months. [5933]

Angela Eagle: The information is:

(a) Those granted refugee status become eligible for mainstream benefits, including Housing Benefit, and separate records of the accommodation costs and addresses of former asylum seekers are not held.

(b) The accommodation costs of destitute asylum seekers may be met in one of three ways:

(i) Directly by the National Asylum Support Service.

(ii) By local authorities under the interim arrangements.

(iii) By Housing Benefit for those entitled to mainstream benefits.

In the financial year ended 31 March 2001 the National Asylum Support Service provided support to single adults at an average cost of £134 per week and to families at an average cost of £294 per week. These figures include the cost of accommodation, vouchers and travel.

For the 2000–2001 financial year Peterborough was able to claim grant from the Home Office of up to £240 per week for each family supported under the interim arrangements and £140 for each single adult. These figures include accommodation costs.

The Home Office reimburses the Department for Social Security for Housing Benefit payments made to asylum seekers and in 2000–2001 the amount paid by the Home Office was £20 million.

Sir Brian Mawhinney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* refugees and *(b)* asylum seekers have settled in Peterborough in the last 12 months; and at what cost to public funds. [5934]

Angela Eagle: The information is:

(a) Individuals granted refugee status are free to choose where they settle and the Home Office does not keep details of the addresses of refugees.

(b) Numbers of asylum seekers allocated support by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) are only available at the regional level.

NASS commenced operations on 3 April 2000 and as at the end of May 2001, 220[1] asylum seekers (including dependants) were allocated accommodation by NASS in the East of England region (of which Peterborough is a part). A further 1,060[1] asylum seekers (including dependants) allocated voucher only support were staying in this region.

The average weekly cost of NASS support in 2000–2001 was £134 per single adult and £294 per family.

Peterborough city council are responsible for the support of asylum seekers who claimed asylum prior to 14 August 2000 and for asylum seekers who lost their entitlement to social security benefits as a result of a first negative decision before 25 September 2000. During 2000–2001 Peterborough city council provided 3,436 weeks of support to single adults and 1,458 weeks of support to families. It is not known how many of these support weeks were provided to asylum seekers who arrived during the last 12 months. The grant claimed by Peterborough city council for providing this support was £789,740.

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 10.

Sir Brian Mawhinney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much central Government grant has been given to (i) the Peterborough city council and (ii) other public bodies, indicating the bodies concerned, to cover the cost of *(a)* refugees and *(b)* asylum seekers who have settled in Peterborough in the past 12 months. [5932]

Angela Eagle: Peterborough city council has claimed grant of £789,740 from the Home Office to cover the costs of supporting asylum-seeking adults and families under the interim arrangements in 2000–2001. Of this, £579,224 has been paid and a balance of £210, 516 is due to be paid shortly.

In addition the East of England Consortium, a consortium of local authorities in the region including Peterborough city council, was paid a grant of £100,000 in 2000–2001. The purpose of the grant is to aid the regional consortia to carry out their enabling role. This role involves the development of structures and mechanisms to ensure robust partnership through effective joint working across the public, statutory, independent, voluntary and private sectors.

The Home Office also provides funding to the Refugee Council Regional Development Team, including a grant of around £40,000 to establish a specific post of regional development adviser for the East of England region, which includes Peterborough.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the cost of the asylum voucher system; and if he will make a statement. [5906]

Angela Eagle: Vouchers were introduced on 3 April 2000 when the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) became responsible for providing support to destitute asylum seekers.

The total face value of vouchers issued in the financial year ending 31 March 2001 was £26.1 million.

Total staffing and related administrative costs of the NASS for the same period, including the costs of processing application forms, allocating accommodation and administering the voucher scheme, were £15.6 million. Vouchers are printed and distributed by third party providers under contract to the Home Office and payments made under the voucher contract are included in the administrative costs of the NASS. Details of payments made under the voucher contract are commercially confidential.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete the review of the voucher system for asylum seekers. [5911]

Angela Eagle: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 339W.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is his policy to introduce a quota for the number of asylum seekers accepted into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [5673]

Angela Eagle: There are no plans to introduce a quota for the number of asylum seekers accepted into the United Kingdom.

Family Visitor Visa

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the reasons for the fall in the number of family visitor visa appeals. [4749]

Angela Eagle: Statistics from the Immigration Appellate Authority show that the number of family visitor appeals is rising. So far this year, the Authority's intake breaks down as follows:

January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*
117	134	281	210	372	513

We attribute the rising figures to the fact that it was likely to take some months for appellants to develop confidence in the scheme, and to seasonal factors.

Police Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the total cost of paying police pensions was in each of the last five years; and what proportion of that cost was met by *(a)* contributions and *(b)* Treasury subvention. [4811]

Mr. Denham: The total cost of paying police pensions for each of the last five years is set out in the table. Police officers pay pension contributions of 11 per cent. of salary at present. The pension scheme is operated on 'pay-as-you-go' terms. Officers' contributions comprise about 26 per cent. of the gross cost of pensions paid each year.

The balance of cost is met from each police authority's police account. This is funded mainly from central grants and council tax precepts.

£000

Year	*Net pensions expenditure*
1996–97	749,003
1997–98	874,897
1998–99	900,643
1999–2000	948,000
2000–01	1,029,454

Source:
The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Actuals 1996–97 to 1999–2000 and Estimates for 2000/01

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reform police pension arrangements; and if he will make a statement. [5779]

Mr. Denham: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for North-East Hertfordshire (Mr. Heald) on 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 48W.

Mr. Stinchcombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Prison Service will introduce a key performance indicator on reducing reoffending rates; and if he will make a statement. [4842]

Beverley Hughes: The Prison Service is committed to reducing the rates of reoffending by prisoners on release. Because data on reoffending rates rely on self-reporting by offenders, reconviction rates are the best proxy measure. The Home Office published a new Public Service Agreement on 3 November 2000 which sets a joint target for the Prison and Probation Services to reduce by 2004 the rate of reconvictions of all offenders punished by imprisonment or by community supervision by 5 per cent. compared to the predicted rate. Because the reconviction data do not become available for over two years after the offender's release, the Key Performance Indicators for the Prison Service (the management tool for delivering this target) are based on delivering the annual outputs (educational qualifications, accredited offending behaviour programmes, and reducing drug use) which evidence shows will reduce the level of reconvictions.

Prisons

Mr. Stinchcombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were studying for degree courses in 2000–01. [4841]

Beverley Hughes: All degree courses for prisoners are run by the Open University through a joint scheme which is managed by the Prisoners Learning and Skills Unit in the Department for Education and Skills. The total figure in June 2001 was 407.

Mr. Stinchcombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons have a telephone system which is operated by a remote call centre. [4834]

Beverley Hughes: There are no establishments which operate in this way.

Mr. Stinchcombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are held in prison establishments *(a)* over 25 miles, *(b)* over 50 miles, *(c)* over 100 miles and *(d)* over 150 miles from their committal court town. [4844]

Beverley Hughes: The following information is based on the distance that prisoners are held from their committal court town. The data were collected on 10 April 2001 and are set out in the table in the nearest format to that requested. There are in the region of 25,000 prisoners held under 25 miles from their committal court town.

Distance from committal court	*Number of prisoners*[1]
Between 25 and 50 miles	15,000
Between 50 and 100 miles	15,000
Between 100 and 150 miles	6,000
Over 150 miles	5,000
Total over 25 miles	41,000

[1] Rounded to nearest thousand

Mr. Stinchcombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown for each prison of positive mandatory drug tests in 2000–01 by type of drug. [4845]

Beverley Hughes: Information on the results of the random mandatory drug testing programme is shown in the table. The information includes the four most frequently encountered drug groups: cannabis, opiates, cocaine and benzodiazepines. Also included is information on numbers of prisoners tested and positive results for all drugs.

Random mandatory drug testing figures 2000–01

Establishment name	*Number positive*	*Percentage positive*	*Percentage positive cannabis*	*Percentage positive opiates*	*Percentage positive cocaine*	*Percentage positive benzodiazepines*
Altcourse	81	8.1	3.7	3.9	0.6	1.1
Askham Grange	9	6.2	1.4	4.1	0.7	0.0
Acklington	92	14.3	2.8	6.5	0.2	0.6
Albany	2	0.7	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
Ashfield	71	16.4	15.0	1.2	0.2	1.8
Ashwell	51	19.7	13.9	8.1	0.4	0.0
Aylesbury	30	13.0	11.7	0.4	0.0	0.0
Belmarsh	72	9.9	5.3	4.0	0.1	1.1
Buckley Hall	96	22.2	15.7	7.4	0.2	0.5
Blundeston	14	5.6	1.2	4.0	0.0	0.4
Bedford	77	16.3	8.1	6.8	0.2	4.4
Blantyre House	2	1.5	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.0
Brockhill	25	15.2	4.2	6.1	0.6	6.1
Bristol	43	15.9	7.4	3.3	0.4	8.1
Birmingham	105	17.3	8.9	9.5	0.3	0.5
Bullingdon	68	12.8	9.2	3.2	0.0	2.3
Brinsford	77	20.8	19.7	1.3	0.3	0.0
Blakenhurst	174	30.0	17.9	11.4	0.3	0.2
Bullwood Hall	16	13.0	2.4	4.1	0.8	6.5
Brixton	104	16.0	7.2	5.7	1.2	5.4
Chelmsford	43	16.9	11.4	3.5	0.4	6.7
Cardiff	81	25.1	22.0	3.1	0.0	5.3
Camp Hill	40	13.6	9.2	6.8	0.0	0.3
Cookham Wood	3	1.8	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0
Coldingley	31	8.1	6.5	1.6	0.0	0.0
Castington	48	15.7	13.7	1.0	0.0	0.3
Channings Wood	30	8.1	5.9	3.0	0.3	0.0
Canterbury	46	14.7	11.5	4.5	0.0	1.6
Dartmoor	15	4.0	2.7	1.6	0.0	0.0
Drake Hall	15	7.1	4.3	2.4	0.0	1.0
Durham	81	15.5	6.5	4.4	0.4	2.9
Doncaster	94	7.2	2.5	4.6	0.1	0.4
Dorchester	32	15.2	10.4	8.1	0.0	0.5
Deerbolt	25	9.1	6.5	1.1	0.0	0.7
Dover	52	15.2	14.9	0.3	0.0	0.0
Down View	16	3.7	1.4	2.3	0.2	0.0
Erlestoke	67	18.6	13.6	6.1	0.8	0.3
Standford Hill	37	8.0	7.3	0.9	0.2	0.0
Eastwood Park	31	15.0	2.9	6.8	0.0	3.9
East Sutton Park	4	3.8	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Everthorpe	71	25.1	20.1	5.7	0.0	0.4
Exeter	38	15.1	9.5	6.7	0.0	3.2
Elmley	49	8.2	4.7	3.9	0.2	0.2
Forestbank	187	22.7	15.3	8.7	0.0	1.9
Ford	25	5.8	4.7	1.6	0.2	0.2
Foston Hall	10	4.6	0.5	4.1	0.0	0.0
Frankland	42	8.3	1.8	5.9	0.4	0.2
Feltham	84	18.9	18.4	0.4	0.0	0.4
Full Sutton	29	4.2	1.2	2.3	0.0	0.6
Featherstone	121	34.0	22.2	17.7	0.3	0.6
Garth	53	14.0	4.5	9.5	0.3	0.0
Gloucester	48	14.1	10.6	3.8	0.0	0.3
Guys Marsh	64	20.3	17.4	4.7	0.3	0.5
Grendon	4	4.0	2.0	1.0	0.0	2.0
Glen Parva	56	12.0	10.9	1.1	0.0	0.2
Gartree	21	5.3	2.8	2.5	0.0	0.5
Hollesley	54	15.1	14.6	1.7	0.0	0.6
Huntercombe	48	15.1	15.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hatfield	18	10.6	8.2	1.8	0.6	0.0
Hewell Grange	32	15.5	13.1	4.9	1.5	0.5
Holme House	61	11.5	4.0	5.1	0.4	0.8
Hindley	37	14.3	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hull	36	11.1	6.8	4.3	0.0	1.2
High Down	66	15.7	6.2	7.9	0.0	5.7
High Point	34	10.8	5.4	4.1	0.0	2.2
Haslar	4	2.4	0.6	1.8	0.0	0.0
Haverigg	58	15.3	8.7	6.8	0.5	1.1
Holloway	50	16.4	1.0	3.6	2.0	12.5
Kirkham	54	21.0	15.2	10.1	0.4	0.0
Kirklevington	10	4.9	0.5	2.5	1.0	0.0
Lancaster	21	11.1	5.8	5.8	0.0	1.1

Random mandatory drug testing figures 2000–01

Establishment name	*Number positive*	*Percentage positive*	*Percentage positive cannabis*	*Percentage positive opiates*	*Percentage positive cocaine*	*Percentage positive benzodiazepines*
Leicester	109	26.1	16.5	8.9	0.0	5.0
Leeds	91	13.1	5.2	7.8	0.0	1.6
Lancaster Farms	31	5.2	5.0	0.2	0.0	0.7
Lowdham Grange	66	10.9	5.5	5.8	0.2	0.0
Lindholme	61	20.3	13.0	7.7	0.3	0.7
Lincoln	77	14.2	8.8	5.9	0.2	1.1
Long Lartin	39	7.2	1.1	6.3	0.0	0.0
Latchmere House	18	7.9	1.3	3.9	3.1	0.0
Low Newton	39	14.1	2.5	11.2	0.0	1.8
Liverpool	122	13.3	6.4	7.5	0.3	0.4
Littlehey	43	12.9	7.2	6.6	0.6	0.9
Lewes	57	20.4	16.1	6.5	0.0	0.0
Leyhill	31	13.4	10.4	3.9	0.0	0.4
Moorland	33	3.6	2.3	1.4	0.0	0.0
Morton Hall	16	16.3	13.3	1.0	1.0	0.0
Manchester	101	15.7	7.9	6.7	0.5	2.2
Maidstone	35	8.9	7.3	2.5	0.5	0.0
Mount	49	19.4	10.7	10.7	0.8	0.8
New Hall	23	5.4	1.4	2.8	0.2	0.9
Nottingham	86	20.5	13.8	7.4	0.5	1.0
Northallerton	27	10.1	6.7	2.2	0.0	0.7
North Sea Camp	46	20.6	17.9	4.9	0.9	0.9
Norwich	98	24.0	14.7	6.6	0.0	8.6
Onley	6	2.0	1.7	0.0	0.3	0.0
Parc	41	9.8	8.9	0.5	0.2	0.5
Portland	8	4.8	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.6
Parkhurst	10	3.7	1.1	2.2	0.0	0.4
Preston	60	17.1	10.0	8.9	0.0	1.7
Kingston	23	11.9	8.8	4.1	0.0	0.0
Pentonville	126	20.1	12.7	6.7	1	2.4
Rochester	11	2.3	1.9	0.4	0.0	0.4
Reading	38	16.6	15.3	0.9	0.0	1.3
Rye Hill	—	—	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ranby	81	10.3	5.9	4.5	0.1	0.2
Risley	55	12.7	5.8	7.6	0.0	0.2
Send	16	8.9	5.0	2.8	0.0	1.7
Stafford	65	18.7	6.0	13.8	0.0	1.4
Stoke Heath	18	5.7	4.7	0.3	0.3	0.3
Stocken	57	17.2	6.0	12.4	0.0	0.0
Swaleside	67	13.6	8.3	6.3	0.2	1.0
Shepton Mallet	22	13.2	7.8	7.2	0.0	0.0
Swinfen Hall	9	2.4	1.6	0.5	0.0	0.0
Spring Hill	10	6.7	4.0	1.3	1.3	0.0
Styal	37	19.7	4.8	13.8	0.0	0.0
Sudbury	36	11.9	8.6	5.3	0.0	0.7
Swansea	78	22.8	16.4	1.8	0.0	8.8
Shrewsbury	35	9.2	5.5	3.4	0.5	1.1
Thorn Cross	28	10.3	8.9	1.1	0.0	0.0
Usk/Prescoed	7	1.9	0.8	1.1	0.0	0.3
Verne	22	4.5	2.6	1.2	0.0	0.2
Weare	52	13.7	6.6	8.2	0.3	0.0
Wellingborough	57	18.9	11.6	8.6	0.7	0.3
Winchester	89	24.6	16.9	6.9	0.0	8.6
Wakefield	13	2.6	1.4	0.6	0.0	0.4
Wealstun	66	18.3	13.3	6.1	0.6	0.3
Woodhill	55	14.1	5.1	6.2	0.0	5.4
Wayland	27	6.9	2.8	4.3	0.3	0.0
Wymott	46	9.2	4.8	5.2	0.0	0.0
Werrington	3	3.1	2.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
Wolds	39	7.9	5.5	2.6	0.0	1.2
Whitemoor	19	7.7	2.0	5.2	0.4	0.8
Wormwood Scrubs	69	21.8	14.2	7.3	0.0	4.7
Whatton	6	2.0	0.7	1.3	0.0	0.0
Wandsworth	59	6.8	3.9	2.7	0.1	0.5
Wetherby	24	7.1	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Totals and averages	6,383	12.4	7.6	4.5	0.2	1.3

Mr. Stinchcombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish for each prison the results achieved by the Prison Service on each of its key performance indicators during 2000–01. [4847]

Beverley Hughes: The final Key Performance Indicators (KPI) result achieved by each prison is given in the tables which have been placed in the Library. The overcrowding and education KPIs are formulated in terms of overall Prison Service results and are not applicable to individual prisons. Private prisons are not required to submit sickness data.

Figures for cost per place reflect establishment costs only and do not include Headquarters overheads. These figures are not comparable with the Prison Service cost per place KPI. Cost per place figures for private prisons include an element of capital repayment and are therefore not comparable with the public sector.

Her Majesty's Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts 2000–01 (HC29) contains the service's overall performance and will be published shortly.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if every prison in England and Wales has a probation service operating within the prison; and if he will make a statement. [4786]

Beverley Hughes: Central records are not kept of the numbers of probation staff seconded to prisons. The last relevant census took place in October 1999 and confirmed that seconded probation staff operated in all prisons.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the longest period of time was an *(a)* male and *(b)* female prison inmate has been held in a segregation unit in a prison in England and Wales. [4785]

Beverley Hughes: As this information will take more time to collect than that allowed for an answer to a parliamentary question, I will write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of uniformed prison officers from ethnic minority communities are working in prisons in England and Wales. [4787]

Beverley Hughes: The percentage of uniformed officers working in prisons in the Prison Service from minority ethnic communities is shown in the table.

	30 June 2001		*Percentage*
	Total staff	*Minority ethnic staff*	*minority ethnic*
Prison officers	18,465	543	2.94
Senior officers	3,773	65	1.72
Principal officers	1,239	15	1.21
Total	23,477	623	2.59

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vacancies for prison officers there are at each grade at Wandsworth prison. [4884]

Beverley Hughes: As at 17 July, there were 33 prison officer vacancies and five senior officer vacancies at Wandsworth. There were no vacancies at principal officer level. Despite several local recruitment campaigns, Wandsworth prison has not yet been successful in combating shortfalls in prison officer grades. This is due to the cost of living in London and competition from other employers. The Prison Service has recently introduced a local pay scheme to help attract staff. Under this scheme, Wandsworth attracts the current maximum local pay addition of £3,000.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his estimate is of the number of people serving a prison sentence who suffer from mental illness; and if he will make a statement. [4883]

Beverley Hughes: A survey of mental ill health in the prison population of England and Wales, undertaken in 1997 by the Office for National Statistics, showed that some 10 per cent. of sentenced women and 7 per cent. of sentenced men had a functional psychosis. Some 63 per cent. of sentenced women and 40 per cent. of sentenced men had a neurotic disorder.

Applying these rates to the current population would indicate that around 3,800 sentenced prisoners would be suffering from a functional psychosis and around 22,000 from a neurotic disorder. Some prisoners will have both conditions.

ADT *v.* UK

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to comply with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of ADT *v.* UK. [4887]

Mr. Keith Bradley: The Government are committed to ending discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. The law relating to homosexual offences is under review as part of the Sex Offences Review.

The review's report 'Setting the Boundaries' recommends that the present offences of buggery and gross indecency should be repealed, with separate provision made for the protection of children and for regulating sexual behaviour in public. Officials are now assessing the responses received to the consultation on the report and will advise Ministers in due course with a view to legislation when parliamentary time allows.

999 Call Service

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his assessment of the operational effectiveness of the Lancashire Constabulary's 999 emergency call service. [4511]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* Responsibility for answering 999 calls to Lancashire Constabulary is an operational matter and the responsibility of the Chief Constable.

Lancashire Constabulary's local target is to answer 90 per cent. of 999 calls within 10 seconds. The Constabulary has informed me that, for the financial year 2000–01, they answered 86.3 per cent. of 999 calls within 10 seconds.

Police Numbers (North Yorkshire)

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on police numbers in north Yorkshire. [5273]

Mr. Denham: On 31 March 2001 the North Yorkshire Constabulary had 1,305 police officers. This is 22 more officers than the force had on 31 March 2000.

North Yorkshire police has been allocated a total of 68 additional recruits under the Crime Fighting Fund (CFF), over and above their existing recruitment plans for the three years to March 2003.

In the first year of the Crime Fighting Fund (CFF) the force recruited four of their CFF allocation. Based on the latest information provided by the force, North Yorkshire Constabulary expects to recruit all of their second year CFF allocation of 39 in 2001–02. The force has been allocated a further 25 CFF recruits in 2002–03.

Operation Napkin

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reports he has received from Gloucester Constabulary on the success of Operation Napkin. [5338]

Mr. Denham: None. I am informed by the Chief Constable that the operation has been successful in reducing racist incidents in Gloucester.

Police Practice (Mentally Ill People)

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what review he is undertaking of police practice in relation to mentally ill individuals; and if he will make a statement. [5313]

Mr. Denham: There is no general review under way, but there are currently several strands of work focused on improving police practice in relation to mentally ill individuals. The Home Office, the Department of Health and the Association of Chief Police Officers are considering the development of national protocols covering the interaction between the police and health services in dealing with the mentally ill. The current review of the police Codes of Practice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 is seeking to strengthen further protections for mentally ill detainees, particularly in terms of assessing their vulnerabilities and fitness for interview. In addition, the review of the Mental Health Act which is under way is looking to increase the emphasis on using hospitals rather than police stations as places of safety for assessing mental condition.

More needs to be done to ensure an appropriate and properly informed response to mentally ill individuals across the whole range of circumstances in which they deal with them. This recognition is increasingly reflected in improvements to police training, operational practice and working relationships with psychiatric and other health services.

Police (Wandsworth)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officer vacancies there are in each rank in the London borough of Wandsworth. [4886]

Mr. Denham: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the Wandsworth Division had three Inspector, 10.5 Sergeant and 38 Constable vacancies at the end of June. There were no vacancies in the ranks of Chief Superintendent, Superintendent and Chief Inspector. Most of the vacancies are due to the increase in the Budgeted Workforce Total for the Wandsworth Division on 1 April 2001.

The Wandsworth Division has a Budgeted Workforce Total for 2001–02 of 586, which is 31 more than it had in 2000–01. The Commissioner's aim is to fill all vacancies by 31 March 2002.

Offenders (Referral Orders)

Vera Baird: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the referral orders for first-time offenders introduced by the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 will be rolled out nationally; and when they will be available in Redcar. [5069]

Beverley Hughes: On 21 March 2001, the then Home Secretary announced plans for referral orders to be rolled out across England and Wales on 1 April 2002.

Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme

Vera Baird: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will extend the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme pilot schemes to include Redcar. [5067]

Beverley Hughes: The first phase of the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP), funded by the Home Office and managed by the Youth Justice Board, is being implemented in 22 Youth Offending Team areas from 17 July. The second phase, due to start from October, includes an ISSP scheme for the Tees Valley. This covers Darlington, Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees and South Tees including Redcar.

Firearms Legislation

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report of the Firearms Consultative Committee on detailed implications of changes to firearms legislation in response to the use of BB and other replica guns in public; and if he will make a statement. [4988]

Mr. Denham: The Firearms Consultative Committee (FCC) has concluded its discussions on controls over imitation and replica firearms and the Chairman will be writing to me shortly with the Committee's recommendations. The Government share the public concerns about the display of imitation and replica firearms in public, particularly as a result of the events in South London this week, and will consider the FCC's advice urgently.

Correspondence

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to a letter from the hon. Member for Woking dated 11 May, ref. S1058709, regarding Mohammed Sfenjeh. [4919]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I wrote to the hon. Member on 6 June 2001.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for West Chelmsford of 23 April concerning his constituent Mr. M. Turner of Great Leighs, Chelmsford. [4998]

Angela Eagle *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I understand that my noble Friend Lord Rooker wrote to the hon. Member about this matter on 19 July 2001.

Sir Brian Mawhinney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the right hon. Member for North-West Cambridgeshire will receive a reply to his letter of 30 May on behalf of his constituent Mrs. Murray. [5935]

Angela Eagle: I wrote to the right hon. Member on 20 July.

Police Authorities

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) who is responsible for the allocation of places between appointing authorities to police authorities to ensure political proportionality of local authority members; [5096]

(2) what rules underpin the appointment of local authority members to police authorities covering more than one county to ensure political proportionality; [5095]

(3) how the rules governing political proportionality of local authority appointees to police authorities apply to the number of *(a)* appointees of each political party from each appointing authority and *(b)* councillors of each party in the police authority's area, in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Police Authority; and how they applied before 7 June. [5097]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The procedures for the appointment of members of police authorities by relevant councils are set out in schedule 2 of the Police Act 1996, as amended by section 105 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001.

In the case of a police authority, such as Hampshire, where there is more than one relevant council, councillor members are appointed to the police authority by a joint committee appointed by the relevant councils from among their own members.

The number of members of the joint committee and the numbers appointed by each relevant council is for agreement by the relevant councils or, in the absence of an agreement, as may be determined by the Secretary of State.

Section 105 of the Police and Criminal Justice Act 2001, which came into effect on 19 June 2001, clarifies the question of political balance on police authorities. It requires councils, or joint committees, to ensure that, so far as practicable, the proportion of members from any political party appointed to the police authority is the same as the proportion of those members on the council, or relevant councils taken as a whole. Any other places on the police authority must then be allocated to councillors who are not members of a political party.

Electronic Services (Departmental Targets)

Brian White: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made to meet his Department's targets to provide services electronically. [5418]

Mr. Blunkett: In accordance with guidelines of the Office of the e-Envoy, and in line with other Departments, my Department has published its initial e-Business Strategy on the internet. Appendix A (service map) lists Home Office services and progress towards e-enablement.

The body of the strategy can be found at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ebusiness/stratmain.pdf. The appendices are at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ebusiness/stratapp.pdf

An updated version of the strategy is due to be published in September.

Race Relations

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions there have been for incitement to racial hatred in each of the last five years (i) in each police service area and (ii) in total; and if he will make a statement. [5120]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Police National Computer

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the accuracy of records held on the Police National Computer and its use in relation to issuing new criminal record checks; and if he will make a statement. [5118]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* We have received some representations concerning the accuracy of Police National Computer (PNC) records, most notably those raised by the Home Affairs Committee and the Information Commissioner.

We fully recognise, and share, the concerns that have been expressed about errors and omissions in some of the data, and delays in inputting data onto the PNC. We have been working closely with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO), the Information Commissioner and other concerned parties to tackle these problems. Police forces are now working to a compliance strategy that has been drawn up by ACPO. This sets quantified performance indicators for key aspects of both quality and timeliness, including the prompt inputting of data both in the initial stages of a case and following the conclusion of trial proceedings. There are also agreed programmes to tackle backlogs.

Probation Service

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff, in each grade, were

employed in *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* Humberside, *(c)* Northamptonshire, *(d)* West Yorkshire, *(e)* Merseyside, *(f)* South Western, *(g)* Kent and *(h)* South Wales Probation Service on 31 March; what the average caseload was in each of those services; how many staff were absent for more than four weeks in each service in the year ended 31 March; and if he will make a statement. [5213]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I have assumed that the hon. Gentleman is interested in the National Probation Service. The new areas Greater London and South Wales came into being on 1 April 2001 and the figures shown are totals of the constituent services. For South Western I have added all services in the south-west region. Information is not yet collected centrally on staff absence.

Numbers of staff[1] in post at 31 December 2000

Grade	*Greater London*	*Humberside*	*Northamptonshire*	*West Yorkshire*	*Merseyside*	*[2]South-West*	*Kent*	*South Wales*
CPO	5	1	1	1	1	7	1	3
DCPO	4	—	—	1	1	—	1	—
ACPO	29	5	3	10	6	23	4	9
Area Mgr	14	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
SPO	165	22	12	49	40	89	34	24
Sen pract	22	—	4	10	—	4	7	10
PO	858	119	62	277	214	413	136	144
Trainee	82	9	7	22	24	52	10	19
Reg train	3	—	—	1	5	2	—	3
PSO	255	37	25	212	133	243	101	66
RIO	14	4	2	—	—	9	—	10
Cler/Sec	470	46	14	119	134	162	47	82
Admin	269	31	28	85	39	168	36	16
Other	63	67	3	27	21	78	27	34
Hostels	73	19	10	35	29	69	9	24
All staff	2,325	359	172	853	646	1,318	413	443

[1] Whole-time equivalent
[2] Wiltshire, Avon, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Devon, Cornwall, Dorset

Caseload[1] at 31 December 1999

	Caseload
Greater London	13,124
Humberside	1,616
Northamptonshire	754
West Yorkshire	5,022
Merseyside	3,734
South-West[2]	7,112
Kent	2,045
South-Wales	2,221

[1] Offenders with a criminal court order supervision at 31 December 1999
[2] Wiltshire, Avon, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Devon, Cornwall, Dorset

Criminal Records Bureau

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what his working estimate is of the demand for *(a)* basic, *(b)* standard and *(c)* enhanced disclosures for the first two years of the operation of the Criminal Records Bureau; [4956]

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the Code of Practice for Registered Bodies drawn up by the Criminal Records Bureau; [4958]

(3) what plans he has to amend the law to allow the Criminal Records Bureau access to sources of criminal records now denied to it; [4957]

(4) how many registered bodies have been registered with the Criminal Records Bureau; and how many applications have been received but not yet registered; [4959]

(5) when the Criminal Records Bureau will commence the issue of *(a)* enhanced, *(b)* standard and *(c)* basic disclosures. [4960]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) will phase in the issue of Enhanced and Standard Disclosures later this year, subject to its systems and processes having been proved under test and pilot conditions and shown to be capable of delivering the required level of service to its customers. We intend to commence the issue of Basic Disclosures in the summer of 2002.

It is expected that demand will begin at a relatively low level and build up. Cost and business projections have been based on the following levels of demand during this and the next financial year:

Disclosures	*2001–02*	*2002–03*
Enhanced	925,000	3,200,000
Standard	75,000	300,000
Basic	0	2,800,000

The CRB will rely on the Phoenix database of the Police National Computer (PNC) as its source of criminal records information. The PNC holds details of recordable offences from England and Wales. Scottish records are also routinely copied to PNC. Work is continuing with a view to ensuring that details of convictions in Northern Ireland are also available to the CRB to the extent that is necessary.

The 'Code of Practice for registered persons and other recipients of disclosure information' was published on 26 April 2001, under section 122(1) of the Police Act 1997. The Code was also laid before Parliament in accordance with section 122(2) of the Act. The Code was placed in the Library on 26 April 2001.

On 17 July 2001 the CRB had received 493 applications for registration. We intend that the processing of these applications will begin by the end of July 2001, when the automated system for processing registration applications will be operational.

Police Numbers

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the authorised police establishment was at the end of 1979; what the number of police officers in post was on 1 May 1997 for each police authority in England; and if he will calculate the percentage difference in these figures for each authority. [4921]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The table sets out the police establishment and strength for each force in England for December 1979 and police strength for 31 March 1997. The percentage change is calculated on the difference between the strength figures for 1979 and 1997, rather than between establishment and strength figures as the figures do not compare like with like.

Police numbers for 1979 and 1997—England

Force	*Authorised establishment December 1979*	*Actual strength 31 December 1979*	*Actual strength 31 March 1997*	*Percentage difference in strength*
Avon and Somerset	2,953	2,861	2,988.8	+4.5
Bedfordshire	947	923	1,093.6	+18.5
Cambridgeshire	1,140	1,087	1,302	+19.8
Cheshire	1,805	1,803	2,045.5	+13.4
Cleveland	1,418	1,411	1,459.3	+3.4
Cumbria	1,113	1,072	1,143.5	+6.7
Derbyshire	1,712	1,757	1,790.6	+1.9
Devon and Cornwall	2,673	2,639	2,864.5	+8.5
Dorset	1,164	1,159	1,284	+10.8
Durham	1,349	1,313	1,460.5	+11.2
Essex	2,533	2,503	2,960.7	+18.3
Gloucestershire	1,116	1,099	1,132.6	+3
Greater Manchester	6,766	6,653	6,921.6	+4
Hampshire	3,034	2,945	3,451.7	+17.2
Hertfordshire	1,533	1,466	1,759.1	+20
Humberside	1,939	1,879	2,045	+8.8
Kent	2,842	2,808	3,260.1	+16.1
Lancashire	3,138	3,089	3,247.5	+5.1
Leicestershire	1,706	1,701	1,948.8	+14.6
Lincolnshire	1,182	1,167	1,196.4	+2.5
London, City of	1,022	834	858.9	+3
Merseyside	4,451	4,469	4,230.4	−5.3
Metropolitan Police	26,589	22,528	26,677.3	+18.4
Norfolk	1,265	1,237	1,431.6	+15.7
Northamptonshire	978	926	1,176.7	+27.1
Northumbria	3,325	3,339	3,676.8	+10.1
North Yorkshire	1,368	1,338	1,337.6	[1]—
Nottinghamshire	2,260	2,125	2,323.4	+9.3
South Yorkshire	2,752	2,644	3,158.7	+19.5
Staffordshire	2,066	2,015	2,211.1	+9.7
Suffolk	1,123	1,105	1,179.7	+6.8
Surrey	1,602	1,460	1,619.5	+10.9
Sussex	2,811	2,777	3,084.9	+11.1
Thames Valley	3,005	2,764	3,695	+33.7
Warwickshire	876	883	925.9	+4.9
West Mercia	1,834	1,837	2,040.2	+11.1
West Midlands	6,509	6,160	7,112.7	+15.5
West Yorkshire	5,104	4,799	5,208.8	+8.5
Wiltshire	1,032	1,007	1,154.3	+14.6
Total	112,035	105,582	118,458.6	+12.2

[1] No change

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many serving police officers there are in the London borough of Wandsworth *(a)* in total and *(b)* broken down by (i) rank and (ii) gender. [5412]

Mr. Denham: The information has been provided by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and is set out in the table. Police numbers are those as at 30 June 2001.

Police numbers—London borough of Wandsworth

Rank	*Male*[1]	*Female*[1]	*Total*[1]
Chief superintendent	1	—	1
Superintendent	1	1	2
Chief inspector	4	—	4
Inspector	17	1	18
Sergeant	70.8	15.7	86.5
Constable	332	90.9	422.9
Total	425.8	108.6	534.4

[1] Full-time equivalent numbers

Airwave Radio System

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the further advice of Sir William Stewart on the potential health risks of specific frequency ranges for the emergency radio Airwave system; and if he will make a statement. [5385]

Mr. Denham: Sir William Stewart was the chairman of the Independent Expect Group on Mobile Phones. The group was commissioned by the Minister of Public Health to assess the current state of research into possible health risks from mobile phones. The Group's report, on Mobile Phones and Health, was published on 11 May 2000.

As a result of the precautionary approach recommended in the report, and recognising that concerns had been raised about Airwave, the Home Office commissioned two studies. One study is being conducted by the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) and the other by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB). The NRPB have engaged their Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation (AGNIR) to review the available evidence. Both of these studies are in progress.

We are anticipating that the AGNIR report will be available in the next few weeks. The DERA study is longer term and DERA will be reporting to us on a regular basis, up to the conclusion of their main programme in May 2002.

Chief Inspector of Prisons

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times he has met the Chief Inspector of Prisons since his appointment as Secretary of State. [6382]

Mr. Blunkett: I have met Sir David Ramsbotham once since my appointment as Home Secretary.

Prison Service

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times he has met Ms Ann Owers to discuss the Prison Service; and if he will make a statement. [6381]

Mr. Blunkett: Ms Ann Owers takes up her appointment as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons on 1 August 2001. I look forward to meeting her. The Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Beverley Hughes), will meet her shortly after she takes up her appointment.

Animal Experiments

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) of the primates which, according to Table 2 of the Home Office statistics on the use of animals in scientific procedures for 1999, how many were wild-caught; from which countries were wild-caught primates imported; how many were ill or injured on arrival, indicating the illness or injury in each case; and how many became ill or injured during quarantine for reasons unrelated to the scientific procedures indicating the illness or injury in each case; [5711]

(2) of the primates destined for UK laboratories but not used in scientific procedures how many primates captive-bred outside the EU were found dead on arrival in the UK in 1999 and 2000; how many primates wild-caught outside the EU were found dead on arrival in the UK in 1999 and 2000; how many primates captive-bred outside the EU *(a)* died and *(b)* became ill in quarantine in 1999 and 2000; and how many primates wild-caught outside the EU died or became ill in quarantine in 1999 and 2000, indicating the circumstances in each case; [5712]

(3) of the primates which, according to Table 2 of the Home Office statistics on the use of animals in scientific procedures for 1999, came from outside the European Union how many were captive-bred; from which countries captive-bred primates were imported; and how many were ill or injured on arrival, indicating the illness or injury in each case and how many became ill or injured during quarantine for reasons unrelated to the scientific procedures, indicating the illness or injury in each case. [5710]

Angela Eagle: We announced in 1997 our intention that licences under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 will never be issued for programmes of work involving the use of great apes (chimpanzees, pygmy chimpanzees, gorillas and orang-utans) and that exceptional justification is required for the use of wild-caught primates.

In addition, the 1986 Act requires that non-human primates cannot be used unless no other species is suitable. Along with regulatory testing to help ensure the safety of medicines, non-human primates (mainly marmosets and macaques) are also used for other important areas of fundamental research. For example, they contribute to programmes of work relating to Parkinson's disease, visual impairment, stroke, diabetes, disorders of reproduction and vaccine development.

Table 2 of the Statistics of Scientific procedures on Living Animals Great Britain 1999 records 418 non-human primates used in scientific procedures as coming from outside the European Union. The detailed information requested in relation to these animals is for the most part not held centrally by the Home Office and it is, therefore, not possible to provide all of the information required about them. However, Home Office records confirm that none of these 418 animals were wild-caught.

The overseas sources of primates used in 1999 were Mauritius, the Philippines, China, Israel and South Africa.

I am advised that problems encountered with imported primates are generally few and instances of death following acquisition are very rare.

It is not possible to provide general information with regard to primates destined for laboratories in the United Kingdom but subsequently not used. Such animals are not included in the annual statistics. I can confirm, however, that no deaths or injuries have been reported in baboons during transportation, including the group of 28 wild-caught baboons imported from Kenya in May 1999 but not used.

Commonwealth Visitors

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answers of 11 July 2001, *Official Report* columns 534–37W, on Commonwealth visitors, how many *(a)* Jamaican, *(b)* Barbadian,

(c) Guyanese, *(d)* Canadian and *(e)* Australian visitors in (i) 2000 and (ii) 2001 to the latest available date were (1) refused entry to the UK and (2) admitted with less than the maximum period of six months' leave; and how many people, from each country, admitted for less than six months, applied for extensions to stay as visitors. [5897]

Angela Eagle: Information on the total number of visitors refused leave to enter the United Kingdom is not available because refusals are recorded according to the reason for refusal and not according to the entry category (ie visitor, student, work permit holder). In addition, it is only possible to determine the number of visitors admitted. Information on the period of leave granted is not available. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 11 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 535W.

However, information is available on the number of refusals where the main reason for refusal was because the immigration officer was not satisfied the applicant was a genuine visitor. It does not include persons intending to enter as visitors, but refused entry on other grounds. This, along with information on the total number of persons refused leave to enter and removed is shown in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the number of decisions on extensions of leave to remain as a visitor, to persons that entered the United Kingdom as a visitor or admitted in another category for less than six months. The data relate to January to September 2000, the latest period available.

Table 1: Passengers refused leave to enter and removed, by selected nationality, 2000 to February 2001

Number of journeys

	Total refused leave to enter and removed	*Of which: main reason for refusal—not satisfied a genuine visitor*
2000		
Jamaica	2,236	1,962
Barbados	37	34
Guyana	13	1
Canada	285	198
Australia	303	256
January 2001		
Jamaica	234	206
Barbados	5	4
Guyana	1	—
Canada	32	22
Australia	29	27
February 2001		
Jamaica	228	185
Barbados	2	2
Guyana	2	—
Canada	31	25
Australia	18	9

Table 2: Grants and refusals of extensions of leave to remain as a visitor[1] in the United Kingdom to persons having entered the country as a visitor[2] or admitted in another category for less than six months, by selected nationality, January to September 2000[3]—United Kingdom

Number of decisions[4]

	Jamaica	*Barbados*	*Guyana*	*Canada*	*Australia*
Grants of extension					
Admitted as a visitor[2]	940	10	20	20	60
Admitted in another category for less than six months	20	—	[5]—	10	10
Total	960	10	20	30	70
Refusals of extension					
Admitted as a visitor[2]	160	[5]—	10	10	10
Admitted in another category for less than six months	10	—	—	—	—
Total	160	[5]—	10	10	10
Total decisions					
Admitted as a visitor[2]	1,090	10	20	30	60
Admitted in another category for less than six months	30	—	[5]—	10	10
Total	1,120	10	20	40	70

[1] Excludes dependents of principal applicants, the outcome of appeals, and withdrawn applications
[2] Includes students admitted for less than six months
[3] Provisional
[4] Totals may not add up due to rounding. This is because all calculations are based on unrounded numbers to ensure accuracy
[5] Five or fewer
Note:
Data rounded to the nearest 10

Channel Tunnel (Illegal Immigration)

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with *(a)* Eurotunnel and *(b)* the French authorities regarding illegal immigration through the Channel Tunnel; and if he will make a statement. [5840]

Angela Eagle: Home Office Ministers and officials have regular discussions with both Eurotunnel and the French authorities about illegal immigration through the Channel Tunnel. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary discussed the subject with the French Minister of the Interior, M. Daniel Vaillant, on 11 July; and I discussed it with the Interior Ministers of France,

Belgium and the Netherlands at a meeting on 17 July. The issue was discussed at the Anglo-French Ministerial Summit in Cahors on 9 February, and at subsequent meetings of the UK-French Cross-Channel Commission of senior officials and its sub-group.

Home Office Ministers have corresponded with Eurotunnel on a number of occasions about illegal immigration problems and improvements to the tunnel security regime. In addition, Immigration and Nationality Directorate officials are in close contact with Eurotunnel.

We have emphasised, through these contacts, that Eurotunnel needs to do more to secure its site at Coquelles. The present situation there is unacceptable, with increased numbers exploiting security deficiencies and posing a safety risk both to themselves and to the tunnel. We are therefore consulting Eurotunnel, and other interested parties, on proposals to extend the civil penalty to Eurotunnel freight train services.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many illegal immigrants were detected after passing through the Channel Tunnel in the past two years; and if he will make a statement. [5841]

Angela Eagle: The number of clandestine entrants detected at Kent ports in 1999, 2000 and the first half of 2001 is set out in the list. Figures are taken from local records and are provisional.

It is not possible to establish precisely how many arrived through the Channel Tunnel system. Some are detected inland and cannot be attributed to a particular entry point.

In the first six months of 2001, 3,012 clandestine entrants were detected at the Cheriton Terminal. This is a recent phenomenon, which has followed a tightening of security in the port of Calais.

Provisional figures indicate that the overall number of persons who have been detected at Kent ports or inland in Kent has reduced by 25 per cent. during the first six months of 2001 compared with the same period in 2000. This includes persons who had no documents, were clandestine entrants or arrived through the tunnel system.

Action is in hand to implement civil penalties in respect of the Eurotunnel shuttles following a period of consultation.

Clandestine Entrants: Dover ports

1999: 8,878

2000: 12,679

2001: 4,071 (to 30 June 2001)

Undocumented arrivals: Dover

1999: 8,276

2000: 7,014

2001: 701 (to 30 June 2001)

Cheriton terminal arrivals

1999: nil

2000: 100 (estimated)

2001: 3,012 (30 June 2001)

South East ports totals

1999: 17,154

2000: 19,693 (excluding Cheriton estimated arrivals)

2001: 7,784 (to 30 June 2001).

Police Shootings

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for each year since 1980, how many civilians have been shot by police; of those how many were *(a)* fatally wounded and *(b)* armed; how many officers were charged in connection with each incident; and how many successful prosecutions ensued in each case. [5480]

Mr. Denham: Figures available are for 1991 onwards and are as follows:

	Persons shot by police	*Fatally wounded*	*[1]Armed*
1991	5	3	5
1992	11	3	11
1993	5	3	5
1994	6	2	6
1995	5	2	3
1996	4	2	2
1997	1	—	1
1998	5	2	3
1999	7	3	6
2000	6	2	6
2001	2	2	2

[1] Includes incidents where the person was subsequently found to be in possession of a replica or imitation firearm or in possession of other dangerous weapons (knives, air weapons etc.).

The number of officers charged in connection with each case and the number of successful prosecutions, by year of incident, are as follows:

	Number of officers charged[1]	*Number of successful prosecutions[1]*
1991	—	—
1992	—	—
1993	—	—
1994	—	—
1995	[2]1	[4]—
1996	—	—
1997	—	—
1998	[3]4	[5]—
1999	—	—
2000	—	—
2001	—	—

[1] As at 19 July 2001.

[2] Murder—one incident

[3] One for murder and three for misfeasance in public office—same incident

[4] Found not guilty

[5] All found not guilty

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason no decision has yet been taken in respect of the instigation of disciplinary proceedings against Sussex Police officers involved in the policing operation that involved the fatal shooting of James Ashley. [5474]

Mr. Denham: Now that the criminal proceedings against Sussex Police officers involved in the shooting of James Ashley have concluded, it is for the independent Police Complaints Authority (PCA) to decide whether disciplinary proceedings should be instituted against any of those officers.

Sussex police have supplied the PCA with the necessary memorandum to enable the Authority to reach its decision. The PCA has agreed to advise the Force of its decision by 31 August 2001.

Sussex police now await that decision and can take no action until it is forthcoming.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason the disciplinary hearing involving the Deputy Chief Constable of Sussex Police in respect of his involvement in the policing operation that involved the fatal shooting of James Ashley is not due to commence until 7 January 2002. [5473]

Mr. Denham: This is a matter for the Sussex Police Authority.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent information he has collated on *(a)* police shootings and *(b)* the results of PCA inquiries into police shootings, and if he will make a statement. [5909]

Mr. Denham: Statistics are published on an annual basis on the number of police operations involving firearms, the number of authorised firearms officers and the number of operations involving armed response vehicles. The number of occasions on which firearms are discharged, and any resulting fatalities, are also recorded.

Information on specific incidents in which shots are discharged, and any subsequent findings or recommendations arising from investigations supervised by the Police Complaints Authority, are carefully considered by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) sub-committee on the Police Use of Firearms. The Home Office is represented on this committee and will consider, in consultation with ACPO, any incidents which give rise to serious concern. Any lessons to be learned from such incidents are subsequently fed into the Manual on the Police Use of Firearms and into police training arrangements.

Strangeways Prison (Phones)

Andrew Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many telephone lines are available at Manchester Strangeways Prison for individuals to phone about prison visits; what percentage of callers get through first time; and what percentage of callers fail to get through after five attempts. [4966]

Beverley Hughes: There are three lines available for booking domestic visits at Manchester Prison.

There have been difficulties with the booking system at Manchester for some time, but it is only recently that technical problems with the telephony equipment have been identified. Manchester is programmed to have its entire telephone system replaced in or around October this year.

The other information requested is not available as the telephone logging records only show the number of successful and unsuccessful calls and do not identify the source or whether it is a first or repeat call. Figures for November 2000, the most recent available, show that 83.5 per cent. of incoming calls received the engaged signal.

It has been very difficult for callers to contact the visit booking service at Manchester prison at certain times, and we regret the inconvenience this has caused. Prior to replacing the system, a weekend telephone booking facility is being introduced from 22 July, and from 19 August prisoners will be able to book visits on behalf of their visitors, who will then be able to collect their visiting orders on arrival at the prison gate.

Prison Governors

Andrew Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what targets are set for the length of time taken by Her Majesty's prison governors to reply to letters from *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* the public; and if the Governor of HMP Strangeways has met these targets. [4964]

Beverley Hughes: The target is for 95 per cent. of letters to be answered within 20 working days in both cases. In the last three months, the Governor of Manchester prison has met this target with 95.6 per cent. of correspondence answered within 20 working days. This represents a marked improvement on the establishment's performance for the year 2000–01.

Criminals (Litter and Graffiti)

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to require criminals to clear away litter and graffiti as reparation for their offences. [5451]

Beverley Hughes: Many offenders are already required to clear away litter and graffiti as part of the work done on community punishment orders and community punishment and rehabilitation orders.

Immigration Officials

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the French authorities regarding the removal of immigration officials from the ports of Dieppe and Cherbourg; and if he will make a statement. [5842]

Angela Eagle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 52W.

Visa Refusals

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were refused visitors visas by British High Commission offices in *(a)* Pakistan, *(b)* India and *(c)* Sri Lanka during the last 12 months. [6372]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

The total number of visitor visa applications refused between June 2000 to May 2001 are as follows:

Pakistan—20,835

India—17,755

Sri Lanka—3,266.

Statistics for June 2001 are not yet available.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Widowed Parent's Allowance

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many widowers whose spouses died prior to 9 April are estimated to be eligible for the new widowed parent's allowance; how many claim forms have been sent to this group of widowers; how many claim forms have been returned; and how many of these widowers already have the allowance. [371]

Malcolm Wicks: To ensure that as many men as possible were able to claim widowed parent's allowance from the outset, the Department identified over 11,000 potential male beneficiaries from the child benefit computer system and sent them claim forms in March 2001. In addition, the Department has placed articles advertising the benefit in targeted magazines. Local Benefits Agency offices have also issued forms direct to men widowed before 9 April on request. Information on the number of men who have successfully claimed widowed parent's allowance is not yet available.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many women claimed incapacity benefit in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what percentage this represents of the total claims. [1475]

Malcolm Wicks: Information on the number of claims for incapacity benefit is not available by gender.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what is the average time to complete a review of incapacity benefit; and if he will make a statement on the factors underlying delays and the availability of clinicians to conduct reviews [3620]

Malcolm Wicks: The medical assessment procedure involves several stages including gathering information from the claimant and their GP or other health care professional and arranging and carrying out examinations.

The most recent study of a sample of cases found that on average the whole process took 11.4 weeks where entitlement was confirmed and 17.5 weeks where benefit was withdrawn.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the *(a)* duration of claim and *(b)* type of incapacitation, of those receiving incapacity benefit; and if he will place the results in the Library. [4810]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is in the table.

Average durations of claims for incapacity benefit current at 31 March 2000

Diagnosis	*Average duration (days)*
All Diagnoses	2,280
Recipients without any diagnosis code on the system	1,308
Certain Infectious and Parasitic Diseases (A00—B99)	1,782
Neoplasms (C00—D48)	1,194
Diseases of the Blood and Blood forming organs and certain diseases involving the immune mechanism (D50—D89)	2,290
Endocrine, Nutritional and Metabolic Diseases (E00—E90)	2,627
Mental and Behavioural Disorders (F00—F99)	2,415
Diseases of the Nervous System (G00—G99)	3,038
Diseases of the Eye and Adnexa (H00—H59)	2,851
Diseases of the Ear and Mastoid Process (H60—H95)	2,213
Diseases of the Circulatory System (I00—I99)	2,308
Diseases of the Respiratory System (J00—J99)	2,533
Diseases of the Digestive System (K00—K93)	2,245
Diseases of the Skin and Subcutaneous System (L00—L99)	1,913
Diseases of the Musculoskeletal system and Connective Tissue (M00—M99)	2,183
Diseases of the Genitourinary System (N00—N99)	1,985
Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Puerperium (O00—O99)	467
Certain Conditions Originating in the Perinatal Period (P00—P96)	0
Congenital Malformations, Deformations and Chromasomal Abnormalities (Q00—Q99)	4,586
Symptoms, Signs and Abnormal Clinical and Laboratory findings, not elsewhere classified (R00—R99)	2,322
Injury, Poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes (S00—U22)	1,701
Factors influencing Health Status and Contact with Health Services (Z00—Z99)	2,088

Notes:
1. These figures are based on a 1 per cent. sample of claims to benefit on 31 March 2000.
2. These figures represent the average duration of a claim to Incapacity Benefit current at 31 March 2000.
3. All diagnoses are coded using the International Classification of Diseases, 10 Edition (ICD10), published by a World Health Organisation. The codes in brackets following each description refer to the ICD codes within that group.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will list the 20 parliamentary constituencies with the *(a)* highest economic inactivity rate, *(b)* highest unemployment rate, *(c)* highest proportion of people of working age claiming incapacity benefit and *(d)* lowest employment rate, indicating the rates in each case. [5215]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information is not available in the format requested.

NIRS 2

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will estimate the number of pensioners who are currently receiving incorrect payments in respect of *(a)* the state retirement pension and *(b)* SERPS that have been caused by problems with the NIRS 2 computer system; [356]

(2) if he will estimate the average number of newly entitled pensioners who are receiving incorrect payments in respect of *(a)* the state retirement pension and *(b)* SERPS that are caused by problems with the NIRS 2 computer system; [357]

(3) if he will estimate the average weekly *(a)* underpayment and *(b)* overpayment in respect of (i) the state retirement pension and (ii) SERPS that are caused by problems with the NIRS 2 computer system. [358]

Mr. McCartney: I will write to the hon. Member.

SERPS

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the cost is of writing to pensioners about their entitlement to inherited SERPS; if all the letters have now been sent out; and if he will place a copy of the letter in the Library. [2264]

Mr. McCartney: A letter was issued in February and March 2001 to inform pensioners of the changes in inherited SERPS and to reassure them that they will be unaffected by the changes. It was sent to approximately 8.3 million pensioner households. The cost of sending the letter was £1,887,126. A copy of the letter was placed in the Library on 29 January.

A second letter is scheduled to be issued later this summer to approximately 1.3 million people who will also be unaffected by the changes in inherited SERPS. These are people who have reached state pension age since the first letter was issued and also those who will reach state pension age by 5 October 2002. The estimated cost of sending this letter is £560,000. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library before this letter goes out.

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will place in the Library *(a)* a copy of the letter informing pensioners that they are unaffected by the changes in entitlement to inherited SERPS and *(b)* a copy of the letter informing people that they might be affected by the changes that are being issued by his Department. [3148]

Mr. McCartney: A letter was issued in February and March 2001 to inform pensioners of the changes in inherited SERPS and to reassure them that they will be unaffected by the changes. It was sent to approximately 8.3 million pensioner households. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library.

A second letter is scheduled to be issued later this summer to approximately 1.3 million people who will also be unaffected by the changes in inherited SERPS. These are people who have reached state pension age since the first letter was issued and also those who will reach state pension age by 5 October 2002. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

A further letter is to be issued to 5.25 million people who will be affected by the reduction in SERPS on the sliding scale. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Benefit Entitlements

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the impact of withdrawing social security benefit from adults unwilling to have their basic skills levels tested; and if he will make a statement. [3371]

Malcolm Wicks: The Government set out their strategy for helping adults improve their basic skills in the document "Skills for Life", published in March this year. This strategy includes a strong focus on helping unemployed people improve their literacy and numeracy skills and so increase their chances of getting and keeping a job. As part of our overall strategy, it is right that we pilot arrangements to sanction people receiving jobseeker's allowance who refuse to take up offers of help in improving their basic skills. The pilots, which we propose to implement in the autumn, will be fully evaluated.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will list the numbers of actual and whole-time equivalent employees of *(a)* the Benefits Agency as at 1 April, *(b)* the headquarters functions of the Benefits Agency as at 1 April, *(c)* the Working Life Agency as at 1 July, *(d)* the headquarters functions of the Agency as at 1 July, *(e)* the Pensions Service Agency as at 1 July, *(f)* the headquarters functions of the Pensions Agency as at 1 July, *(g)* the Disability and Carers Directorate as at 1 July, *(h)* the headquarters functions of the Disability Directorate as at 1 July, *(i)* the Child Support Agency as at 1 July and *(j)* the headquarters function of the Child Support Agency as at 1 July. [3700]

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Since 1 April 2000, the HQ functions of the Benefits Agency have been carried out by Department of Social Security (DSS) departmental directorates which support all business units in the Department. The reason for this was to ensure more resources were focused on front line delivery and to reduce duplication across the agencies. As a result, as at 1 February 2001 (the last published figures), 2,523 staff had moved from departmental support services and were not replaced. The resource was transferred to the Benefits Agency. The figures show the staffing levels for those directorates.

At 1 April 2001, the total staffing in Benefits Agency and DSS departmental directorates was as follows (a separate figure is not available for BA HQ for the reasons outlined above):

Benefits Agency and DSS departmental directorates staffing as at 1 April 2001

	Actual staff	*Whole time equivalent staff*
Benefits Agency	70,330	64,683.4
DSS departmental directorates	7,112	6,852.6

At 1 July 2001, the Department for Work and Pensions continues to be structured as the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service. Formation of the working age organisation (to be known as JobCentre Plus) and the pensions organisation (to be known as the Pensions

Service) will not take place until April 2002. The information is therefore not available in the precise format requested.

The Department for Work and Pensions staffing at the latest available date is shown in the following table. During the period in question responsibility for the calculation and recovery of overpayments has been transferred to one of the departmental directorates, resulting in a reduction of staff numbers in the Benefits Agency and an increase in numbers in the directorates.

Department for Work and Pensions 1 June 2001 (latest information available)

	Actual staff	*Whole time equivalent staff*
Benefits Agency	68,908	63,470.0
Disability and Carers Directorate[1]	7,255	6,623.6
Employment Service	35,067	30,465.3
DSS Departmental Directorates	8,970	8,471.3
Child Support Agency	10,998	10,145.2
Child Support Agency HQ	1,101	1,056.1

[1] Also included in Benefits Agency figures.

Pension Forecasts

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will set out the target implementation dates for the provision of new pension forecasts. [3735]

Mr. McCartney: I will write to the hon. Member.

Disability Benefits

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the *(a)* target times and *(b)* average time it took to deal with (i) revisions, (ii) renewal claims and (iii) original applications for (A) disability living allowance and (B) attendance allowance were in the last 12 months. [4354]

Maria Eagle: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Alexis Cleveland, chief executive of the Benefits Agency. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Alexis Cleveland to Andrew George, dated 20 July 2001:

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking what the (a) target times and (b) average time it took to deal with (i) revisions (ii) renewal claims and (iii) original applications for (A) Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and (B) Attendance Allowance (AA) were in the last 12 months.

The information is in the table attached. The Decision Making and Appeals procedures introduced in October 1999 mean revisions are shown as reconsiderations and supersessions. Reconsiderations occur when a claimant asks for a claim to be looked at again within one month of the previous decision. Supersessions occur when such requests are made outside the one month time limit.

Target days are always expressed as 95 per cent. of those cases cleared within the number of days shown against each claim event. It is not possible to compare these figures directly with the actual average clearance times in each category as these are based on the number of days taken to clear 100 per cent. of cases per event in a particular month. Target figures are not available expressed in actual average clearance times.

I hope this is helpful.

	Claims	*Renewals*	*Reconsiderations*	*Supersessions*
Disability Living Allowance 2000–01				
Target, 95 per cent. cleared in	73.0	84.0	99.0	99.0
Actual average clearance days (in month)				
July	48.7	39.3	49.0	62.1
August	47.5	39.4	43.0	57.9
September	46.2	34.8	44.8	55.6
October	45.7	32.3	44.7	55.0
November	44.5	32.1	42.6	52.5
December	44.0	31.9	39.4	51.5
January	45.5	34.7	41.6	54.3
February	44.4	29.8	38.8	47.3
March	41.7	28.7	33.7	44.5
April	41.4	28.6	35.6	44.6
May	41.5	30.3	37.4	44.6
June	43.5	32.3	36.8	48.4
Attendance Allowance				
Target, 95 per cent cleared in	63.0	66.0	87.0	87.0
Actual average clearance days (in month)				
July	33.6	30.7	50.9	54.3
August	32.0	26.8	47.5	50.8
September	29.4	25.2	51.8	48.2
October	27.1	26.1	46.1	46.5
November	25.9	24.7	44.9	45.8
December	26.0	25.1	42.2	43.1
January	28.7	25.4	44.4	45.6
February	26.9	20.7	40.5	36.6
March	24.9	19.2	35.6	32.9
April	25.3	20.6	36.0	31.5
May	25.9	21.6	33.9	32.6
June	26.8	23.0	35.3	35.3

Note:
All figures in days

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many children broken down by *(a)* age group and *(b)* proportion of households with children in that age group, live in households where a parent is in receipt of (i) Incapacity Benefit, (ii) Severe Disablement Allowance, (iii) Income Support with a Disability Premium and (iv) Disability Living Allowance. [4356]

Malcolm Wicks: The available information is in the tables.

Number of dependent children living in families where a parent receives Incapacity Benefit (IB), Income Support (IS) Disability Premium or Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Age group	IB	DLA	IS Disability Premium
0–4	85,000	130,000	100,000
5–10	150,000	290,000	150,000
11–15	165,000	275,000	155,000
16+	70,000	90,000	55,000

Number of dependent children living in families where the parent has IB, DLA or IS Disability Premium as a proportion of all children in Great Britain

Percentage

Age group	IB	DLA	IS Disability Premium
0–4	2	4	3
5–10	3	7	3
11–15	4	8	4
16+	6	7	4

Notes:

1. Caseloads are rounded to the nearest 5,000 and percentages to the nearest percentage point.
2. For IB and DLA the figures have been calculated from the 1999–2000 Family Resources Survey. For the IS Disability Premium they have been taken from the February 2001 Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiry and the February 2001 Child Benefit statistics.
3. Data are not provided for Severe Disablement Allowance because the sample sizes are too small to support a reliable estimate.
4. People are not counted as receiving a benefit if they receive it on behalf of someone else.

IT Projects

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will list the information technology projects being undertaken by his Department and agencies responsible to his Department, including *(a)* the start date, *(b)* the planned completion date, *(c)* the current expected completion date, *(d)* the planned cost and *(e)* the current estimated cost; and if he will make a statement. [4403]

Mr. McCartney *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* A major programme of change is currently under way in the Department to modernise the way it delivers its services and to support the implementation of important new policy initiatives such as the reform of Child Support and the introduction of new tax credits. This programme requires extensive IT change affecting all areas of the Department.

A number of the projects to deliver this change programme are already under way and will continue into the next year. Plans for others, including the implementation of Pension Credit from 2003 and the replacement of the Department's outdated computer systems, are currently being developed. Finalised completion dates and costs for these are therefore still under development.

Modernisation projects are brigaded under the headings given in the table in order to facilitate the management of the Department's modernisation programme. The overall costs of the projects to support Working Age, Pensions, Child Support and other key welfare reforms are shown but it is not yet possible to show the IT cost component because contracts have not yet been let for many of the IT projects. Because of the number of projects involved under each of the headings, the dates given can only be a broad indication of the earliest project start date, and the latest planned and expected end dates. The dates given are overall project targets, and thus embrace the IT elements of the project.

Programme	Expected completion date	Planned cost (£ million)	Current estimated coast (£ million)
Working Age	March 2003	289	726
Pensions	December 2004	57	432
Children	April 2003	914	864
Corporate	March 2005	856	1,539

Notes:

1. The increase in planned and estimated cost under Working Age project work from the information provided previously in response to PC 641/2001 is due to the Department's responsibility for projects which were previously the Department for Education and Employment. An additional factor in the increased costs is the number of additional projects which have come on stream since February, as well as revised estimates for Child Support reform.
2. The costs shown have the following characteristics: they do not include any increase for pay and prices over the period; they include IT and non-IT cost components relating to each IT project; they do not include on-going core costs which will be incurred once the projects 'go live'. Additionally, the figures are high level estimates which are consequently subject to change.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many complaints in relation to Child Support Agency cases were received in *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01 by (i) the Child Support Agency, (ii) the Child Support Agency independent case examiner and (iii) the Parliamentary Ombudsman. [4162]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The number of complaints that the agency has received has decreased in comparison with an increase in the agency's caseload. Also, while the number of complaints referred to the independent case examiner (ICE) and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (PCA) has increased, this is also against an increase in the caseload of the agency.

The Child Support Agency only started to count how many complaints it received from 1999–2000. Prior to this, the agency only counted how many complaints were being cleared.

Agency caseload (as at March of each year)

	Number
1999	1,030,100
2000	1,048,920

Number of complaints received by the agency

	Number
1999–2000	21,015
2000–01	19,634

Number of complaints received by the Independent Case Examiner

	Number
1997–98	1,087
1998–99	1,536
1999–2000	1,226
2000–01	1,488

Number of cases received by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration

	Number
1997–98	67
1998–99	51
1999–2000	102
2000–01	76

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the rate was of non-compliance in *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01 with payment of maintenance assessments by the CSA; what the backlog of cases is at the CSA; how many cases have been outstanding for one year or more; what the level of outstanding debt is in the CSA and what percentage of that debt is considered unrecoverable; and what assessment he has made of the level of accuracy in maintenance assessments. [4163]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* Compliance has improved; we have increased the number of fully compliant cases by 16.03 per cent. in 2000–01.

Average rate of non-compliance

Year	Percentages
1997–98	31.4
1998–99	30.8
1999–2000	30.1
2000–01	28.7

There are 186,323 cases awaiting initial assessment and of these 47,209 are over 52 weeks old.

As of March 2001, the level of outstanding debt was £527,802,484. From this figure the percentage of debt that would possibly be uncollectable is 39.5 per cent.

The accuracy of the most recent action taken on cases was 78.5 per cent.

Mr. Denis Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many child support claimants have had to wait more than six months from the date their claim was submitted before their first payment is received in the last three years; [6296]

(2) what average period of time elapses between the Child Support Agency receiving a claim and the claimant receiving their first payment. [6297]

Malcolm Wicks: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Mr. Doug Smith. He will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Mr. Doug Smith to Mr. Denis Murphy, dated 20 July 2001:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about the Child Support Agency.

You have asked how many child support claimants have had to wait more than six months from the date their claim was submitted before their first payment is received in the last three years. Also what average period of time elapses between the Child Support Agency receiving a claim and the claimant receiving their first payment.

Your questions cannot be answered in the precise format you require as this information is not gathered in the way you have requested.

In 1998–99 our target was to clear 65 per cent. of new maintenance assessments within 22 weeks and we achieved a target of 62 per cent.

In 1999–2000 our target was changed to clear 65 per cent. of new maintenance assessments within 20 weeks, we achieved 51 per cent. clearance.

This target was discontinued in 2000–01 and we are now aiming to reduce our outstanding work across all key areas.

We are striving to improve performance in key areas and have introduced more robust measures to support this process for the coming year.

We do not measure the average time between receipt of an application for maintenance and the client receiving their first payment.

The Department produces a CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics which is available in the House of Commons Library and you may find the information it contains of further interest.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many *(a)* PFI and *(b)* PPP contracts have been agreed by his Department over the last five years; how many have been satisfactorily completed; and in how many has compensation been (i) paid and (ii) claimed for performance failure. [4598]

Mr. McCartney: The information is as follows:

(a) The Department for Work and Pensions has awarded eight PFI contracts over the last five years. Of these five were awarded by the Department of Social Security (DSS) and three by the Employment Service (ES) as an Executive Agency of Department for Education and Employment. Details are:

1. PRIME (Private Sector Resource Initiative for the Management of the Estate). A 20-year PFI partnership deal competitively awarded by DSS to Trillium on 1 April 1998. Trillium were recently acquired by Land Securities, the UK's largest property company, and are now called Land Securities Trillium.

2. A series of contracts awarded by DSS under the ACCORD (Access to Corporate Data) framework. The DSS established the ACCORD framework to secure the full range of IS/IT systems needed to underpin the Department's modernisation strategy, and Government's ambitions for Welfare Reform. Overarching contracts were awarded to three major consortia

in 1999, Affinity, lead by EDS, Arcway, lead by BT, and 1Accord, lead by ICL. Within this framework three PFI contracts were awarded for IS/IT services:

(i) Strategic Outsourcing—a 10 year contract awarded to Affinity on 8 August 2000;

(ii) to underpin Child Support Reforms—a 10 year contract awarded to Affinity 8 August 2000; and

(iii) to deliver new Wide Area Network (WAN) services—a five year contract awarded to Arcway in November 2000.

Other contracts will be agreed with service providers over the life of the ACCORD framework.

3. The Benefit Payment Card Project formed part of the BA/POCL Horizon Automation Project, which was a PFI project to automate post offices and benefit payments. The Benefit Payment Card Project, introduced in October 1996, was cancelled in May 1999.

4. The Employment Service (ES) has entered into two IT related and one other PFI deal over the last five years:

(i) The Escom contract with Siemens Business Services (SBS) began in February 1998 and is due for completion February 2003.

(ii) ES went into Partnership with Electronic Data Systems (EDS) in August 1998 for provision of IT and Telephony services. This contract is ongoing until July 2008.

(iii) In February 1999 ES awarded Rebus Human Resources Services and Norwich Systems Accounting a 10 year partnership for the delivery of ES' Human Resources Services.

(b) The Department has two PPP agreements:

1. A Lead Service Provider agreement made by DSS with Affinity in September 2000 under the ACCORD framework; and

2. a Network and Office Service Provider agreement made by DSS with Arcway in November 2000, also under ACCORD.

All the above, apart from the cancelled benefit payment card, are long-term service agreements and as such none has yet been completed.

The Department has not claimed compensation under any PFI/PPP contract to date.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how (1) many PFI transactions have been overseen by his Department and its predecessors in each of the last 10 years; what his estimate is of the cost savings made in each of these transactions in comparison with the public sector alternative; what are the outstanding payments to be made in relation to these transactions for each of the next 15 years; and if he will make a statement; [5718]

(2) if he will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the Private Finance Initiative; and if he will make a statement. [5719]

Mr. McCartney: I will write to the hon. Member.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he intends to reply to the letter to him dated 12 June from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Ms S. B. Mqwayi. [4501]

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Never. The right hon. Member's letter is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and has been transferred accordingly.

Child Poverty

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of children were living in workless households during the spring quarter of 2001, using the Labour Force Survey. [4804]

Malcolm Wicks: The information requested is not available. The information taken from the spring quarter of the Labour Force Survey in 2000 was that 15.8 per cent. of children were living in workless households.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress has been made in reducing the number of children in the United Kingdom living in poverty; and if he will make a statement. [5713]

Malcolm Wicks: Poverty and social exclusion are multi-faceted problems. Therefore we do not use a single definition of poverty, but instead use a range of indicators to monitor the progress of our strategy. Information relating to the indicators can be found in the second Government "Opportunity for all" report on tackling poverty and social exclusion, "One year on: making a difference" (Cm 4865). The report also describes and monitors the impact of policies we have already introduced and sets out our plans for the future.

Student Loans

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what plans his Department has to reform the benefits system in order to ensure families are not penalised through the reduction in benefits as a result of one partner applying successfully for a student loan; [4579]

(2) if he will estimate the impact on long-term family income of one partner receiving a repayable student loan and the family experiencing a consequential loss in non-repayable benefit payment; [4658]

(3) what analysis his Department has made of the number of *(a)* married and *(b)* unmarried students, in full-time education in receipt of a student loan who have experienced a consequential reduction in benefit payment. [4659]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The information is not available.

Student loans and most allowances are taken into account in the assessment of income-related benefit entitlement because primary financial support for students comes from the education maintenance system.

If student loans were not taken into account, the benefit system would be supporting students rather than the educational maintenance system. This would operate unfairly against the majority of students who are not entitled to benefits, as well as being contrary to the whole basis on which the income-related benefits are paid. We have no plans to change the current arrangements.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many days on average were lost

per employee in his Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from his Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5054]

Mr. McCartney: Information is not available in the format requested. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Average days lost per employee due to sickness

Year	DSS Group	ES Group
1993	12.2	11.8
1994	12.1	11.0
1995	12.6	11.9
1996	12.2	11.8
1997	12.2	12.6
1998	10.8	10.7
1999	10.9	11.0

Notes:

1. Machinery of Government changes:

1996 figures do not include the Resettlement Agency;

1999 figures do not include the Contributions Agency.

2. As the Department for Work and Pensions is a new Department, the information is only available under the former categories of the DSS Group and the Education and Employment/Employment Group (DFEE). It is not possible to separate out information for the parts of the employment group which are now the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions.

3. For consistency, the data on sick absence are taken from the reports on the Analyses of Sickness Absence in the Civil Service 1993–99. Data for 2000 are not available at this time.

4. DSS Group comprises: DSS HQ, Resettlement Agency, Information Technology Agency, Contributions Agency, Child Support Agency and War Pensions Directorate.

5. ES Group comprises DfEE, Health and Safety Executive, ACAS and Employment Services.

Numbers of staff retiring early

Year	DSS Group	DSS Group[1]	Employment Service	Employment Service[1]
1996	1,046	570	n/a	n/a
1997	811	447	n/a	n/a
1998	904	403	184	n/a
1999	39	278	172	n/a
2000	61	195	134	n/a

[1] Ill Health Retirement

Notes:

1. Table does not include figure for DfEE.

2. Data for staff retiring early for the Department of Education and Employment Services (Employment Group) are not held centrally. Information would need to be sourced from 'Paymaster', formerly the Paymaster General's office. The question cannot be answered due to disproportionate cost.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events his Department and its predecessors have participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5040]

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I will write to the right hon. Member.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much housing benefit was paid by each London borough in the last year for which figures are available. [5414]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is in the table.

Housing Benefit expenditure 1999–2000

£000

London boroughs	Rent rebate	Rent allowance	Total
City of London	3,353	1,240	4,593
Camden	58,640	55,442	114,082
Greenwich	50,054	32,496	82,550
Hackney	51,513	66,789	118,302
Hammersmith	29,238	44,382	73,620
Islington	68,740	36,998	105,738
Kensington & Chelsea	22,848	44,825	67,673
Lambeth	66,983	62,234	129,217
Lewisham	50,851	43,388	94,239
Southwark	75,175	44,539	119,714
Tower Hamlets	66,332	41,616	107,948
Wandsworth	44,638	48,995	93,633
Westminster	46,495	69,363	115,858
Barking	33,662	14,264	47,926
Barnet	26,904	50,226	77,130
Bexley	253	37,754	38,007
Brent	34,995	89,033	124,028
Bromley	1,862	53,340	55,202
Croydon	37,070	55,946	93,016
Ealing	35,247	59,650	94,897
Enfield	38,209	38,340	76,549
Haringey	56,348	78,083	134,431
Harrow	15,747	30,435	46,182
Havering	16,682	12,873	29,555
Hillingdon	29,711	26,845	56,556
Hounslow	27,296	25,291	52,587
Kingston-upon-Thames	14,000	11,165	25,165
Merton	13,172	22,986	36,158
Newham	40,278	81,877	122,155
Redbridge	16,744	40,944	57,688
Richmond-upon-Thames	18,249	16,296	34,545
Sutton	15,403	14,680	30,083
Waltham Forest	27,863	47,050	74,913
Total London	1,134,555	1,399,385	2,533,940

Note:

The data are the latest available and may be subject to change at a later date. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source:

Rent allowance and non-housing revenue account rent rebate information is from returns submitted to DWP by local authorities. Housing revenue account rent rebate information is from returns submitted to DTLR by local authorities.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent estimates he has made of performance of ITNet in the delivery of Housing Benefit to claimants in Islington; and if he will make a statement. [5361]

Malcolm Wicks: The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's report on the London borough of Islington's administration of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit was published in December last year. The report revealed problems with the quality of Islington's benefit service as provided by its contractor ITNet.

We have received the council's response to the report, which includes a comprehensive action plan to achieve improvements in the service provided to people in

Islington. We are considering the council's response and what future action is appropriate to monitor the authority's performance.

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when the proposed amendment to the Housing Benefit Regulations will be brought into force. [5816]

Malcolm Wicks: The amendment to regulation 7(l)(h) of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987, which allows benefit to be paid to people who let property they previously owned if five years or more have elapsed since the original sale, came into force on 21 May 2001.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to review the arrangements whereby Housing Benefit is not available to an adult who is paying rent to a blood relative living in the same property. [5561]

Malcolm Wicks: We have no plans to review existing arrangements.

Non-state Pension

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of *(a)* people, *(b)* men and *(c)* women of working age have contributed to a non-state pension in at least three out of the last four years. [5220]

Mr. McCartney *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information is not available in the format requested. Such information as is available is in the table.

Proportion of working age people contributing to a private pension in three of the last four years, 1995–98

	Percentage
Male	58
Female	40
All	49

Notes:
1. Working age refers to all those aged between 20 and the State Retirement Age who are in work.
2. Information on 1998–01 (inclusive) is not available.
Source:
British Household Panel Survey

Income Support

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many working aged people had been living in families in receipt of income support or income-based job seeker's allowance for two years or more in 2001. [5236]

Malcolm Wicks *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information is in the table.

Income support/income-based jobseeker's allowance (JSA) beneficiaries under 60 years of age, where the current claim duration is two years or more as at February 2001

Thousand

	Income support	Income-based jobseeker's allowance
All beneficiaries	1,605.5	139.0
Claimants aged under 60 years	1,383.9	114.6
Partners aged under 60 years	222.6	24.4

Notes:
1. Working age is defined in this instance as people aged 16 to 59 inclusive.
2. Figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample and are therefore subject to a degree of sampling error.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred and are expressed in thousands.
4. Income-based JSA cases will include some claimants with an underlying entitlement to contribution-based JSA.
Source:
Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiry, February 2001.
Jobseeker's Allowance Statistics Quarterly Enquiry, February 2001.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people living in the London borough of Wandsworth are in receipt of a severe disablement allowance. [5413]

Malcolm Wicks: As at 28 February 2001, there were 1,000 recipients of severe disablement allowance in the London borough of Wandsworth. This figure is rounded to the nearest hundred and based on a 5 per cent. sample of the benefit computer system which excludes a small number of clerically held cases.

Departmental Press Release

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many press releases were issued by his Department *(a)* in total, *(b)* on the Minimum Income Guarantee, *(c)* on Benefit Fraud, *(d)* on the Winter Fuel Payment, *(e)* on Stakeholder Pensions and *(f)* on the Child Support Agency in (i) 1997, (ii) 1998, (iii) 1999, (iv) 2000 and (v) 2001 to date; and what the estimated total cost was of issuing press releases in each year. [5883]

Mr. McCartney: The information is in the table.

Year	Total for year[1]	Minimum Income Guarantee	Benefit Fraud	Winter Fuel Payment	Stakeholder Pensions	Child Support Agency
1997	290	—	17	1	4	10
1998	311	3	19	6	1	9
1999	260	6	49	2	8	10
2000	411	6	70	7	11	11
2001[1]	244	3	28	1	9	6

[1] To date
Notes:
1. These are the totals of "all" press releases issued in each year and the costs reflect these totals.
2. Numbers of press releases are recorded on a calendar year basis from January to December each year.

Costs are recorded in financial years from April to March and are as follows:

	£
1997–98	16,328
1998–99	18,461
1999–2000	16,220
2000–01	15,054
2001–02	[1]6,343

[1] estimated to date

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Bacon: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many disabled people were in receipt of the Disability Working Allowance in September 1999. [5445]

Malcolm Wicks: At 30 September 1999, there were 16,834 people in receipt of Disability Working Allowance.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement clarifying the JSA rules in respect of payments of additional moneys to fathers who are separated but share the care of their children. [4968]

Malcolm Wicks: Jobseekers are entitled to additional benefit in respect of dependants only if they are in receipt of Child Benefit. This ensures that Social Security benefits paid in respect of the same dependants are aligned and paid to the adult primarily responsible for their care.

Pensioners (Romford)

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in Romford benefit from *(a)* the Winter Fuel Allowance and *(b)* free television licences. [6272]

Mr. McCartney: Last winter, 2000–01, around 15,500 winter fuel payments were made, to people aged 60 or over, in Romford.

The BBC is responsible for the administration of the free television licence scheme, and we understand that a geographical distribution of the number of free licences issued is not available. However, we estimate that 5,700 people aged over 75 years old (who may benefit from a free television licence) live in Romford.

Widows' Pension Entitlement

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to review the provision whereby widows lose their pension entitlement on remarriage both in terms of *(a)* the basic state pension and *(b)* occupational pensions. [5563]

Mr. McCartney: There are no plans to change current provisions in regard to state pension for widows who remarry.

There is no requirement for occupational pension schemes to provide lifetime pensions for surviving spouses. Entitlement will depend on what is set out in the rules of each individual scheme. A number of public service schemes are currently considering the issue.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when the Government plan to bring forward legislation to allow carers over the age of 65 years to receive new awards of invalid care allowance. [6094]

Maria Eagle: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) today.

Minimum Income Guarantee

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of pensioners in the Henley constituency eligible for the minimum income guarantee have so far claimed it. [6091]

Mr. McCartney: Estimates of the numbers of eligible people who have not claimed the minimum income guarantee, are not available below national level.

As at February 2001, there were 1,100 minimum income guarantee claimants in the Henley constituency.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of pensioners in the Romford constituency who are eligible for the minimum income guarantee have claimed it. [6273]

Mr. McCartney: Estimates of the numbers of eligible people who have not claimed the minimum income guarantee are not available below national level.

As at February 2001, there were 1,600 minimum income guarantee claimants in the Romford constituency.

Care Homes

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what level of support funding is made available by his Department to care home owners; and if he will make a statement; [6392]

(2) what assessment he has made of the costs levied on care homes as a result of the introduction of *(a)* the national minimum wage and *(b)* the passing of the Care Standards Act 2000. [6393]

Maria Eagle: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Department of Health.

Annuities

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will calculate the date at which a single man of 65 years retiring today relying solely on pensions savings of £100,000 buying a level single annuity at market rates can be expected to become eligible for Income Support if the minimum income guarantee for pensioners continues to be linked to earnings. [6007]

Mr. McCartney: I will write to the hon. Member.

Stakeholder Pensions

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what size of stakeholder pension savings a woman currently of the age of 40 years will need under the current annuities system in order to buy in 2026, at the age of 65 years, an index-linked annuity to match the minimum income guarantee, assuming the MIG continues to be linked to earnings, earnings continue to grow at their current rate and current market annuity rates apply; [6364]

(2) what size of stakeholder pension savings a woman currently aged 50 years will need under the current annuities system in order to buy in 2016, at the age of 65 years, an index-linked annuity to match the pensioners' minimum income guarantee, assuming MIG continues to be linked to earnings, earnings continue to grow at their current rate and current market annuity rates apply; [6366]

(3) what size of stakeholder pension savings a woman currently of the age of 60 years will need under the current annuities system in order to buy in 2006, aged 65 years, an index-linked annuity to match the pensioners' minimum income guarantee, assuming MIG continues to be linked to earnings, earnings continue to grow at their current rate and current market annuity rates apply. [6365]

Mr. McCartney: I will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions for what reason unisex annuities were not adopted in the regulations introducing stakeholder pensions. [6369]

Mr. McCartney: Current legislation already requires annuity providers to provide a unisex annuity in respect of any protected rights in occupational and personal pensions.

Pensioner Income

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make it his policy to ensure that support to pensioners is increased in line with GDP growth; and if he will make a statement. [6063]

Mr. McCartney: We want all pensioners to have a decent and secure income in retirement and to share fairly in the rising prosperity of the country. We are providing significant extra help for pensioners, including a £200 winter fuel payment and a minimum income guarantee of more than £92 a week for single pensioners. We have increased the basic state pension by £5 a week for single people and £8 a week for couples. In 2001–02 alone, we will be spending £4.4 billion more in real terms on help for pensioners than was spent in 1996–97.

Jobcentre Plus

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what measures he is taking to ensure that *(a)* Jobcentre Plus pathfinder offices and *(b)* all future Jobcentre Plus facilities are fully accessible for (i) wheelchair users, (ii) people with impaired mobility, (iii) people with a hearing impairment, (iv) people with a visual impairment and (v) people with learning disabilities. [6191]

Maria Eagle: All the future planning for Jobcentre Plus will be in compliance with Disability Discrimination Act requirements for accessibility.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what provision is being made in Jobcentre Plus offices for private interview facilities. [6195]

Maria Eagle: Private interview rooms are an integral part of the design of Jobcentre Plus and they will be provided in all the public caller offices within the pathfinder areas opening from October this year.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what standards and targets are being set, and with what advice, to ensure disabled people's access to all Jobcentre Plus facilities. [6193]

Maria Eagle: The Jobcentre Plus offices have been designed by consultants who are specialists in Disability Discrimination Act requirements. Within the limitations of the current building stock being converted, the standard is to achieve maximum accessibility for disabled people. We also plan to enable people to have greater access to our services by telephone.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what arrangements are being made to train staff at Jobcentre Plus in *(a)* disability awareness, *(b)* disability legislation and *(c)* support services available to disabled people. [6194]

Maria Eagle: The following training will be delivered to staff working in Jobcentre Plus work-focused interview extension sites. We have consulted with disability specialist organisations on the format and content of the training. The training will cover disability awareness, disability legislation and the support services available to sick and disabled customers. This training will build on existing training on equal opportunities, working with Diversity and the Disability Discrimination Act.

1. Open Learning Handbook—this is in open learning format and is crucial prior learning for people attending their disability awareness training. The handbook covers:

   Awareness of disability etiquette and language;

   Disability Discrimination Act;

   Procedure to follow when submitting disabled customers to vacancies. Action to take if employer suspected of discrimination;

   Person Capability Assessment, permitted work rules, relaxation of benefit linking rules including DPTC;

   Disabled Employment Adviser (DEA) referrals.

2. Disability awareness training—two-day tutor-led workshop to consolidate the learning from the above Open Learning Handbook. The event covers:

   Disability—Impact on Employment;

   Disability Discrimination Act;

   Disability Symbol;

   Benefit Conditions for Disabled People;

   Programme provision for Disabled People;

   Networking and working in partnerships with specialist organisations.

3. In addition, Personal Advisers working with sick and disabled customers—two-day tutor-led event. This will include skills based practice in a role-play environment. The event covers:

   Role and responsibilities of the Incapacity Personal Adviser;

   Principles of New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP);

   Role of the Job Broker (NDDP);

   Encouraging customers to consider the Job Broking Service;

   Identifying Adviser concerns when working with sick and disabled customers;

   Considering the Traditional/New Perspective of disability;

   Identifying the customer's attitudes and barriers to employment. Offering support and guidance to help identify short/long term solutions to help prepare customers for training/employment;

   Networking and working in partnerships with specialist organisations;

   Dealing with concerns and reservations that the customer may have;

   Submitting job-ready customers to employers including Access to Work.

Jobpoint Terminals

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if an assessment of jobpoint touch-screen computer terminals has been carried out in terms of their

accessibility to visually impaired people; and if disability access was a consideration when the decision was made to purchase the system. [6192]

Maria Eagle: I can confirm that the jobpoint touch-screen terminals were designed and procured taking into account the requirements of people with disabilities, including those who are visually impaired. Human factors specialists, jobcentre staff and clients with disabilities were actively involved in the specification of requirements for the new system, in the evaluation of proposed designs and in the development and testing of the chosen solution.

The text on screen is displayed in a font colour, style and size with good contrast which conforms to RNIB guidelines on designing screens for visually impaired users. The flat screen technology used is easier to view and use than conventional glass screens, and provides a stable non-flickering, non-reflective image. This is the recommended solution for people with photo-sensitive epilepsy, as confirmed by the British Epilepsy Association. Accessibility by disabled people was also an important factor when developing the jobpoints. The selected design enabled comfortable access by wheelchair users as well as people standing or sitting down.

As the installation of jobpoints progresses we are continuing to review usage and public reaction to them, including their accessibility to people with disabilities. Future enhancements will take into account the developing needs of such users, including visually impaired people.

State Retirement Pension

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are in receipt of the state retirement pension in the UK. [6304]

Mr. McCartney: At 30 September 2000, there were about 3.75 million men and approaching 6.5 million women in Great Britain receiving the state retirement pension. Figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Source:

Pensions Strategy Computer System at 30 September 2000

Departmental Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will list the top 10 companies to which his Department contracted out its construction and refurbishment work out in the last 12 months. [6422]

Mr. McCartney: The top 10 companies (selected in relation to the value of work) contracted by our private sector partners, Land Securities Trillium, to undertake construction and refurbishment work on the former Department of Social Security estate are, in alphabetical, order as follows:

Anglian Building Products Ltd.

Dalkia Energy & Technical Services

Fairhurst Ward Abbotts Ltd.

G. S. Hall Ltd.

Haden Building Management Ltd.

Interface (Europe) Ltd.

Mansell Maintenance Services Ltd.

Mitie Managed Services Ltd.

R. Daubney & Co Ltd.

WKD Builders & Decorators Ltd.

The companies contracted by the Employment Service, while an Executive Agency of the Department for Education and Employment, in alphabetical order are:

David McLean

Drivers Jonas

Henry Boot Management Ltd.

Kier Western

Melville Dundas

Terrapin

Try Interiors

WS Atkins.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Denis Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many applications for the *(a)* care and *(b)* mobility component of Disability Living Allowance have (i) been refused and (ii) been successful during each of the last five years. [6295]

Maria Eagle: People claim Disability Living Allowance and may qualify for either the care or the mobility component or both. Relevant figures are in the table.

Disability Living Allowance applications: decisions from 1996–97 to 2000–01

			Benefit awarded Components awarded[1]		
Year	*All decisions*	*Benefit refused*	*All awards*	*Care*	*Mobility*
1996–97	515,795	276,126	239,669	184,708	184,005
1997–98	466,960	255,711	211,249	168,849	155,387
1998–99	383,794	208,197	175,597	148,988	126,299
1999–2000	371,431	190,390	181,041	155,225	129,377
2000–01	417,485	206,144	211,341	182,582	151,292

[1] Care and mobility components do not sum to 'all awards' because claimants can be awarded both.

Source:

Department for Work and Pensions Information Centre: 100 per cent. data.

Mr. Denis Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many applications were received for the *(a)* care and *(b)* mobility component of Disability Living Allowance in each of the last five years; and what average time was taken to determine an application in each of those years. [6286]

Maria Eagle: People claim Disability Living Allowance and may qualify for either the care or the mobility component or both. Relevant figures for the past four years are set out in the table. I will write to my hon. Friend about the figures for 1996–97 which are archived and not immediately available today.

Disability Living Allowance applications from 1997–98 to 2000–01

Year	Number of claims received	Average clearance time (days)
1997–98	461,359	37.23
1998–99	398,277	35.03
1999–2000	392,599	42.63
2000–01	410,269	46.80

Source:
The Department of Work and Pensions Information Centre: 100 per cent. data

Significant backlogs of work accrued in the processing of Disability Living Allowance in 2000 because of the growing caseload and the introduction in October 1999 of a new system of decision-making and appeals. The Benefits Agency tackled this backlog as a priority and it has now been substantially cleared. The average clearance time in the first three months of 2001–02 is 42.17 days.

Landlord Fraud

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many prosecutions by his Department there have been against landlord fraud in the Greater London area during the last 12 months. [6305]

Malcolm Wicks: The administration of Housing Benefit is the responsibility of local authorities and they would take forward the prosecution of landlords involved in benefit fraud.

Benefits (Regulatory Reform)

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he will begin public consultation on the introduction of changes to the Invalid Care Allowance and Vaccine Damage Payment schemes by regulatory reform orders. [6526]

Maria Eagle: As announced last autumn, we intend to introduce changes to both the Invalid Care Allowance and Vaccine Damage Payment schemes. The changes will allow carers over the age of 65 to claim Invalid Care Allowance and also extend entitlement by up to eight weeks after the death of the person being cared for. At the same time we intend to make provision to change the name of the benefit to Carer's Allowance.

The changes to the Vaccine Damage Payment scheme will extend the time limits for claiming payment, reduce the level of disability necessary to qualify and allow certain people previously disallowed under the time limit or disability threshold to have their claims reconsidered.

We intend to introduce these changes by regulatory reform orders introduced later this year. We will be issuing public consultation documents setting out our proposals on Monday 23 July 2001.

Social Fund

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he will publish his annual report on the social fund for 2000–01 and the social fund commissioner's annual report. [6527]

Malcolm Wicks: The Secretary of State's annual report on the social fund for 2000–01 (CM 5238) was published today and has been laid before Parliament.

The social fund commissioner's report has also been published today and copies placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Kenya

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent preliminary report by David Taylor concerning the Archer's Post training area in Northern Kenya. [2783]

Mr. Ingram: Neither I nor my officials have seen Mr. Taylor's report, nor was it commissioned by the Ministry of Defence.

European Trans-sonic Wind Tunnel

Jane Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will contribute to the funding of the European Trans-sonic Wind Tunnel. [4551]

Dr. Moonie: Over the next two years the Ministry of Defence will be making payments equivalent to some £1.3 million towards the European Trans-sonic Wind Tunnel at the prevailing euro rates of exchange. Some 68 per cent. of this sum will be recovered from the Department of Trade and Industry. There are no plans to contribute further funding beyond 2003.

Defence Aviation Repair Agency

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of DARA at RAF St. Athan; and if he will make a statement. [4638]

Mr. Ingram: The business case to possibly re-site DARA has recently concluded that due to high infrastructure costs, along with environmental and ecological considerations, it was not feasible to move DARA to Cardiff international airport.

The Welsh Development Agency has now re-focused its attention back to the St. Athan option and is working closely with the Defence Estates Agency, which is now taking the lead of this project, together with DARA, to provide a solution. DARA will be the hub of any development on the site.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact of the abandonment of the move from RAF St. Athan to Cardiff international airport on the restructuring of the Defence Aviation Repair Agency. [5317]

Mr. Ingram: Red Dragon has not been abandoned. In conjunction with the Defence Estates Agency, the Welsh Development Agency and DARA are now focusing on an option to develop the St. Athan site as an aviation business park and for other industrial and defence uses. Much of the work carried out to define DARA's requirements for its fixed-wing aircraft business unit for possible relocation to Cardiff airport will facilitate the St. Athan study. There has therefore been very little impact on the overall project, which has not been abandoned.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who decided that the proposed move of DARA at RAF St. Athan was not feasible. [5324]

Mr. Ingram: The recommendation was made jointly by the Chief Executives of the Welsh Development Agency and the Defence Aviation Repair Agency following a review meeting and was endorsed by the DARA ministerial board on 11 July 2001.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the environmental costs were of the proposed relocation of DARA at RAF St. Athan to Cardiff international airport. [5322]

Mr. Ingram: Two options were studied at Cardiff airport—a West side and an East side. The study revealed there would be extremely high infrastructure and land preparation costs of at least £30 million at both locations. Additionally, the studies concluded that there was an unacceptably high impact on protected species and listed buildings within the area, and that noise pollution may have been a problem.

The study also revealed that the available space that could be created was not sufficient to provide for potential future expansion.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the infrastructure costs were of the proposed relocation of DARA at RAF St. Athan to Cardiff international airport. [5323]

Mr. Ingram: Following completion of the studies for the possible move of DARA to Cardiff international airport, projected costs were estimated to be in the order of £65 million including provision for up to 46 fast jets and all supporting facilities. DARA's intention was to negotiate a leased facility option to avoid up-front capital costs.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason the Red Dragon project has been abandoned by the Defence Aviation Repair Agency. [5318]

Mr. Ingram: Red Dragon has not been abandoned, but its focus is now on developing first-class modern facilities at St. Athan that will help to reduce DARA's overhead so that it can compete favourably for long-term business. Only the Cardiff airport options have been eliminated from the study.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the consultants' report on the relocation of the Defence Aviation Repair Agency from RAF St. Athan to Cardiff International airport. [5319]

Mr. Ingram: No. The consultants' report is owned by the Welsh Development Agency and any decision to publish it would be a matter for them.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he intends to review the contract of the Chief Executive of the Defence Aviation Repair Agency; and if he will make a statement. [5320]

Mr. Ingram: The Chief Executive of the Defence Aviation Repair Agency is employed on a fixed term contract which has been extended to August 2003.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost was of the feasibility study into the proposed move from RAF St. Athan to Cardiff International Airport. [5321]

Mr. Ingram: The estimated feasibility study costs were £330,000, which were equally shared between the Welsh Development Agency and the Defence Aviation Repair Agency.

Merlin Helicopters

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the unit production cost is of Merlin helicopters. [3528]

Dr. Moonie *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many days on average were lost per employee in his Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from his Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5061]

Dr. Moonie: I will write to the right hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Petrol Stations

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies she has carried out on areas of the UK that are disadvantaged through the recent closure of large numbers of retail petrol stations; and if she will make a statement. [5306]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department has not carried out any studies. The Government are committed to ensuring that a free and open market between fuel suppliers operates within the UK petrol retail sector to the benefit of consumers. The Director General of Fair Trading continues to monitor the market to ensure that anti-competitive behaviour does not occur.

Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft

Mr. Cameron: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the timetable is for receiving bids and awarding contracts for the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft; and if he will make a statement. [5621]

Dr. Moonie: Bids for this prospective PFI project were received from two consortia on 3 July. We currently anticipate taking a formal investment decision on the programme in 2002, including selection of a preferred bidder should PFI remain the best value-for-money solution. The earliest contract award is scheduled for the first quarter of 2003.

Chemicals (Disposal)

Ms Atherton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish past and current methods of treatment for *(a)* pralidoxime mesylato, *(b)* arsenic chloride and *(c)* a mixture of ethylphosphonyl dichloride and ethylphosphonyl difluoride before disposal. [5790]

Dr. Moonie: The materials are no longer prepared in large scale in the Ministry of Defence and bulk treatment methods are not currently required. All laboratory waste is now incinerated or sent to a hazardous waste contractor as appropriate.

The following information outlines the procedures used for disposal of these chemicals during the decommissioning of Nancekuke in 1980. Pralidoxime mesylate was dissolved in water and treated with sodium hypochlorite (bleach) before being discharged into the sea though the effluent system.

Arsenic Chloride was hydrolysed in water and the product was treated with sodium hypochlorite. This was then diluted into the effluent system until the sodium arsenate discharged was less than 234 parts per million.

The mixture of ethylphosphonyl dichloride and ethylphosphonyl difluoride was hydrolysed then neutralised, probably with caustic soda, before being diluted and discharged into the sea through the effluent system.

Barton Stacey

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the Out of Bounds for All Purposes areas will be reviewed in Barton Stacey; and if he intends to include all residential properties on his Department's land at Barton Stacey in the review; [5439]

(2) if he will made a statement on Defence Estates' refusal to respond to requests for repair at Moody's farmhouse, Barton Stacey; [5437]

(3) if he will make a statement on the future of the first floor flat, Moody's farmhouse, Barton Stacey, operated by Defence Estates; [5441]

(4) if he will suspend work on Moody's farmhouse at Barton Stacey pending an inquiry; [5440]

(5) what assessment he has made of the future accommodation needs of non-commissioned officers in Barton Stacey; and if he will made a statement; [5438]

(6) what assessment he has made of the spare capacity of his Department's housing stock in Barton Stacey; and if he will make a statement. [5442]

Dr. Moonie: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Joint Strike Fighter

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the UK's participation in the down select stage of the Joint Strike Fighter programme. [6202]

Dr. Moonie: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Submarines

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost of each of the Trafalgar Class submarines was. [6203]

Dr. Moonie: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Defence Intelligence and Security Centre

Ann McKechin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are for the conduct of the Quinquennial Review of the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre Defence Agency. [6456]

Mr. Ingram: The Defence Intelligence and Security Centre (DISC) Defence Agency is responsible for the training of the armed forces and other intelligence agencies in intelligence and security disciplines; to maintain an operational capability; and to contribute to effective and timely advice to the armed forces on appropriate intelligence and security matters. A review of the DISC will be conducted by a team of military and civilian personnel under the leadership of a Ministry of Defence civil servant. The work will be overseen by a Steering Group chaired by the Director General Intelligence Collection, who is the owner of the agency.

The review will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 will conduct a challenging examination of the current arrangements, taking into account the requirements and views of customers, staff and other stakeholders, and identify organisational/structural options for future service provision. Phase 1, for which preliminary work has already been set in hand, is expected to be completed by the end of October 2001.

Following consultations, Phase 2 will develop detailed proposals for improvements in performance and service delivery, and is expected to be completed by the end of February 2002.

There will be a consultation with stakeholders throughout the process, but the Ministry of Defence is also keen to hear the views of other interested parties, including suggestions for improvements to the provision of services. Any comments should be sent by 15 September 2001 addressed to:

The Head of the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre
Review Team
Room 302
Old War Office Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2EU.

Manning Agencies

Mr. Hendrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are for the conduct of quinquennial reviews of the three services manning agencies. [6457]

Mr. Ingram: Reviews of the three agencies—the Naval Manning Agency, the Army Personnel Centre and the RAF Personnel Manning Agency—whose core business centres upon the posting and career development of service personnel, will be conducted in parallel by a single team of military and civilian personnel under the leadership of a senior Ministry of Defence civil servant. The work will be overseen by a Steering Group chaired by the Director General of Service Personnel Policy.

Conducting the reviews in parallel will allow the study team to look across the three agencies to identify more broadly ways to improve the means by which services and functions are achieved. Phase I will conduct a challenging examination of the current arrangements, taking into account the requirements and views of customers, staff and other stakeholders, and identify organisational/ structural options for future service provision. Phase I, for which preliminary work has already been set in hand, is expected to be completed by the end of September 2001.

Following consultations, Phase 2 will develop detailed proposals for improvements in performance and service delivery, and is expected to be completed by the end of December 2001.

There will be consultation with stakeholders throughout the process, but the Ministry of Defence is also keen to hear the views of other interested parties, including suggestions for improvements to the provision of services. Any comments should be sent by 15 September 2001 addressed to:

The Head of the Services Manning Agencies
Quinquennial Reviews Team
Open Plan Area
2nd Floor St. Giles Court
1–13 St. Giles High Street
London WC2H 8LD.

Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency

Sandra Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency for 2001–02. [6518]

Dr. Moonie: The Key Targets have been set for the Chief Executive of the Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency for the financial year 2001–02. The targets build upon progress made by the agency since it formed on 1 April 1997 and are as follows:

Pay, Allowances and Pensions Payments

While making 100 per cent. of payments of pay, allowances and pensions by the due date, the number of errors per 1,000 payments not to exceed 2.0 for pay and allowances and 1.5 for pensions.

Currency of Personnel Records and Liabilities Data

Update all time-critical records within two days from receipt of valid input.

Responsiveness

Resolve 95 per cent. of inquiries, including written and official help desk responses, within 10 working days of receipt, across all Services where information and/or authority is within AFPAA control.

Efficiency

To reduce the average unit costs to deliver AFPAA services by 3 per cent. in year.

RAF Chinook ZD576

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a member of the AAIB was present when the engines of RAF Chinook ZD576 were strip examined at Textron Lycoming's Stratford Connecticut plant. [6289]

Mr. Ingram: Yes. I also refer my right hon. Friend to the answer the then Minister of State for the armed forces gave to the hon. Member for New Forest, West (Mr. Swayne) on 23 April 2001, *Official Report*, column 99W.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what date the engineering member of the RAF Board of Inquiry into RAF Chinook ZD576 completed the Manager's Course for Chinook Mk2; [6287]

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the after flight servicing certificate for ZD576 for 1 June 1994 and the before flight servicing certificate for ZD576 for 2 June 1994. [6288]

Mr. Ingram: I will write to my right hon. Friend and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

European Rapid Reaction Force

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the commitment he proposes making from UK forces, broken down by service and composition of units, to the proposed European Rapid Reaction Force. [5701]

Mr. Hoon: There is no standing European Rapid Reaction Force. The UK has identified a pool of forces and capabilities which would enable it to make a significant contribution to operations in support of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, where NATO as a whole is not engaged. UK participation in any particular operation, and the nature of our contribution, would be matters for decision by the UK Government in the light of circumstances at the time.

In the maximum scale operation envisaged at Helsinki—a corps level deployment of up to 60,000 troops—the UK component could be around 12,500 strong. Maritime and air deployments of up to 18 warships and 72 combat aircraft could be made in addition.

The pool of forces identified by the UK provides for an element of choice in order to cater for differing operational, political or geographical circumstances. The full details of the forces identified are confidential, but the major elements are as follows:

Land

Either an Armoured or Mechanical brigade, each of which could be sustained for at least a year; or an Air Assault brigade which could be deployed for up to six months. Combat Support enabling capabilities such as Artillery, and Short Range Air Defence, and Attack Helicopters could be deployed in addition, supported by the appropriate complement of logistic enablers and national support troops.

Maritime

Maritime forces comprising one aircraft carrier, two nuclear-powered submarines, deployment of up to four destroyers/frigates, support vessels; and an amphibious task group, including one helicopter landing platform and submarines could not necessarily be sustained continuously for a whole year.

Air

Up to 72 combat aircraft (including Sea Harriers), with associated support aircraft including strategic transport. This number would be available for six months to cover initial theatre entry. For a longer term commitment the total would reduce.

The development of the EU Headline Goal and the commitment of EU member states to delivering the capabilities required are important steps in a wider

process of improving European defence capabilities. They will reinforce efforts being made nationally and multinationally, in particular, in response to NATO initiatives and in so doing strengthen the European contribution to the Alliance.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if RAF units based in Moray will be part of a UK commitment to the European Rapid Reaction Force; and if he will make a statement. [5702]

Mr. Hoon: There is no standing European Rapid Reaction Force. The UK has identified a pool of forces and capabilities from which it could contribute to EU-led operations in support of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, where NATO as a whole is not engaged.

The pool includes RAF elements based in Moray.

Service Personnel

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state for the most recent year the number of *(a)* civilian, including agency staff and *(b)* service personnel based in (i) each region or nation of the UK and (ii) on service overseas broken down by location; and if he will make a statement. [5704]

Mr. Ingram: The estimated number of civilian and UK Regular forces personnel in each Government office region of the UK, at 1 July 2000, is as follows:

	Service[1]	*Civilian*[2]	*Total*
United Kingdom	170,295	94,692	264,986
England	143,039	75,344	218,382
Wales	3,223	4,919	8,142
Scotland	15,080	9,329	24,409
Northern Ireland	8,387	3,195	11,582
Unknown	566	1,905	2,471
England[3]			
North East	1,421	484	1,905
North West	1,904	2,106	4,010
Yorkshire and the Humber	13,055	2,904	15,959
East Midlands	8,812	2,588	11,400
West Midlands	6,720	7,969	14,689
East of England	17,309	6,347	23,656
London	6,428	7,165	13,593
South East	49,620	23,360	72,980
South West	37,770	22,420	60,190

[1] Service figures are for UK Regular forces only so they exclude Gurkhas, Full Time Reserve Service personnel, Mobilised Reservists and the Home Service battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment.

Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel on board ships in home waters are included in the region of their ship's home port.

The figures estimating the service personnel in each Government office region are obtained from a different source from that used to obtain the number of personnel in overseas regions. Consequently, the sum of these two groups does not match the total number of UK Regular forces.

[2] Comprises UK based permanent civilian personnel counted on a full time equivalence basis

Due to rounding, totals may not match the sum of their constituent parts.

[3] By Government office region.

The number of civilian and UK Regular forces personnel abroad, at 1 April 2001, is as follows:

	Service	*Civilian*	*Total*
Overseas region	38,898	4,317	43,215
Continental Europe	26,717	1,304	28,021
Gibraltar	485	58	543
Cyprus	3,659	279	3,938
Elsewhere in Mediterranean, Near East and Gulf	1,864	33	1,897
Far East	301	20	321
Other locations	5,872	2,623	8,495

Notes:

1. Includes service personnel who are on loan to countries in the areas shown and Naval service and civilian personnel at sea.
2. All defence attaches and advisers and their staff are included under "other locations" and not identified within specific areas.

Precision-guided Missiles

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many precision-guided missiles the UK is proposing to procure from the USA; and at what cost. [5925]

Dr. Moonie: The Ministry of Defence intends to procure the Advanced Medium Range Air to Air Missile (AMRAAM) from the USA to equip Eurofighter. The cost of the AMRAAM procurement is expected to be in the region of £110 million. Disclosure of the information on missile numbers would harm UK defence and, accordingly, I am withholding it under Exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

A competition is also in progress to select a solution for the Light Forces Anti Tank Guided Weapon Capability. One candidate is a US solution. The cost of the procurement will depend on the option selected. These systems are also under consideration to meet other anti-tank requirements and the final quantities procured will depend on the outcome of Balance of Investment studies.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what NATO policy is with regard to precision-guided missile availability; and how many such missiles he anticipates being available to NATO via its member countries *(a)* including the USA and *(b)* excluding the USA, in each of the next two years. [5927]

Mr. Hoon: I will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the UK was approached to join the Netherlands-led consortium for the procurement of precision-guided missiles from the USA; and what the response was and the reasons for it. [5926]

Dr. Moonie: I will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Defence Diversification Agency

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his Department's policy is for recovering costs for services provided by the Defence Diversification Agency. [5930]

Dr. Moonie: The Defence Diversification Agency (DDA) makes no charge to the companies, mostly small and medium enterprises, with which it has dealings in support of the following DDA aims: extending technology

and expertise within the defence sector to civilian use; fostering partnerships and joint development programmes; and informing and assisting with diversification planning. In its dealings with other organisations, the DDA charges for additionally requested services on a full-cost basis, recovering all costs incurred, including an element for administration and overheads.

National Missile Defence

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure has been incurred by his Department on evaluating the likely cost and impact of any National Missile Defence facilities located in the UK. [5916]

Mr. Hoon: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which UK military officials were present during the recent National Missile Defence tests held by the United States of America. [5917]

Mr. Hoon: None, though an official from the British Defence Staff (Washington) watched live footage of the test at a US Department of Defence facility in Washington DC on the night of 14 July.

Service Personnel (Columbia)

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel from Colombia have been *(a)* attached to and *(b)* trained by UK military establishments in each of the past five years. [5921]

Mr. Ingram: None.

Meteor Missile

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the in-service date of the Meteor missile is; and if he will make a statement. [6200]

Dr. Moonie: The approved in-service date of Meteor is 2012. Meteor will provide the RAF with a world class missile and the programme demonstrates the clear commitment of the UK and its European partners to working together to deliver capability, for the benefit of our armed forces and our defence industry..

Pensions

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the entitlement of widows and widowers to keep their armed forces pension following remarriage. [5460]

Dr. Moonie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and the Social Security Minister announced, on 20 July 2000, that change would be made to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) to allow widows and widowers in receipt of an attributable forces family pension to retain their pension if they remarry or cohabit. These changes took effect from 31 October. Previously, an attributable widow's pension was withdrawn on remarriage or cohabitation, although it would have been automatically restored on second widowhood or at the end of a period of cohabitation. Those widows or widowers who had already remarried, and have had their attributable pension withdrawn, were not included in the change. Those in receipt of a War Widows' Pension payable under the Naval, Military and Air Force Etc. (Disablement and Death) Service Pensions Order 1983, or a non-attributable widows or widowers' AFPS pension are also not affected by the change; their pensions will still cease on remarriage or cohabitation.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many defence contracts are out to tender; what time scale is placed on each contract; and what is the estimated value of each contract. [6205]

Dr. Moonie: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Wind Farms

Mrs. Humble: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department was consulted on the proposals for off-shore wind farms at Cleveleys, Lancashire; and what comments it made. [6052]

Dr. Moonie: The Ministry of Defence was consulted on the proposed off-shore wind farm at Cleveleys, Lancashire (also known as Shell Flats) on 27 April 2001. The response, dated 16 July 2001, objected to the proposed siting of a wind farm at this position because it lies within 15 miles of BAE Systems Ltd. Warton. The MOD applies planning safeguards to this airfield because of its use for the developmental test and evaluation flying of new military aircraft.

Mission Simulator

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the software for the full mission simulator at Middle Wallop will be certified; and when he expects the Army Air Corps helicopter pilots will be training on the FMS. [6104]

Dr. Moonie: Software problems have delayed the availability of the Full Mission Simulator (FMS) for the UK WAH-64 Apache Attack helicopter. We currently expect the FMS to be available by May 2002, which will allow Army Air Corps pilots to begin training on it from June 2002.

MOD Sites

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's approach to company accreditation, registration and certification in relation to the potential sale to companies of his Department's redundant sites. [5553]

Dr. Moonie: When disposing of redundant sites, prior to accepting an offer, the Ministry of Defence checks the financial status of the company purchasing the site to ensure they have sufficient funds to complete the sale.

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his Department's policy to sell his Department's redundant sites to unregistered companies. [5554]

Dr. Moonie: It is the Ministry of Defence's policy to sell redundant sites at the highest price, and this could result in a sale to a registered or unregistered company.

Armaments Contracts

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a breakdown by nation and region of the UK of the total value of current MOD armaments contracts. [5703]

Dr. Moonie: Data on defence contracts are not collated under the heading "armaments". However, I draw the hon. Member's attention to the publication "UK Defence Statistics 2000", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Table 1.9 contains information on defence expenditure on equipment in the UK regions.

MOD Housing

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans the Government have to regain ownership from Annington Homes of former Ministry of Defence residential accommodation which is rented to provide housing for military personnel; and if he will make a statement. [6326]

Dr. Moonie: There are no plans for the Ministry of Defence to regain ownership from Annington Homes of the Service Families Estate.

Upholder Class Submarines

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proceeds have been derived from the sale of the Upholder submarines to Canada. [6201]

Dr. Moonie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my noble Friend Lord Robertson, the then Secretary of State for Defence, gave on 6 April 1998, *Official Report*, column 56W, to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Healey) and my answers to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 23 October 2000, *Official Report*, column 30W, and 19 December 2000, *Official Report*, column 89W, the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis) on 27 October 2000, *Official Report*, column 341W and the hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) on 20 December 2000, *Official Report*, column 184W. Canada has acquired the four ex-Royal Navy Upholder class submarines. The acquisition takes the form of an eight year lease with an option of outright purchase.

The first of the submarines was handed over to Canada on 6 October 2000 and the three remaining submarines will follow over the next 18 months. Canada has exercised its option to purchase outright the first of the submarines HMCS Victoria.

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the refurbishment costs for the four Upholder class submarines prior to their leasing to the Canadian Government. [6105]

Dr. Moonie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my noble Friend Lord Robertson, the then Secretary of State for Defence, gave on 6 April 1998, *Official Report*, column 56W, to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Healey) and my answers to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 23 October 2000, *Official Report*, column 30W and 19 December 2000, *Official Report*, column 89W, the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis) on 27 October 2000, *Official Report*, column 341W and the hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) on 20 December 2000, *Official Report*, column 184W. Canada has acquired the four ex-Royal Navy Upholder class submarines. The acquisition takes the form of an eight year lease with an option of outright purchase.

The submarines are being refurbished by BAE Systems Marine Ltd., Barrow-in-Furness to a standard acceptable to the Royal Navy. The cost of the refurbishment of the submarines is commercially sensitive and I am withholding the details in accordance with Exemption 13 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many PFI transactions have been overseen by his Department in each of the last 10 years; what his estimate is of the cost savings made in each of these transactions in comparison with the public sector alternative; what are the outstanding payments to be made in relation to these transactions for each of the next 15 years; and if he will make statement; [5795]

(2) if he will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the Private Finance Initiative; and if he will make a statement. [5796]

Mr. Ingram: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Departmental Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the top 10 companies to which his Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6425]

Dr. Moonie: I will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

HEALTH

Cancer

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research he has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated into relative survival rates following diagnosis of cancer in the UK and the rest of Europe. [63]

Yvette Cooper: The Department, through the European Union, is contributing to the funding of a set of studies known as the Eurocare studies. These are continually comparing cancer survival outcomes, treatment practice and diagnostic practice across Europe in patients diagnosed since the late 1970s. The Eurocare studies have produced evidence to suggest that, for many cancers, survival rates for patients a decade ago are lower in this country than in other comparable European countries.

The Department held a workshop in March 2000 to look at the Eurocare data on cancer survival rates, and there were two main conclusions. First, the poorer survival rates in the United Kingdom reported for many cancer types were to a large extent real. Secondly, for breast and colorectal cancer it appears that the poor

survival rates in the UK can be attributed at least in part to patients having more advanced disease at the time of diagnosis. The NHS Cancer Plan of September 2000 took account of these conclusions, setting out the actions required to achieve earlier diagnosis and to ensure patients receive high quality treatment.

The Department funded pilot work on the UK component of further Eurocare studies of survival rates for breast, bowel and prostate cancer in early 2000. The Department is currently considering whether to provide further support for this study.

The Department has recently commissioned, under the Inequalities in Health initiative, a project that investigates inequalities in cancer incidence and survival for the population of England and Wales over 45 years of age. The focus will be on socio-demographic inequalities that cannot be estimated from cancer registry data.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many urgent referrals for suspected cancer were made by general practitioners; how many such referrals were not seen within the two-week target; and how many breaches of the two-week target there were, expressed as a percentage of the relevant number of referrals, in the NHS in England, broken down by health authority and each hospital trust for the year ended 31 March. [3222]

Yvette Cooper: The information available has been placed in the Library. Data on urgent cases of suspected breast cancer are available for 2000–01, and for other suspected cancers for the final quarter of that year.

The White Paper "The new NHS—Modern, Dependable" set the standard that everyone with suspected cancer will be able to see a specialist within two weeks of their general practitioner deciding that they need to be seen urgently and requesting an appointment. These arrangements were guaranteed for everyone with suspected breast cancer from April 1999 and were introduced for all other urgent cases of suspected cancer during 2000. Central monitoring of the all-cancer two week standard began on 1 January 2001. Figures will be available later this year.

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish data on the incidence of cancer in the Avon area using the same criteria as those used by Dr. Chris Busby in his investigation of the links between cancer and proximity to Oldbury nuclear power station. [5893]

Yvette Cooper: Ward level data contain patient identifiable information and are therefore not in the public domain. Access to these data is granted to researchers following approval of the research project by the ethics committee of the relevant health authority.

Creatine

Mr. Gareth R. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what examination his Department has undertaken of the study by the French Food Safety Agency of the potential for cancer caused by the long-term use of creatine. [3728]

Yvette Cooper: The Food Standards Agency is aware of the French Food Safety Agency (AFSSA) report on creatine supplementation published on 23 January 2001. The European Scientific Committee on Food (SCF) published its opinion on the safety aspects of creatine supplementation on 7 September 2000. This concluded that though no important adverse effects have been reported, large-scale, well controlled studies are lacking.

The SCF are considering additional information on creatine including the AFSSA report. The FSA will consider the SCF conclusions when they become available.

Nutriprem 2

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what recent representations he has received regarding the prescription status of Nutriprem 2; [1169]

(2) when he expects to announce his decision on the change in the classification of Nutriprem 2 for prescription status; and if he will make a statement. [1170]

Ms Blears: We have had a number of representations from right hon. and hon. Members and others. We expect to announce our decision in due course.

MMR Vaccine

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has commissioned into possible links between gender and MMR vaccine damage. [1088]

Yvette Cooper: Studies undertaken by the Public Health Laboratory Service on adverse events after measles, mumps and rubella vaccine routinely include analysis of gender in both exposed individuals and non-exposed controls.

For example, two studies that have identified real adverse reactions to MMR vaccine look also at gender. No significant difference between the number of males and the number of females was identified when looking at the association between MMR vaccine and cases of idiopathic thrombocytopaenic purpura (ITP), whereas more males than females were found to have asceptic meningitis associated with the administration of brands of MMR vaccines containing Urabe strain mumps virus. This mirrored the higher rate of asceptic meningitis in males after wild mumps infection, (MMR vaccines containing the Urabe strain mumps were discontinued in the United Kingdom in 1992).

Although many studies have identified that more males are autistic than females, no studies have identified a causal association between autism and MMR vaccination.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of children aged *(a)* 1 to 2, *(b)* 2 to 3 and *(c)* 3 to 4 years have been given MMR inoculations i) in total and (ii) in each region. [2821]

Yvette Cooper *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* Coverage of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine in the childhood immunisation programme is measured at age

two and at age five. The most recent figures were published by the Public Health Laboratory Service in June and are as follows:

MMR percentage coverage figures for January to March 2001

	1 dose by age 2	*1 dose by age 5*	*2 doses by age 5*
Northern and Yorkshire	88.5	94.4	79.5
Trent	90.1	95	81.4
Eastern	87.6	92.5	76.8
London	76.4	84.7	60.5
South East	85.9	92.0	74.4
South West	86.6	95.0	82.7
West Midlands	87.8	94.9	78.0
North West	86.5	93.3	75.3
England	85.8	92.4	75.5

Source:
Public Health Laboratory Service Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of children aged *(a)* one to two, *(b)* two to three and *(c)* three to four years have been given MMR inoculations in Oxfordshire. [6100]

Yvette Cooper: The information available about children immunised against measles, mumps and rubella is contained in the Statistical Bulletin "NHS Immunisation Statistics, England: 1999–2000". A copy of the bulletin is in the Library and can also be found on the Department's website www.doh.gov.uk/public/sb0026.htm.

Healthy Eating

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she proposes to take to promote information and education for consumers on healthy eating. [1726]

Yvette Cooper: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Department of Health work closely together in this area.

The National Health Service Plan sets out a programme of action on diet and nutrition, including a five-a-day programme to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and a National School Fruit Scheme as part of a national campaign to improve the diet of children. These initiatives will include information for consumers.

The FSA disseminates information and advice to consumers on a wide range of dietary issues through written material and their website www.foodstandards.gov.uk. It also promotes "Catering for Health", a joint FSA/Department of Health document providing guidance on healthy catering practices for those involved in training caterers.

The FSA and the Department of Health also work closely with the Department for Education and Skills to provide information on diet and nutrition to school children through school-based activities.

Ministerial Travel

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last travelled on the London underground in the course of his official duties. [3679]

Ms Blears: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State travels using the most efficient and cost-effective mode of transport and would travel on the underground as and when appropriate. He has not, as yet, had occasion to travel on the London underground in the course of his official duties.

Prozac

Stephen Hesford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the delayed side effects caused by Prozac; [4266]

(2) what research he has undertaken into the delayed side effects caused by Prozac. [4242]

Ms Blears: As with all medicines, the safety of Prozac (fluoxetine) is continually monitored by the Medicines Control Agency (MCA) and the independent expert advisory body, the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM).

Part of this monitoring is via the Yellow Card scheme, where health professionals report suspected adverse drug reactions (ADRs) to the MCA/CSM. Doctors are reminded in the British National Formulary about the possibility of delayed adverse effects of medicines and that any suspicion of such an effect should be reported. All reports received are routinely assessed by the MCA. The other data sources regularly used in the monitoring of drug safety in the United Kingdom include formal safety studies, published medical literature, information from pharmaceutical companies and other regulatory authorities throughout the world together with information on the level of drug prescribing.

In 1998, the CSM conducted a detailed review of the safety profile of Prozac and other similar drugs with particular reference to concerns about dependence. The CSM advised that there was insufficient evidence to support such an association. This was published in "Current Problems in Pharmacovigilance" in September 2000.

UK Population Biomedical Collection

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress in establishing the UK Population Biomedical Collection. [4036]

Ms Blears: The Department, in partnership with the Wellcome Trust and the Medical Research Council, plans to establish a large prospective cohort of about 500,000 volunteers. The cohort will be used to study interactions between genetic, environmental and lifestyle risk factors to help determine the relative contribution of these factors in the development of chronic diseases in middle or adult later life. The scientific programme and the business plan for this initiative is under development with a view to obtaining final funding decisions early next year. It is anticipated that full cohort recruitment will start in 2003.

Free Prescriptions

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the savings

made by his Department since 1 April in relation to under-25 year olds residing in England receiving free prescriptions in Wales; [4544]

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of under-25 year olds residing in England receiving free prescriptions in Wales since 1 April. [4547]

Yvette Cooper: No information on English prescriptions dispensed in Wales since April has yet become available.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans he has to prevent under-25 year olds residing in England from receiving free prescriptions in Wales; [4548]

(2) what plans he has to liaise with the National Assembly for Wales to prevent under-25 year olds residing in England from receiving free prescriptions in Wales. [4543]

Ms Blears: None. The Department has regular contacts with the National Assembly for Wales at all levels on a wide range of health issues, but prescription charges and exemption arrangements within Wales are a matter for the National Assembly itself.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress being made on the replacement of wards on Copthorne South Site at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. [4442]

Yvette Cooper: The move from Copthorne South and achieving its closure is a recognised priority both locally and regionally. The Royal Shrewsbury Hospital National Health Service Trust and the Princess Royal Hospital NHS are finalising the outline business case for phase 1 of the scheme, in partnership with Shropshire health authority.

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many full-time equivalent staff work in *(a)* legal services, *(b)* estates management, *(c)* IT services, *(d)* administration and *(e)* management in (i) Royal Shrewsbury Hospital NHS Trust, (ii) Community and Mental Health NHS Trust and (iii) Shropshire health authority; and if he will make a statement. [4439]

Yvette Cooper: The table shows a breakdown of all the administration and estates staff information available centrally. It is therefore not possible to identify separately staff within information technology services and legal services.

NHS hospital and community health services (HCHS): Administration and estates staff as at 30 September 2000

whole-time equivalents

	All areas of work	*Central functions*	*Hotel and property*	*Scientific, therapeutic and technical support*	*Clinical support*	*Ambulance service support*
Shropshire Health Authority all staff	110	110	0	0	[1]—	0
Of which:						
Senior managers	[1]—	[1]—	0	0	0	0
Manager	30	30	0	0	[1]—	0
Clerical and Administrative	80	80	0	0	0	0
Royal Shrewsbury Hospitals NHS Trust all staff	370	130	30	50	150	[1]—
Of which:						
Senior managers	10	[1]—	0	[1]—	[1]—	0
Manager	10	10	[1]—	0	[1]—	0
Clerical and Administrative	320	120	10	50	140	[1]—
Maintenance and Works	20	0	20	0	0	0
Shropshire's Community and Mental Health Services NHS Trust all staff	410	230	90	10	50	30
Of which:						
Senior managers	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	0	0	0
Manager	10	10	[1]—	0	[1]—	0
Clerical and Administrative	340	220	30	10	50	30
Maintenance and Works	60	0	60	0	0	[1]—

[1] Five or less and greater than zero.

Note:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10
2. Due to rounding totals may not equal the sum of component parts. Figures exclude learners and agency staff

Source:

Department of Health Non-medical Workforce Census

Dental Services

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to allow patients an entitlement to free dental check-ups; and if he will make a statement. [4643]

Ms Blears: People under 18-years-old (under 19 if in full-time education); pregnant women; and women who have borne a child in the previous 12 months pay no charges for national health service dental care or treatment. Free dental care or treatment under the NHS is also available to those in receipt of certain benefits and tax credits. In addition, anyone on a low income may be entitled to full or partial remission of charges through the NHS low income scheme. We have no plans to introduce free dental check-ups for all and believe that it is a better use of scarce resources to focus help on those who need it most.

Medicines Control Agency

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of medicines prescribed to *(a)* children and *(b)* adults (i) do not have full marketing authorisation by the Medicines Control Agency and (ii) are not licensed for all ages. [4653]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* In the United Kingdom, there is a legal exemption to allow supply of unlicensed medicines under certain conditions. This allows a doctor or dentist to prescribe an unlicensed medicine or a licensed medicine outside its licensed indications ('off-label' prescribing) for the special needs of his individual patient. For instance a doctor may prescribe a medicine for a child that is licensed only for adults. The Department has not undertaken research into such prescribing, or monitored the level of its use. However, reports in the literature of results of hospital-based surveys indicate that such prescribing is extensive in children. For example, in a neonatal intensive care unit around 90 per cent. of neonates received off-label or unlicensed medicines[1]; in an intensive care unit around 70 per cent. of children received a medicine outside a licensed indication and 31 per cent. of prescriptions were for unlicensed or off-label use[2]; and in a study of children in medical and surgical wards 25 per cent. of the products prescribed during the admission were for unlicensed indications[3]. In primary care the incidence of off-label or unlicensed prescribing to the paediatric population is thought to be around 10 per cent.[4]. Copies of the referenced papers will be placed in the Library. No similar evidence exists for adults.

We recognise the critical importance of this issue and agree that children should have access to medicines that have been fully evaluated to the same high standards of safety, quality and efficacy as those available for the adult population. The problem is not confined to the UK, but affects the whole of Europe and the United States of America. The UK is leading the call for action at a European level. Medicines regulation in the UK derives largely from European legislation and an international approach to the problem is therefore needed.

We have consequently raised the profile of this issue at a European level, including taking the lead in developing a European guideline, adopted in 1997, to encourage companies to undertake appropriate clinical trials on the use of medicines in the treatment of children. This formed the basis for an international guideline, which came into operation in January in the European Union, and also applies in the USA and Japan. In addition, the Council of the European Union has asked the European Commission to bring forward measures to make sure that medicines for children are fully adapted to their specific needs. We are presently waiting for their proposals. However, the Commission has stated its intention to comply with this request. The UK will play an active role in the development of this initiative to ensure that effective solutions are found.

In addition the Committee on Proprietary Medicinal Products (CPMP), the scientific advisory committee of the European Medicines Evaluation Agency (EMEA), recognising the importance of this topic has announced its intention to set up a paediatric expert group to advise the EMEA and its scientific committees on all questions relating to the development and use of medicinal products in children. The UK has nominated representatives to this paediatric expert group.

In the meantime, the UK Government have taken important steps at a national level within the existing regulatory framework. The Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM), an independent expert committee that advises the licensing authority, asks companies for paediatric development plans where appropriate and has established a paediatric sub-group to provide expert advice on the licensing and safety of medicines for children. Product information for parents and carers is being simplified and the profile of monitoring the safety of medicines used in the treatment of children has been increased. Since 1998, the MCA has jointly funded a pilot scheme in Trent, the Paediatric Regional Monitoring Centre (PRMC), to stimulate reporting of adverse drug reactions (ADRs) to medicines used in the treatment of children. The scheme aimed to stimulate the reporting of suspected ADRs in children. The progress of the PRMC was reviewed after two years and it was concluded that it has been only of limited success. The MCA and CSM are now proposing to pursue a wider strategy to enhance existing data collection mechanisms and the lessons learned from the PRMC will be fully utilised in taking forward this strategy. The Government are committed to finding a long-term solution so that parents and carers can be reassured about the safety of medicines given to children.

I also refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Mr. Love) on 8 May 2001, *Official Report*, columns 147–48W.

[1] Conroy S. McIntyre J. Choonara I. Unlicensed and off label drug use in neonates. Arch. Dis. Childhood 1999: 80: F142–145

[2] Turner S. Gill A. Nunn AJ. Hewitt B. Choonara I. Use of 'off label' and unlicensed drugs in paediatric intensive care unit. *The Lancet* 1996: 347: 549–550

[3] Turner S. Longworth A. Nunn AJ. Choonara I. Unlicensed and off label drug use in paediatric wards: prospective study: BMJ 1998: 316: 343–346

[4] McIntyre J. Conroy S. Avery A. Corns H. Choonara I. Unlicensed and off label drug use in general practice. Arch Dis Child 2000: 83: 498–501

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what dates his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if he will make a statement. [4817]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

New Variant CJD

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have died from new variant CJD in each of the last five years broken down by *(a)* health authority and *(b)* unitary/district council where the person had been living. [5304]

Yvette Cooper: For reasons of patient confidentiality the information cannot be provided in the format requested. I refer the hon. Member to table 3 in the ninth National CJD Surveillance Unit annual report which gives data on deaths by region and county of onset from 1 May 1995 to 31 January 2001. A copy is available in the Library.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events his Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5039]

Yvette Cooper: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Cannabis

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what clinical trials have been conducted into the use of cannabis for treatment of MS; and when the results will be published. [5343]

Ms Blears: The Medical Research Council (MRC) is funding a clinical trial into the efficacy of cannabis extract and a single cannabinoid in the treatment of spasticity in multiple sclerosis patients. The trial is being run by Dr. John Zajicek, Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, and the MRC Clinical Trials Unit. The trial started recruitment in autumn 2000. It will take three to four years to complete from the point of recruitment and the results will be published subsequently in peer reviewed publications.

We are aware that a second study on the development of a medicine derived from cannabis has started. This work is expected to last for three years and is being led by Dr. Guy of GW Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Detailed evidence about clinical trials with cannabis and its derivatives was presented to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology inquiry into the therapeutic uses of cannabis. It provides information about clinical trials with cannabis and its derivatives that are completed and published or on-going. The date of publication of the on-going trials is a matter for the investigators and sponsors. This information is recorded in the Committee's reports "Cannabis: the Scientific and Medical Evidence" (9th Report Session 1997–98, HL Paper 151) and "Therapeutic Uses of Cannabis" (2nd Report Session 2000–01, HL Paper 50), copies of which are available in the Library.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4893]

Ms Blears: Throughout the summer break, a Department of Health Minister will be on duty, in line with paragraph 68 of the current Ministerial Code.

NHS Appointments Commission

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the *(a)* criteria which the NHS Appointments Commission must apply to making appointments and *(b)* membership targets which they have been set. [4186]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The criteria to be applied by the new National Health Service Appointments Commission are set out in the information pack sent by the Commission to all potential applicants. Copies of the information pack will be placed in the Library.

New, more ambitious, equal opportunities goals and objectives for all public appointments to NHS boards, special health authorities and Department of Health non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) were announced today. Full details will be placed in the Library.

Although Ministers are no longer directly responsible for making NHS appointments, we have set the Commission for Public Appointments equal opportunities goals and objectives which we will expect to see fully achieved by the end of 2004. While all appointments will be made on merit, we will expect the Commission to continue the progress already made in making NHS boards more representative of the communities they serve.

We have made huge strides over recent years in increasing the proportion of women and black and ethnic minority candidates appointed to NHS boards. 50 per cent. of all NHS board members are now women, and 12 per cent. are black or from ethnic minorities. This compares with figures of only 39 per cent. and 5 per cent. at the time of the 1997 general election. As a result, the boards of these bodies are now far more representative of the communities they serve.

Huge improvements have also been made in the representative nature of appointments to national bodies, with 37 per cent. of those appointed to Department of Health special health authorities and NDPBs now being women, and 15 per cent. being black or from ethnic minorities.

NHS Consultants

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS consultants there were in *(a)* England and *(b)* Buckingham in each year since 1980. [5642]

Mr. Hutton: Data showing the number of consultants working in the NHS in England for each year since 1987, and in Buckinghamshire for each year since 1994, are shown in the table.

Information regarding the number of consultants employed in the NHS in England prior to 1987 was not collected centrally. Prior to 1994 it is not possible to identify figures for the number of consultants working in Buckinghamshire.

Hospital, public health medicine and community health service medical and dental services

Number

As at 30 September	*England*	*Buckinghamshire*
1987	14,870	n/a
1988	15,200	n/a
1989	15,720	n/a

Hospital, public health medicine and community health service medical and dental services

Number

As at 30 September	*England*	*Buckinghamshire*
1990	16,370	n/a
1991	16,670	n/a
1992	17,140	n/a
1993	17,490	n/a
1994	18,050	210
1995	19,420	230
1996	20,300	230
1997	21,370	230
1998	22,220	240
1999	23,220	260
2000	24,310	270

Notes:
1. "n/a" denotes not known. Prior to 1994 some data were returned directly by the Oxfordshire region. It is therefore not possible to identify individual organisation's contribution to these figures.
2. Figures rounded to the nearest 10. "0" denotes less than 5.
Source:
Department of Health medical and dental workforce census

Derek Twigg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by health authority the average number of hours per week consultants spend working in the NHS at the latest date for which figures are available. [5426]

Mr. Hutton: Information is not held centrally or across health authorities on the average number of hours per week worked by consultants in the national health service. For information on the types of contract held by consultants, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 23 April 2001, *Official Report*, column 175W.

St. George's Hospital, Tooting

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the estimated shortage of doctors and nurses at St. George's hospital, Tooting is. [5416]

Mr. Hutton: The current vacancy rates at St. George's national health service trust are shown in the table.

Department of Health vacancies survey, March 2001 medical and dental and qualified nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff vacancies in St. George's hospital NHS trust—three month vacancy rates[1,2] and numbers[3]

	St. George's healthcare NHS trust
Number of three month medical and dental vacancies	[4]—
Three month medical and dental vacancy rate (percentage)	0.0
Number of three month qualified nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff vacancies	160
Three month qualified nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff vacancy rate (percentage)	10.3

[1] Three month vacancies are vacancies as at 31 March 2001 which trusts are actively trying to fill, which had lasted for three months or more (whole time equivalents)
[2] Three month vacancy rates are three month vacancies expressed as a percentage of three month vacancies plus staff in post from the September 2000 medical and dental and non-medical work force censuses (whole time equivalent)
[3] Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10
[4] Zero
Notes:
1. Percentages are calculated on unrounded figures
2. Percentages rounded to one decimal place
Source:
Department of Health Vacancies Survey 2001

In line with Government policy, St. George's has introduced a number of initiatives to combat nursing vacancies, including return to practice courses, overseas recruitment and open days for immediate appointment of nurses.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average waiting list times are for *(a)* knee and *(b)* hip operations. [5746]

Mr. Hutton: The average (median) waiting times for knee and hip operations during 1999–2000 are shown in the table. Data for 2000–01 are not yet available.

	Median waiting time (days)
Type of operation	
Hip replacement	201
Knee replacement	253

Source:
HES date 1999–2000

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list health authorities in England in order of the highest number of patients waiting for *(a)* an out-patient and *(b)* an in-patient appointment, indicating numbers of patients awaiting treatment, for (i) general surgery, (ii) urology, (iii) trauma and orthopaedics (iv) ear, nose and throat, (v) ophthalmology, (vi) oral surgery, (vii) cardiothoracic surgery, (viii) general medicine, (ix) cardiology, (x) thoracic medicine, (xi) infectious diseases, (xii) medical oncology, (xiii) geriatric medicine, (xiv) gynaecology and (xv) clinical oncology. [5815]

Mr. Hutton: We do not collect information on total numbers of patients waiting for out-patient appointments. A table showing numbers of patients waiting more than 13 weeks for their appointments following general practitioner referral has been placed in the Library.

Under the NHS Plan, the national health service will reduce the maximum wait for an out-patient appointment from over six months today to three months by the end of 2005. By the same date the maximum wait for in-patient treatment will be reduced from 18 months today to six months.

Smoking

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of those aged over 16 years smoked in *(a)* 1999, *(b)* 2000 and *(c)* 2001. [5225]

Yvette Cooper *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The latest available data are shown in the table:

Prevalence of cigarette smoking among adults aged 16 years and over, by gender

England 1999 *Percentage*

Gender	*Prevalence*	*Base*
Men	27	3,543
Women	26	4,224

Notes:
1. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole figure
2. Comparable data are not yet available for 2000 and 2001
Source:
Health Survey for England: Trend data for adults 1993–99

HIV

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new cases of heterosexually acquired HIV have occurred in each quarter since March 1997. [5379]

Yvette Cooper *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The table lists the number of cases of heterosexually acquired HIV diagnosed per quarter in England, reported until the end of June 2001.

Year (quarter)	*[1]Number of diagnoses*	*Annual total*
1997 (Q1)	240	
1997 (Q2)	227	926
1997 (Q3)	211	
1997 (Q4)	248	
1998 (Q1)	250	
1998 (Q2)	261	1,081
1998 (Q3)	273	
1998 (Q4)	297	
1999 (Q1)	307	
1999 (Q2)	344	1,304
1999 (Q3)	352	
1999 (Q4)	301	
2000 (Q1)	429	
2000 (Q2)	407	1,665
2000 (Q3)	423	
2000 (Q4)	406	
2001 (Q1)	408	
2001 (Q2)	217	

[1] The numbers, particularly for the most recent quarters, will rise as further cases are reported

Source:

Confidential clinician and laboratory reporting to the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre the Public Health Laboratory Service

NHS Direct

Mr. Levitt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce *(a)* a national textphone number and *(b)* interactive e-mail to the NHS Direct service. [5617]

Ms Blears: We are committed to introducing a national textphone service for NHS Direct and expect this to be fully implemented within the next twelve months. An interactive e-mail inquiry service will be introduced in November this year.

Nursing and Midwifery Council

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the draft order on the Nursing and Midwifery Council; and if he will make a statement. [5518]

Mr. Hutton: We are receiving a substantial volume of responses to consultation. These are currently being considered, and a report will be published in due course.

Worcestershire Social Services

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the level of funding available to Worcestershire social services department. [5748]

Yvette Cooper: For 2001–02, we have made available just over £84 million to Worcestershire county council for social services; this is 6.4 per cent. more than in 2000–01. Within this increase, Worcestershire's social services standard spending assessment has increased by 5.2 per cent.

Bed Blocking

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to reduce the level of bed blocking in Worcestershire. [5749]

Yvette Cooper: The number of delayed transfers of care in Worcestershire have been relatively steady, with no significant increases being reported. However, Worcestershire social services and the local health economy are working collaboratively to address existing needs, and several plans are currently in hand. These include:

- the joint appointment of a lead senior manager for older people
- expanded admission prevention and rapid response teams to prevent avoidable admission to hospital
- ensuring effectiveness of Medical Assessment Units at hospitals to support early diagnosis and appropriate transfer to other services when acute admission is not required
- further expansion of national health service rehabilitation services as part of our initiative on intermediate care
- maximise the capacity of local community hospitals, develop residential re-ablement services in areas which currently do not receive this service, and continue expansion of home-based re-ablement services.

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mr. Alan Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes discussed the Aventis study entitled "The Effect of Glufosinate-Resistant Corn on the Growth of Male Broiler Chickens"; and if he will place the minutes of this meeting in the Library. [5654]

Yvette Cooper: The chicken study was not part of the package considered by the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes.

The study was part of the dossier submitted to the French competent authority in support of an application to market glufosinate tolerant maize. The study has recently been considered by the Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs who are currently finalising their comments.

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia

Dr. Stoate: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of funding was allocated by his Department between 1996 and 2001 for research into benign prostatic hyperplasia. [5879]

Yvette Cooper: The main Government agency for research into the causes of and treatments for disease is the Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its funding via the Department of Trade and Industry. The Department of Health funds research to support policy and the delivery of effective practice in the national health service.

Between 1996 and 2001 the Department of Health and the MRC's estimated spend on research projects related to benign prostatic hyperplasia was over £1.5 million. In addition to these specific projects the Department of Health also provides funding for research commissioned by the research councils and charities that take place in the NHS. The total investment will therefore be considerably greater than the spend on individual projects. The National Research Register contains details of these projects and is available at: http://www.doh.gov.uk/research/nrr.htm.

Worcestershire Health Authority

Dr. Richard Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on performance related pay increases agreed for executive directors of the Worcestershire health authority in *(a)* 1998–99, *(b)* 1999–2000 and *(c)* 2000–01. [5495]

Yvette Cooper: I am informed that executive directors of Worcestershire health authority have received no performance-related pay increases for any of the three years specified.

Health authorities must publish details of pay awards to directors in their annual reports. These awards must be in line with national policy, and I understand that this has been the case for executive directors of Worcestershire health authority.

Medicines Commission

Mr. Lepper: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish the annual report of the Medicines Commission for 2000. [6516]

Yvette Cooper: We have received the report, and copies have been laid before both Houses of Parliament today in accordance with the requirements of section 5(2) of the Medicines Act 1968.

Bound volumes have been placed in the Library containing the 2000 reports of the Medicines Commission, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Advisory Board on the Registration of Homoeopathic Products, the British Pharmacopoeia Commission, the Veterinary Products Committee and the Independent Review Panel on Advertising.

We are glad to acknowledge the valuable work done by the distinguished members of the Medicines Act Advisory Bodies and thank them for the time and effort dedicated in the public interest to this important work.

Public Health

Mr. Prosser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Government's response to the Health Select Committee's second report on Public Health will be published. [6517]

Yvette Cooper: We expect to publish the Government's response to the Select Committee next week and copies will be placed in the Library.

Health Visitors and District Nurses

John Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health visitors and district nurses were employed in NHS hospital and community health services in each of the last three years for which figures are available. [5834]

Mr. Hutton: Data showing the number of health visitors and district nurses employed in the national health service in each of the last three years are in the table.

NHS Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS): health visitors and district nurses in England as at 30 September each year

	1998	*1999*	*2000*
Health visitors	12,570	12,800	12,830
All district nurses	14,260	14,260	14,450
Of which:			
1st level	12,610	12,640	12,590
2nd level	1,650	1,620	1,860

Notes:
Figures are rounded to the nearest 10
Due to rounding totals may not equal the sum of component parts
Source:
Department of Health Non-medical Workforce Census

John Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of health visitors and district nurses employed in NHS hospital and community health services are aged *(a)* over 50 and *(b)* over 55 years. [5833]

Mr. Hutton: Data showing the number and percentage of health visitors and district nurses employed in the National Health Service who are *(a)* over 50 and *(b)* over 55 years of age are shown in the table.

NHS Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS): number and percentage of health visitors and district nurses aged 50 and over and 55 and over in England as at 30 September 2000

	Headcount all ages	*Headcount 50 years or over*	*Percentage 50 years or over*	*Headcount 55 years or over*	*Percentage 55 years or over*
Health visitors	12,830	4,090	31.9	1,720	13.4
All district nurses	14,450	3,870	26.8	1,570	10.9
Of which:					
District nurse 1st level	12,590	3,480	27.6	1,390	11.0

Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10
2. Figures exclude learners and agency staff
3. Percentages rounded to one decimal place
4. Percentages calculated from unrounded figures

Source:
Department of Health Non-medical Workforce Census

NHS Complaints Procedure

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total cost to the NHS has been of claims made against it by patients for negligence, broken down by *(a)* amount of compensation paid to patients and *(b)* total amount paid to lawyers for both the NHS and claimants in legal costs, in each of the last 10 years. [5025]

Ms Blears: Figures on the amounts included in the National Audit Summarised Accounts for clinical negligence expenditure for the latest available years are as follows:

Year	£ million
1996–97	235
1997–98	144
1998–99	221
1999–2000	373

Source:
National health service summarised accounts for health authorities, NHS trusts and NHS Litigation Authority

Figures prior to 1996–97 are not available because clinical negligence was not separately identified in the accounts prior to that date.

Changes to accounting policies mean that these amounts are not directly comparable.

The summarised accounts do not show, and it is therefore not possible to break down separately what proportion of these figures are for compensation payments and legal costs.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total cost has been to the NHS of operating its complaints procedures in each of the last 10 years. [5023]

Ms Blears: The information requested is not available centrally.

Geriatric Emergencies

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list health authorities in England in order of the highest number of patients aged 75 years and over admitted for emergency treatment. [5810]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is shown in the table.

Emergency admissions of patients 75 and over to hospital, at quarter 4 2000–01

Health authority	Number of emergency admissions	Rate of emergency admissions per 1,000 population 75 and over
Birmingham	5,522	82.6
Dorset	4,946	62.1
Avon	4,924	61.9
East Sussex Brighton and Hove	4,921	60.1
Leicestershire	4,915	76.4
East Kent	4,492	76.2
Leeds	4,140	79.9
Norfolk	4,121	56.1
Lincolnshire	4,072	71.6
North Essex	4,008	56.6
West Kent	3,900	58.1
Nottingham	3,858	82.9
North Yorkshire	3,855	60.3
South Essex	3,850	70.9

Emergency admissions of patients 75 and over to hospital, at quarter 4 2000–01

Health authority	Number of emergency admissions	Rate of emergency admissions per 1,000 population 75 and over
Suffolk	3,731	62.1
Berkshire	3,700	78.0
South Cheshire	3,689	72.6
East Riding	3,605	81.9
Durham	3,481	79.3
North and East Devon	3,418	67.8
Newcastle and North Tyneside	3,321	92.0
Cambridgeshire	3,250	64.7
South and West Devon	3,222	55.3
Somerset	3,182	67.1
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	3,148	72.7
Sheffield	3,002	70.9
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	2,988	62.9
South Derbyshire	2,987	70.4
Calderdale and Kirklees	2,954	72.2
Wigan and Bolton	2,933	77.4
Gloucestershire	2,884	61.2
North West Lancashire	2,881	67.5
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	2,846	75.0
Tees	2,740	77.1
Southampton and South West Hampshire	2,733	58.6
Liverpool	2,700	90.8
South Staffordshire	2,698	73.9
West Surrey	2,642	54.9
Bradford	2,633	82.0
Wiltshire	2,623	58.8
East Lancashire	2,558	70.8
East and North Hertfordshire	2,488	70.9
West Hertfordshire	2,415	62.0
Oxfordshire	2,378	56.3
Northamptonshire	2,336	61.1
Buckinghamshire	2,291	56.4
Warwickshire	2,275	61.2
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	2,251	58.3
Worcestershire	2,231	54.3
Wirral	2,228	83.3
Gateshead and South Tyneside	2,227	82.1
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	2,222	61.2
West Pennine	2,212	73.0
Salford and Trafford	2,200	66.1
North Nottinghamshire	2,185	76.2
North Staffordshire	2,178	61.7
North and Mid Hampshire	2,158	62.7
Bedfordshire	2,130	63.8
Shropshire	2,123	66.1
West Sussex	2,073	26.4
East London and City	2,052	73.4
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	2,039	71.4
Barking and Havering	2,029	68.3
Northumberland	2,021	84.2
North Derbyshire	1,980	67.0
Morecambe Bay	1,960	71.5
Bury and Rochdale	1,904	75.6
East Surrey	1,841	51.5
North Cumbria	1,800	72.2
South Humber	1,789	74.8
Wakefield	1,786	82.9
Enfield and Haringey	1,754	63.8
Bexley and Greenwich	1,753	61.8
St Helens and Knowsley	1,723	81.9
Manchester	1,676	59.8
Sandwell	1,647	71.6
Camden and Islington	1,629	82.8
Doncaster	1,577	75.7
Kingston and Richmond	1,552	65.7
Sunderland	1,552	84.9
Sefton	1,551	60.5
Coventry	1,539	65.8
South Lancashire	1,493	75.1
North Cheshire	1,482	79.8
Stockport	1,349	60.8
Rotherham	1,337	78.4
Wolverhampton	1,323	74.2
Barnsley	1,315	78.2
Dudley	1,229	54.7
Bromley	1,216	49.8

Emergency admissions of patients 75 and over to hospital, at quarter 4 2000–01

Health authority	*Number of emergency admissions*	*Rate of emergency admissions per 1,000 population 75 and over*
Walsall	1,187	69.6
Croydon	1,161	61.1
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	1,138	52.5
Barnet	1,109	48.0
Solihull	1,105	69.1
Hillingdon	1,069	66.7
Herefordshire	832	54.2
Isle of Wight	797	53.1
Brent and Harrow	621	23.8

Source:
Quarterly returns at Quarter 4 2000–01

GPs

Mrs. Dean: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the remuneration paid to hospital practitioners to ensure that it is sufficient to fund the necessary locum cover for the general practitioner. [5931]

Mr. Hutton: We are currently considering with the profession the quantum and complexity of the work performed by general medical practitioners in hospitals and will consider the remuneration issues in this context.

Clinical Staff Numbers

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his target is for the number of *(a)* nurses and *(b)* doctors in the NHS for each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement. [5688]

Mr. Hutton: We have not set annual workforce targets. The National Health Service Plan targets are for 20,000 more nurses, 7,500 more consultants, 2,000 more general practitioners and 6,500 more therapists and other health professionals between 1999 and 2004. We have now rolled forward these commitments to provide 20,000 additional nurses and 10,000 additional doctors between 2000 and 2005.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is his policy to increase expenditure on health services up to the European Union average as a percentage of gross domestic product; and if he will make a statement. [5708]

Mr. Hutton: It is our intention to increase United Kingdom health care expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product towards the average of the European Union countries, which is around 8 per cent. of gross domestic product. On current spending plans, by 2003–04 total health spending in the UK will be around 7.7 per cent. of gross domestic product. Spending plans beyond that time will be made at the next spending review.

Biomedical Scientists

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to recruit more biomedical scientists to the NHS, and increase staff retention. [6396]

Mr. Hutton: The National Advisory Group for Scientists and Technicians has been charged with developing plans to improve workforce planning, education, training and career development among this group of staff, including biomedical scientists. The Department is also developing a specific strategy for improving recruitment, retention and return, liaising closely with employers, professional bodies and trade unions to raise the profile of the work of scientists.

The National Health Service careers service, http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk, has been extended to include scientists and technicians. A new generic scientists and technicians careers leaflet has also been prepared.

To address particular recruitment and retention problems in pathology laboratories pay increases of between 7.3 per cent. and 16.7 per cent. have been agreed from April 2001 for over 6,000 trainee Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers (MLSOs), MLSO1s and MLSO2s.

Neonatal Screening

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will announce a timetable for the national roll-out of the 20 universal neonatal hearing screening pilots. [5814]

Yvette Cooper: The universal neonatal hearing screening pilot is the first phase of a national roll-out of the service. The pilot phase will provide important information, about the impact on audiology and other support services, and will provide the data that is required to enable us to plan a national roll-out to a sensible, feasible time scale. An announcement will be made early next year about a timetable for national implementation, taking account of the initial findings of the pilot phase. The pace of change will be determined by the practical challenges that the pilot will uncover.

Breast Screening

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* screening and *(b)* non-screening pilot schemes his Department has established since May 1997; and how many have now been completed and (i) rolled out nationally, (ii) given a timetable for national roll out and (iii) placed under review subject to further consideration of their findings. [5813]

Yvette Cooper: Since 1997, the Department has run six screening pilots. These are screening for chlamydia (under review), colorectal cancer (in progress), universal neonatal hearing screening (in progress), using liquid based cytology and human papilloma virus testing in cervical screening (in progress), extending the National Health Service Breast Screening Programme to older women (completed and being implemented) and developing new ways of working in the NHS Breast Screening Programme (in progress). Information on all forms of non-screening pilot programmes could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Kidderminster Hospital

Dr. Richard Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the projected costs of the inquiry into elective surgery at Kidderminster Hospital. [3760]

Yvette Cooper: The independent clinical review of future elective services at Kidderminster Hospital is being undertaken because of the new opportunity presented by the planned increase in elective surgery through the implementation of the National Health Service Plan.

Professor Ara Darzi, Professor of Surgery at St. Mary's Hospital, London, is undertaking the review and is giving his services free of charge. The staffing support costs associated with the review have come from normal departmental running costs.

Expenses will be incurred for accommodation and hospitality and are commensurate with a clinical review of this type.

Trivax Vaccines

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money his Department has paid in compensation to families whose children are believed to have been damaged as a consequence of inoculation with Wellcome's Trivax vaccines from *(a)* batch 3741 and *(b)* batch 3732. [5694]

Maria Eagle: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Pickett's Lock

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment she has made of the impact of a new athletics facility at Pickett's Lock on existing international standard facilities in England. [97]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

BBC Digital

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will publish the correspondence between her Department and the BBC concerning the BBC's proposals for new digital services. [2411]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 5 July 2001]:* I have placed copies of all relevant correspondence between my Department and the BBC in the Libraries of both Houses, except those where rules of commercial confidentiality apply.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will publish recent representations made by the independent television sector concerning proposed new BBC digital services; and if she will make a statement. [2410]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 5 July 2001]:* Where permission has been given to do so, I will publish responses to the consultation once I have reached a decision on whether to approve the proposed new services.

Lottery Funding (Films)

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to her answer of 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 72W, on lottery funding of films, what the net income is from all sources to date, in each case, of films in receipt of lottery funding; and on how many screens each opened. [2815]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* This information changes constantly as a film is released at cinemas and on video or DVD in different countries at different times. The shelf life of films is long, which means there is no simple answer to the question. That is not to say that revenues are not known for films in which lottery money has been invested (in relation to territories and media where the distributor was entitled under the terms of the deal to a share of the revenues) but those revenues increase constantly and reflect changing market value and are therefore difficult to interpret.

The Maltings, Farnham

Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what advice was given by the South East Arts Board on the Maltings lottery application; what response the Arts Council of England made to this advice; on what basis the response was made; and if she will place the relevant papers in the Library; [2830]

(2) what information she has collated about the Maltings, Farnham; and if she will make a statement. [2829]

Tessa Jowell: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts will write to the right hon. Member, placing copies of her letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Bletchley Park Trust

Mr. Brady: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will provide financial assistance to the Bletchley Park Trust. [3744]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I recognise the work of the Bletchley Park Trust in commemorating the vital code-breaking work of those who worked at Bletchley Park during the second world war. I am not in a position to provide financial assistance, as the trust is not among the museums and galleries that are sponsored by my Department.

Television (Consumer Choice)

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when consumers will be able to choose the specific television channels they wish to purchase without having to take other channels as part of a package; and if she will make a statement. [4731]

Dr. Howells: As stated in the White Paper "A New Future for Communications", the Government are committed to ensuring that public service television channels are available to everyone, as now, free at the point of consumption, both before and after the switchover to digital television.

However, for other channels, it is up to the providing company to determine the arrangements for sale, subject to normal competition law.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many *(a)* PFI and *(b)* PPP contracts have been agreed by her Department in the last five years; how many have been satisfactorily completed; and in how many has compensation been (i) paid and (ii) claimed for performance failure. [4604]

Tessa Jowell: My Department has not itself entered into any PFI or PPP contracts over the last five years. The Royal Parks Agency, which is an Executive Agency, has entered into one PFI contract in the last five years, which has yet to be completed. To date there has been no compensation claimed or paid in respect of this project.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many PFI transactions have been overseen by her Department and its predecessors in each of the last 10 years; what her estimate is of the cost savings made in each of these transactions in comparison with the public sector alternative; what are the outstanding payments to be made in relation to these transactions for each of the next 15 years; and if she will make a statement. [5793]

Mr. Caborn: My Department has not itself entered into any PFI contracts. The Royal Parks Agency, which is an Executive Agency, has signed one PFI contract, which took effect in 1997, and the British Library, which is an NDPB, has signed two contracts, one of which took effect in 1997, the other is yet to begin.

My Department does not hold full details of these arrangements. I have contacted the RPA and the British Library for more information, and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available, placing a copy of my letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Published guidance on public sector comparators (PSC) notes that:

> "Accounting Officers should not rely solely on a straight comparison of a PSC bid to its PSC, which should never be regarded as a pass/fail test, but instead as a quantitative way of informing judgment." (Treasury Taskforce Technical Note No. 5: How to construct a public sector comparator).

As agreed with the National Audit Office, payments to contractors under PFI contracts are commercially confidential. Aggregate figures of estimated payments under all PFI contracts for the years 2000–01 to 2025–26 were published in table C18 of the Budget 2001 "Red Book".

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the Private Finance Initiative; and if she will make a statement. [5794]

Mr. Caborn: I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which Departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4889]

Tessa Jowell: In line with the Ministerial Code, a DCMS Minister will be on duty throughout the summer recess.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events her Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5033]

Mr. Caborn: Ministerial colleagues and I attend and support a great number of national and international events in support of DCMS policies. So too do my officials. To provide a full list of such events would incur disproportionate costs; however, I have listed a number of them to give a flavour of the type of awareness events in which the Department participates.

(a) National events

(i) Sponsorship

In October 1999, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Ministers for Sports and for the Arts hosted a conference to discuss a report by policy action team 10 on the impact of sports and the arts on social exclusion.

In July 2000, the Minister for the Arts hosted a seminar to discuss the impact of the Disability Discrimination Act on DCMS sectors.

In November 2000, the Secretary of State hosted the "Culture Culture" conference to promote the value of culture to a wide audience.

(ii) Departmental Attendance

In July 1997, the Minister for Sport attended the world cerebral palsy games in Nottingham.

In March 1999, the Minister for Sport attended the launch of the south-east rugby academy.

In October 1999, the Minister for Sport attended the launch of the English Federation for Disability Sport.

In October 1999, the Minister for Sport launched the England and Wales Cricket Board's Inner City Project at Lords.

In April 2000, the Minister for Sport opened the London Marathon Exhibition.

In May 2000, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Minister for the Arts accompanied the Queen to the opening of the Tate Modern.

In May 2000, the Secretary of State was the keynote speaker at the Call to Action breakfast launch for the second nationwide careers festival, organised by Springboard, which aims to raise the profile and promote the image of careers in the tourism and hospitality industry.

In December 2000, the Secretary of State and the Minister for the Arts accompanied the Queen to the opening of the British Museum Great Court.

In 2000, the Minister for Sport attended the Olympic youth and education initiatives.

In May 2001, the Secretary of State launched museums and galleries month at the National Portrait Gallery.

(iii) Similar departmental activities

In 1999 and following the publication of "Tomorrow's Tourism", DCMS has held two tourism summits to demonstrate the Government's commitment to the tourism industry and provide a good example of joined up Government.

In May 1999, the Department participated in the international anti-doping arrangement (IADA) which was hosted by the Minister for Sport.

In December 2000, the Secretary of State supported Sport England's "Sport and Health—Working Together" conference.

In April 2001, the Secretary of State chaired the tourism forum in April 2001 and launched the national recovery strategy following the outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

(iv) Message of support

Ministers deliver many messages of support to a wide range of organisations. For example, many go directly to the tourism industry, such as at events organised by the British Incoming Tour Operators Association, the Association of British Travel Agents, the British Hospitality Association and other trade bodies. Messages are also provided to arts and sport organisations engaged in national events. Additionally messages aimed at, for example, the audiovisual industry will be provided for specific events.

(b) International events

(i) Sponsorship

In 1998, DCMS made a particular effort to involve the public in the UK Presidency of the EU and to highlight broader EU cultural links. We produced a widely-distributed publication to promote UK cultural events with a European element; also a booklet of European poetry and a summary of the Department's presidency-related meetings and their conclusions.

With sponsorship from DCMS, poems by European poets appeared on London Underground and Eurostar trains, and on postcards and other media distributed around the country.

Ministers and officials have participated in a number of events linked to the national lottery, including the annual lottery monitor conferences and events organised by the Coalfields Communities Campaign. My Department sponsored a national lottery coalfields conference in 1998.

In November 2000, the Minister for the Arts hosted a seminar for cultural attachés at the House of Commons. The meeting was part of the visiting arts cultural attachés training and briefing programme, designed to familiarise the cultural attachés with policies and trends in the UK. Around 50 cultural attachés attended, representing a wide cross section of countries and experience.

In February 2001, the Minister for Broadcasting hosted a dinner, in conjunction with DTI at Lancaster house. The event allowed the Minister to emphasise Government support for improving UK television export performance to key figures in the broadcasting industry.

DCMS Ministers recognise the importance of boosting the UK tourism industry and promoting Britain's contemporary image abroad. For that reason, they have also attended many events aimed at supporting Britain's tourist industry at home and abroad. This has included giving a presentation on tourism policy in Berlin during the UK's Presidency of the EU in 1998 and promoting Britain and the Commonwealth games, which will take place in Manchester during the golden jubilee year 2002.

(ii) Departmental Attendance

In October 1997, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport addressed English Heritage's international conference on world heritage at the Queen Elizabeth conference centre in London. The Conference was held to mark the 25th anniversary of UNESCO's world heritage convention.

In 1998, the Minister for the Arts attended the European composers seminar, as part of the UK's EU Presidency.

In September 1998, the Minister for Sport met the President of the International Olympic Committee in Switzerland.

In October 1998, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport gave the keynote speech at an international conference in Bath on world heritage cities.

In February 1999, the Minister for Sport attended the International Olympic Committee conference on doping in sport.

In July 1999, the Minister for Sport attended an event relating to the 2006 world cup bid which incorporated anti-doping discussions in Washington.

In November 1999, the Heritage Minister delivered a speech at the inaugural meeting of a new international archaeological body—the Europae Archaeolgiae Consilium—at an event hosted by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

In November 1999, the Minister for Sport attended the Royal Society of Medicine conference on medicine, sport, ethics and the law.

In June 2000, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport visited the USA and Canada where, among other engagements, he discussed tourism satellite accounts with the Canadian Minister of Trade.

In June 2000, the Minister for the Arts spoke at the Royal Commonwealth Society about the contribution of the contribution of the Commonwealth communities to British culture.

In July 2000, the Minister for the Arts hosted a reception at the Royal National theatre. The exhibition was opened by President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia and featured works by the Georgian artist, Petre Otskheli.

In October 2000, the Minister for Tourism visited Sweden and Finland as part of the Prime Minister's step change initiative. In addition to her other engagements she visited the local offices of the British Tourist Authority and met the Swedish Minister for Tourism. She also received the French Minister for Tourism in London.

In October 2000, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Prime Minister hosted a US museum of television and radio international conference event in London. The event was aimed at strengthening co-operation with the US and promoting UK broadcasters' growing imports overseas.

In November 2000 the Minister for Sport participated in the international consultative group on anti-doping in sport (ICGADS).

In February 2001, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport spoke in Strasbourg at an international conference on the benefits of involving the arts in the healthcare environment. The conference was arranged and attended by the French Ministers of Culture and Health.

More recently, and in light of the effect on tourism of the foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreak, Ministers visited New York and Toronto to get across the message that Britain is still open for business.

DCMS sports directors, or a representative, attend regular meetings of EU members states, approximately three per year.

Ministers attend a wide range of events arranged by successive EU Presidencies. These can include informal meetings to discuss issues related to tourism, sport, culture, audiovisual and other issues.

DCMS officials attend official level EU working groups and meetings of the Council of Europe.

(iii) Similar departmental activities

In February 2000, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport met the Brazilian Ambassador to discuss the Brazil 500 festival.

In June 2000, the Minister for Sport met Danish Sports Minister to discuss Euro 2000.

In June 2000, DCMS and other UK bodies took part in a cross-sectoral study on the management of cultural diversity undertaken by the Council of Europe.

In March 2001, the Minister for the Arts signed a declaration initiated by Sweden, then EU Presidency, on behalf of all EU Ministers of Culture. The declaration condemned the Taliban for its decision to destroy all statues and non-Islamic shrines in Afghanistan.

In March 2001, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Minister for the Arts met Julian Nida Rümelin, the German Minister of State in the Federal Chancellery with responsibility for Culture and Media. One of the subjects discussed was the issue of German tax on visiting artists.

In order to promote British art and culture and to support the international role of the DCMS and FCO and their Ministers, the Government Art Collection (GAC) has displayed works of art for UK/international events such as the British-French summit at Canary wharf (1997), the G8 summit in Birmingham (1998) and the European enlargement conference at Lancaster house (1998). Additionally, the GAC has worked closely with the FCO to display works of art by contemporary British artists in the new British embassies in Moscow and Berlin (both opened in 2000), works of art which demonstrate important cultural links between the UK, Russia and Germany.

In addition to attending events overseas, Ministers and officials have met a number of tourism representatives including from China, Spain, Belgium, the Ukraine, Poland, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, Malaysia, Yemen and South Korea.

(iv) Message of support

Ministers send many messages of support to a wide range of organisations, too numerous to list here.

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport sends many messages of support to art and cultural organisations, including a message of support each year to the European Union Baroque orchestra, which is a training initiative of the European Commission, and was founded in 1985. It aims to give pre-professional orchestral experience to young baroque musicians.

Messages of support issued by the Sports Minister have included to the Robert Clack school, for their South Africa rugby tour; the Lincolnshire Schools Cricket Association under-16 team for their forthcoming tour of South Africa; hockey and netball teams from the King Henry VIII school for their tour of South Africa; the national hockey champions of England 2000 under-14s and under-16s' forthcoming tour of Malaysia and Australia and Brighouse high school's football club's forthcoming tour of South Africa.

Television Licences

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the annual cost would be of charging a television licence fee to all pensioners below the age of 75 years of *(a)* £25 and *(b)* £50. [4916]

Dr. Howells: The estimated cost, at current television licence fee levels, of providing concessionary licences for all pensioners below the age of 75 is *(a)* £425 million a year for a £25 licence fee and *(b)* £290 million a year for a £50 licence fee, in both cases excluding administrative costs.

Agencies (Staff)

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what is the total number of employees of *(a)* the New Opportunities Fund, *(b)* UK Sport, *(c)* the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, *(d)* Sport England, *(e)* the Millennium Commission and *(f)* the Advisory Committee on Libraries; and how many of these are (i) women, (ii) members of ethnic minorities and (iii) registered disabled. [5124]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information is shown in the following table.

Employees

Sponsored body	*Total*	*Women*	*Members of ethnic minorities*	*People who have declared a disability*[1]
New Opportunities Fund (NOF)	176	115	24	5
UK Sport	81	38	6	0
National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA)	38	25	5	0
Sport England	444	222	68	8
Millennium Commission	89	57	11	0
Advisory Council on Libraries	0	0	0	0

[1] Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, people have (from 2 December 1996) no longer been registered as disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944

Digital TV

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport by what date every household in Worcestershire will be able to receive digital television by cable or terrestrial distribution systems; and if she will make a statement. [5753]

Dr. Howells: The Government are committed to ensuring that everyone who currently receives free-to-air channels on analogue will continue to do so digitally after the switchover to digital television, whether by terrestrial, cable or satellite means. Maps showing the predicted digital terrestrial television (DTT) coverage from each of the main UK DTT transmitter sites and relays have been placed in both Houses on CD-ROM. These show that parts of Worcestershire are covered by transmissions from the Malvern, Bromsgrove, Ridge Hill and Lark Stoke transmitters. The BBC and ITC, who are responsible for the DTT transmission network, are now considering, in consultation with the digital broadcasters, manufacturers, consumer groups and Government, how to improve the core coverage of all digital television multiplexes across the UK. Cable services are available in Worcestershire, although coverage concentrates on areas of dense population. It is for cable operators to decide on the roll out of their digital services and viability of extending services to non-urban areas.

Films

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) how many films were refused British certification in *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2000, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 1998; [5557]

(2) what was the average time taken by her Department to make a decision on British certification once a film had been submitted in each of the last four years; [5558]

(3) how many films received British certification in *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2000, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 1998. [5556]

Dr. Howells: No central record is kept of cases being refused. The Department is, however, aware of the following numbers of films being refused certification:

Year	*Film*
2001[1]	1
2000	1
1999	1
1998	0

[1] 1 January to 30 June

The number of certificates issued is as follows:

Year	*Certificates*
2001[1]	400
2000	685
1999	142
1998	196

[1] 1 January to 30 June

No central record exists of the time taken, but the bulk of applications in each of the last four years have been dealt with within two weeks. Some applications take longer to process where, for example, incomplete information is provided by the applicant.

Millennium Dome

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the disposal of the contents of the dome; and if she will indicate the sum raised. [4969]

Dr. Howells: A sale of contents held in March raised £3.5 million. The New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC) is in the process of selling other items by private treaty sales. It is too early to predict the amount raised from the private treaty sales.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how souvenir items for sale to visitors at the dome were disposed of following the closure of the dome; and for what value. [4970]

Dr. Howells: Some unsold items were sold in February and March, both as part of the auction of dome contents and by retail sales at the same time. Other items are being sold privately. Because the process is not complete, it is not possible to state a value.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the role played by Lord Levy in facilitating sponsoring arrangements for the Millennium Dome. [5476]

Dr. Howells: Lord Levy was asked to help with advice to the New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC) on fundraising in June 1998. Responsibility for negotiating and securing sponsorship rested with NMEC.

Gambling

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what action her Department is taking to combat gambling by young people; and if she will make a statement. [6373]

Mr. Caborn: The report of the Gambling Review Body (Cm 5206), which was published on 17 July, makes a number of recommendations intended to control gambling by youngsters, including recommendations that (with limited exceptions) there should be a minimum age of 18 for all gambling and that gaming machines should not be allowed on premises which are not licensed for gambling. We have now started a process of public consultation on the report, and will be reporting our conclusions to Parliament in due course.

Television News Contracts

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to monitor the award of the new independent television news contract and to ensure continued plurality of news sources. [5462]

Dr. Howells: The award of the new news provider contract for Channel 3 is not a matter for Government. ITV will make the decision to award the contract to one of the two companies that have been awarded nominated news provider status by the Independent Television Commission. It is the responsibility of the ITC to ensure that only companies meeting the required standard are granted such status. This system ensures that ITV has a provider of high quality national and international news that can offer competition to the BBC's national news services and in turn guarantees plurality for viewers.

Sporting Events

Mr. Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she will respond to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on the staging of international sporting events. [6015]

Mr. Caborn: The Government will respond shortly.

Lottery Funding

Mr. Denis Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what progress is being made to ensure that community groups and local authorities in disadvantaged areas receive an increased share of lottery funding. [6298]

Mr. Caborn: The Government are keen to see a fair distribution of funding throughout the country and has directed distributors to ensure that all parts of the UK have access to lottery funds. In addition, we have asked the community fund to target £100 million of its funds, and the new opportunities fund an additional £50 million to some 50 areas which are both deprived and have received less lottery funding than other parts of the country. The scheme will be UK-wide and will begin in April 2002.

Alcohol Sales

Ms Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what further measures she intends to take to prevent the sale of alcohol in licensed premises to those already intoxicated. [6229]

Dr. Howells: It is already an offence for a licensee to permit drunkenness in licensed premises or to sell alcohol to a drunken person. Anyone on licensed premises who procures or attempts to procure any alcohol for consumption by a drunken person commits an offence; and it is also an offence to aid a drunken person in obtaining or consuming alcohol in licensed premises.

We expect to bring into force shortly those parts of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 which will extend the offence of permitting drunkenness to managers of licensed premises who do not themselves hold the licence, and extend to all bar staff the offence of selling alcohol to drunken persons in licensed premises. At the same time, the new police powers to close down disorderly and excessively noisy licensed premises will be brought into force.

Sir Walter Raleigh

Mr. Swire: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has for the relocation of the statue of Sir Walter Raleigh from Raleigh Green, Whitehall. [5950]

Dr. Howells: My right hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) announced on 15 November 2000 that the statue of Sir Walter Raleigh, which is currently sited in Whitehall, should be moved to a new home at the Royal Naval college, Greenwich. English Heritage, who are the statue's guardians, are managing the relocation with the intention of completing the re-siting by the autumn.

The Arts

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the total value of (i) Government assistance and (ii) lottery assistance since 1997 has been in cash and real terms to *(a)* opera companies, *(b)* ballet companies, *(c)* classical orchestras and *(d)* popular music groups; and if he will make a statement. [6307]

Dr. Howells: We have asked the Arts Council of England for the information requested, and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts will write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available, placing copies of her letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Music Industry

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what specific assistance she has given to the promotion and development of popular music initiatives; what specific schemes she has put in place to promote entry into the music industry for young artists; and if she will make a statement. [6308]

Dr. Howells: My Department's aim is to ensure a successful and thriving music industry in the UK, working in partnership with the industry and other Government Departments. The industry relies on the creativity of our young artists for its future success, and I want to see this young talent protected, nurtured and promoted, regardless of musical genre. My Department has no specific initiatives in relation to popular music, but supports the activities of a wide range of industry bodies in this area. In relation to the entry of young artists into the music industry, I naturally fully support the Government's new deal for musicians programme.

Sporting Events (Government Assistance)

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the total value of assistance provided by the Government to the *(a)* English FA bid for the 1996 European Championships, *(b)* UK bids for the Olympic games since 1997, *(c)* UK bids for the Commonwealth games since 1997, *(d)* English FA bid for the World Cup since 1997 and *(e)* Scottish FA bid for the 2008 European Championships is in (i) cash and (ii) real terms; and if she will make a statement. [6309]

Mr. Caborn: Financial assistance provided by the Government to these bids was as follows:

(a) the English Football Association received no financial assistance from the Government in respect of its successful bid for the 1996 European Football Championships;

(b) there have been no UK bids for the Olympic games since 1997;

(c) the bidding process for the 2002 Commonwealth games closed in November 1995 with the award of the event to Manchester. There has been no financial support for the Manchester bid since 1997;

(d) direct financial assistance from the Government to the English Football Association's bid for the 2006 World Cup consisted of £20,000 in respect of the travelling expenses of the Prime Minister's Special Envoy. My Department paid certain other travelling expenses in respect of the bid, and these items were fully reimbursed by the Football Association,

(e) the Scottish Football Association has yet to decide whether to make a formal bid for the 2008 European Championships. UK Sport has contributed £5,000 from grant in aid funding to the cost of a feasibility study. No other Government assistance has been provided to date. Should a bid be made, funding to assist with the bidding process will be a matter for Scottish Ministers to determine.

Administrative costs were incurred by the Department of National Heritage, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and by other Departments involved in providing non-financial support for the English Football Association's bids for the 1996 European Football Championships before 1996, and the 2006 World Cup between 1997 and 2000. These cannot be quantified.

Foot and Mouth

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment she has made of the effects of the foot and mouth outbreak on tourism in Henley; and if she will make a statement. [6097]

Dr. Howells: Our best estimate to date is that the loss of revenue in 2001–02 by the English tourist industry is likely to be around £120 million per week averaged over the eight-month tourism season. We have not attempted to apportion this overall estimate to individual regional tourist boards or individual tourism destinations, such as Henley, since the available data do not enable this to be

done with a sufficient degree of reliability. We are currently updating this estimate in the light of the latest available data.

Independent Football Commission

Derek Twigg: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when the appointment of the Chairman of the Independent Football Commission will be made. [6448]

Tessa Jowell: The Government have agreed to the request from the football authorities to appoint the first chairman of the Independent Football Commission—the new self-regulatory body which they are establishing. The process of appointing the chairman is being conducted in the open and transparent manner that applies to public appointments. An independent public appointments advisory panel was convened to consider the applications which had been received by the Department for this post. The panel has made its recommendations to me. I am currently considering them. I therefore hope to make an announcement on the appointment shortly. I shall place a copy of any announcement I make on this issue in the Libraries of both Houses.

Royal Parks Agency

Mr. Colman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she will respond to the recommendations in the report on the five-year review of the Royal Parks Agency; and if she will make a statement. [6513]

Tessa Jowell: The report's main conclusion and recommendation was that responsibility for the royal parks should remain with central Government and that the Royal Parks Agency (RPA) should continue to manage them although the Department should work towards establishing the royal parks as a non-departmental public body (NDPB). The Government accept this recommendation and would like to see early progress to the change of status to NDPB. It is our intention, therefore, to establish the royal parks as an NDPB from 1 April 2002. I shall retain responsibility for the management of the royal parks but will be seeking Parliament's approval of an order under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 to delegate my day-to-day responsibilities to the new body. The Government have accepted all the recommendations in the report for improving the efficiency of the Royal Parks Agency. The chief executive has already achieved much in implementing these. This work will continue as part of the preparations for NDPB status. The Government accept the recommendation that the royal parks should be policed by a uniformed force. My Department and the Home Office are discussing the future relationship between the royal park constabulary and the Metropolitan police service so as to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective policing of the royal parks.

The Government believe that NDPB status, with the management of the royal parks guided by an expert and experienced board, will provide the royal parks with greater freedom and focus to continue to build on the high standard of presentation of the royal parks which has improved even further in recent years.

New Millennium Experience Company

Mr. Colman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she will publish the annual report and financial statements of the New Millennium Experience Company for the period ending 31 December 2000. [6514]

Dr. Howells: I have today placed copies of the New Millennium Experience Company's annual report and financial statements for the period ending 31 December 2000 in the Libraries of both Houses.

Sport England

Mr. Colman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what progress has been made on the review of Sport England. [6515]

Mr. Caborn: As part of this Department's programme of quinquennial reviews of its public bodies, I am today announcing the conclusion of the first stage of the Sport England quinquennial review.

Sport England is responsible for developing and maintaining the infrastructure of sport in England, for distributing national lottery funds for sport in England and for five national sports centres. The first stage of the review concludes that the development of sport is important to both the Government's wider objectives and the public, and that Sport England should continue its unique role in the development of sport in England on behalf of the Government but at arm's length from it.

The first stage of the review has made a series of recommendations for consideration in the second stage of the review to enable Sport England to further become a responsive and high quality organisation responsible for the development of sport in England and play its part in implementing the proposals set out in the Government's plan for sport published earlier this year.

We aim to complete the second stage of the review in the autumn. Copies of the first stage report have been placed in the Libraries of the both Houses.

Royal Parks (Culling)

Mr. Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) how many foxes have been removed from the Royal Parks in each of the last four years; and what the method employed was; [1826]

(2) how many and what species of animals have been culled in the Royal Parks in each of the last four years. [1825]

Mr. Caborn: Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its chief executive, William Weston. I have asked him to reply.

Letter from William Weston to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 20 July 2001:

I have been asked by the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport to reply to your Parliamentary Questions about the number and species of animals culled in the Royal Parks in each of the last four years, and the number of foxes removed from the Royal Parks in the same period.

I am sorry I have been unable to reply sooner, but these figures were not available centrally and it takes some time to collate them from around the eight Royal parks for which I am responsible. I should also point out that we have only started collecting this data since 1998.

We removed foxes either because they are having a serious effect on the population of other wildlife or because they are in poor health, mainly due to mange. We have removed the following numbers, using humane traps and shotguns.

1998: 125

1999: 92

2000: 83

2001: 110

I enclose a list of other species culled in each of the last four years.

Animal species	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*
Red deer	331	193	240	105
Fallow deer	402	217	235	361
Squirrel	1,915	891	1,282	588
Rat	55	50	23	36
Rabbit	3,568	2,770	2,450	776
Mice	0	4	9	0
Greylag Geese	0	0	25	0
Canada Geese	0	0	97	0
Moorhen	12	11	18	0
Coot	8	7	12	0
Crow	740	335	541	429
Magpie	230	161	210	153
Jay	9	0	0	0
Pigeon	1,061	2,035	2,176	518
Hornet	12	0	2	0
Wasp	12	19	33	0

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Building on Success

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will place in the Library the written responses she has received to the Green Paper "Building on Success". [2593]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* A full list of respondents to the consultation exercise on the Green Paper will be placed in the Library before the end of the month. The list does not include responses that have requested anonymity.

I have asked officials to ensure that a full list is also sent to the hon. Member. Copies of any individual written responses from the list will be made available to Members on request.

The summary and analysis of the responses and the list of respondents will be available via the departmental website www.dfes.gov.uk before the end of the month.

Head Teachers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on her Department's proposals to give extra responsibilities to head teachers. [2968]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* We are committed to giving head teachers in successful schools greater managerial discretion in matters of pay and staffing. We plan to say more about this in a White Paper to be published in the autumn.

Tuition Fees

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many and what proportion of students *(a)* paid the full cost of, *(b)* paid the partial cost of and *(c)* were exempt from contributing towards the cost of tuition fees, each year since 1998; and if she will make a statement. [4069]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* In England and Wales, under the Student Support Scheme, students and their families make a contribution towards tuition fees only if they can afford to do so. Students are assessed on family income.

In 1998–99 and 1999–2000 (the latest year for which data are available) the following table shows the proportions of students making a full/partial/nil contribution towards their fees. The proportion of students who are exempt from making any contributions is expected to increase to 50 per cent. in 2001–02, when the income threshold at which parents are expected to contribute will increase from £17,805 to £20,000 and the threshold for spouses will rise from £15,070 to £17,200. These increases are 10 per cent. above inflation.

All students

Academic year	*1998–99*[1]		*1999–2000*[1]	
	Number of students (000s)	*Percentage of students*	*Number of students (000s)*[2]	*Percentage of students*
Full student/parent/spouse contribution[3,4]	84	35	168	35
Partial student/parent/spouse contribution	49	20	94	20
Nil student/parent/spouse contribution[5]	108	45	215	45

[1] 1999–2000 data are provisional and as such may change.

[2] Student Support Scheme funding arrangements in higher education came into effect from the start of the 1998–99 academic year; 1999–2000 was the second year of the scheme accounting for the increase in student numbers.

[3] In 1998–99, includes students who withdrew from their course before the fee due data (and therefore no fee payment was made by Local Education Authorities).

[4] In 1998–99, includes an estimated 15,000 students who, because they did not expect to receive a contribution to their fees from public funds, did not make an application to their local authority.

[5] Includes students on courses where the fees were not subject to income-assessment (e.g. PGCE courses; and some other ITT courses; and some courses at private colleges).

Source:

F503G Survey of LEAs in England and Wales.

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what discussions she has had with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in the Welsh Assembly regarding the conclusions of the Independent Investigation Group on Student Hardship and Funding in Wales; and if she will make a statement; [5754]

(2) what assistance she plans to give the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in Wales to address student poverty; and if she will make a statement. [5755]

Margaret Hodge: I met the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning on 17 July and we discussed the recent report of the Independent Investigation Group into Student Funding and Hardship. It is for the Assembly itself to respond to the recommendations in the report addressed to them and which fall within their powers.

Applications are increasing, and drop-out remains consistently low. The figures published by UCAS on 20 July show that overall the number of UK students applying to higher education has gone up by 2.4 per cent. In particular, there has been a 4.7 per cent. increase in the number of applications from students over 21. The latest Student Income and Expenditure Survey does not give evidence of widespread student hardship. However, we have increased support going to the most vulnerable students, those with dependants or with disabilities. For student parents entitled to receive maximum financial support, this could be up to £13,110—or £17,425 if student loans are taken into account—per year. But we are not complacent, and will continue to review the effectiveness of the arrangements against our widening access and increasing participation objectives. Arrangements for further education student support are matters for each country but we will continue to keep in touch with each other when considering future developments.

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the benefits of abolishing tuition fees throughout England and Wales; and if she will make a statement. [5756]

Margaret Hodge: The new funding arrangements for higher education introduced in 1998–99 provide for contributions from students, their parents and the taxpayer. From this autumn, 50 per cent. of students will make no contribution to tuition fees following changes in the parental-income threshold.

There is no evidence to suggest that the new arrangements are deterring students from entering higher education. The total number of full-time students enrolled in HE has risen in each of the two years since contributions to fees were introduced. The latest published figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service show a 2.4 per cent. rise in UK applicants for entry in autumn 2001 and the figures for mature students show a rise of 4.7 per cent.

Academic Medicine

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on her plans to increase recruitment into academic medicine. [4422]

Margaret Hodge: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Teachers (Early Leavers)

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many teachers left the profession in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage of the total this represents. [3702]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

SATs

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of seven-year-old children in Sure Start areas achieved level 1 or above in key stage 1 English and maths tests in *(a)* 1999–2000 and (ii) 2000–01. [4801]

Yvette Cooper: Sure Start is expected to have an impact on children's performance at key stage 1 performance in the medium term. Baseline information to enable this to be measured is currently being collated from the 180 Sure Start programmes that are operational and should be available by the end of 2001.

School Exclusions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of pupils were excluded in 1999–2000. [4808]

Mr. Timms: The Department collects data on permanent exclusions but not on fixed term exclusions. Information on permanent exclusions is shown in the table.

Number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of the school population , January 1999–2000

	Percentage[1]
Maintained Primary	0.03
Maintained Secondary	0.21
Special	0.40
All Schools	0.11

[1] The number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of full and part-time pupils of all ages (excluding dually registered pupils in special schools) in January

The latest permanent exclusions data were published in a Statistical First Release "Permanent Exclusions from Schools, England 1999/2000" on 19 July, copies of which are available from the Library, or alternatively can be accessed from the Department for Education and Skills statistical website www.dfes.gsi.gov.uk/statistics.

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what guidance her Department provides to schools and local education authorities concerning temporary and permanent exclusion policies. [5019]

Mr. Timms: The Department's Circular 10/99, Social Inclusion: Pupil Support, contains the Secretary of State's guidance on the appropriate use of exclusion—both fixed term and permanent—procedures to be followed on exclusion and provides guidance on the duties and roles of those involved in the process. My right hon. Friend intends to consult schools on changing the guidance in order to provide more support for head teachers.

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to collect statistics on the number of children and young people who receive fixed-term exclusions from schools. [5027]

Mr. Timms: Local education authorities collect data from their schools on fixed-term exclusions. These data are not collated nationally, nor are there currently plans to do so.

Qualifications

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of 19-year-olds had at least one level 2 qualification or equivalent in 2000. [4806]

John Healey: The proportion of 19 to 21-year-olds in England with at least one level 2 qualification or equivalent, as measured by the autumn Labour Force Survey, was 75.3 per cent. in 2000.

Child Care

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of the first 1 million child care places provided under the National Childcare Strategy were taken up by under-fives using *(a)* daycare nurseries and *(b)* childminders. [4915]

Mr. Timms: The National Childcare Strategy has not reached a total of 1 million child care places yet. Since April 1997, 382,685 new child care places have been created. Of these, 132,538 have catered for under-fives. 82,298 of these were daycare places in day nurseries, pre-schools and playgroups[1] and 50,240 were with childminders.

[1] Daycare is defined as child care of three and a half hours or more. It is not possible to break down the figures for new places to show those in nurseries only.

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what her Department's estimate is of the number of full-time child care places in the United Kingdom for children up to 5 years. [4912]

Mr. Timms: At the end of March 2000 the Survey of Children's Daycare Facilities in England showed that there were 264,200 places in day nurseries and 320,400 places with childminders[1]. We do not have figures for the United Kingdom as a whole.

[1] The childminding places cater for children aged 0–8. We are not able to separate childminding places to show only those places that cater for 0–5-year-olds. These figures do not include full-time places in pre-schools and playgroups, which traditionally provide care for less than three and a half hours a day but are increasingly expanding into daycare, because a breakdown is not available.

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate has been made of the proportion of families that require full-time day care for one or more children at some point in their working life. [4913]

Mr. Timms: The Department does not have a figure for the demand by families for child care over their working life but it does have information on the use of day care.

The Department commissioned a survey of parents' use of and demand for child care. This survey shows that 28 per cent. of parents had used some formal child care in the last week of the survey. The survey shows that 31 per cent. of parents who had used some child care in the last year said there had been times when they would have needed or liked more child care but they were unable to obtain it.

Pupil Expenditure

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much was spent per pupil in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in each English local education authority in each year since 1990. [5332]

Mr. Timms: The information requested is contained in a table copies of which have been placed in the Library. Information based on net institutional expenditure per pupil is given in real terms for each local education authority from 1990–91 to 1999–2000, the latest year for which this information is available.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4890]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In line with paragraph 72 of the Ministerial Code, a Minister for this Department will be on duty throughout the summer adjournment.

Student Hardship

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what information she has collated on the earnings of *(a)* female graduates and *(b)* male non-graduates; and if she will make a statement on alleviating female student hardship. [4989]

Margaret Hodge: Latest Labour Force Survey figures, for Spring 2000, show average weekly earnings of £458 for female graduates with first degrees and above. Average earnings figures for the category of male non-graduates are not available from the Survey report but, within that category, men with no qualifications earn on average £293 per week. By comparison, women earn £217 per week on average.

The Government recognise that female single parents and some female mature students may have additional financial needs. They have benefited in particular from the fourfold increase in access and hardship funds since 1997–98 and will be major beneficiaries from the new child care package in 2001–02, including a child care grant typically covering 85 per cent. of actual costs. For student parents entitled to receive maximum student support, this could be up to £13,110—or £17,425 if student loans are taken into account—per year.

Medical Schools

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are training to become medical doctors at medical schools in the Greater London area. [4882]

Margaret Hodge: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Students[1] on first degree medical courses[2] in Greater London 2000–01

	Number
Men	3,210
Women	3,286
Total	6,496

[1] Includes all home domiciled and overseas students studying at higher education institutions in Greater London.
[2] Includes pre-clinical and clinical medicine. Graduate entrants to medical schools apply to study under the standard undergraduate route, joining in year 3 of the 6 year course. They are therefore included in these figures.

School Buildings (North Somerset)

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much money has been allocated for *(a)* new school building and *(b)* school building repairs and improvement in north Somerset for each year since May 1997. [5876]

Mr. Timms: A total of £1.1 million has been allocated since May 1997 specifically for new school building in north Somerset, based on the demand for new pupil places as assessed by north Somerset local education authority. The authority has been allocated a further £30.7 million for school building repair and improvement work, making a total capital allocation of £31.8 million. The following table shows the breakdown of the total amount allocated for each year since May 1997. Additional allocations for 2002–03 and 2003–04 will be made later this year.

£000

Financial year	New pupil places	Repair and improvement	Total capital
1997–98	80	4,216	4,296
1998–99	468	4,412	4,880
1999–2000	—	3,499	3,499
2000–01	553	7,172	7,725
2001–02	—	4,542	4,542
2002–03	—	2,843	2,843
2003–04	—	4,068	4,068
Total	1,101	30,752	31,853

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the condition of school buildings in North Somerset; and if she will make a statement. [5877]

Mr. Timms: Information on the condition of school buildings should be currently available from the Local Education Authority.

Authorities' condition data, supplied to support the Department for Education and Skills' arrangements for appraisal of Asset Management Plans, are being validated with a view to publishing national benchmarking data later this year.

Drugs

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate she has made of the number of exclusions from schools that arose from drug-related incidents in each year since 1997. [5885]

Mr. Timms: The Department does not keep records of the numbers of drug-related incidents leading to exclusion. In the absence of data it is impossible to make a reliable estimate.

Newly Qualified Teachers

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of newly qualified teachers have left the teaching profession in each of the last five years for which information is available. [5396]

Mr. Timms: The percentage of regular newly qualified teachers leaving the maintained schools sector[1] in England within one year of entering service is as follows:

Financial year left service	Percentage of new entrants leaving
1994–95	3.5
1995–96	4.1
1996–97	3.9
1997–98	4.0
1998–99	4.1

[1] Teachers moving from the maintained schools sector to the Independent sector, FHE sector, miscellaneous or other non-school service or providing FE for adults are included as leavers.

Education Funding (North Somerset)

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what the 2001–02 Education SSA for North Somerset Council would be if the real terms percentage increase were the same as the English national average; [5874]

(2) what the real terms difference between the education spending in 2001–02 by North Somerset Council and the education SSA for the same authority in 2001–02 is, expressed as *(a)* cash and *(b)* a percentage. [5875]

Mr. Timms: If the percentage increase (4.64 per cent.) in North Somerset's SSA were the same as the national average (4.78 per cent.) its SSA for 2001–02 would be £74.62 million.

Based on North Somerset's Budget Statement (final outturn information is not yet available), total education revenue expenditure for 2000–01, net of special and specific grants, was £72.24 million. North Somerset's education SSA for 2001–02 is £74.51 million: at 2000–01 prices this is £72.69 million. This is £0.45 million or 0.6 per cent. more than North Somerset's budgeted expenditure for 2000–01.

Teachers Numeracy Test

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for what reason teachers in England are required to pass the national numeracy test before being qualified to teach. [5869]

Mr. Timms: Trainee teachers in England are required to pass the numeracy test to ensure that they have the necessary numeracy skills to carry out their professional roles effectively. In order to raise standards in schools and ensure that all children achieve their full potential, we need newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who possess these skills. Evidence from Ofsted has confirmed that the

numeracy standards for a significant number of teachers in schools in England have not been good enough in the past.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for what reason teachers who have qualified in Scotland or Wales are allowed to teach in England without passing the national numeracy test. [5868]

Mr. Timms: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 5 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 299W.

Schools (Oxfordshire)

Mr. Cameron: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills which secondary schools in Oxfordshire have applied for specialist status; and what awards have been made to date. [5625]

Mr. Timms: The following Oxfordshire schools successfully applied for designation:

	Designation
Banbury School	Technology—1995
Bicester Community College	Technology—1998
Didcot Girls High School	Technology—1997
Henry Box School	Language—2001
King Alfred's School	Technology—1999
Lord Williams's School	Sports—2001
Peers School	Technology—1995
St. Birinus School	Technology—1997
Wheatley Park School	Arts—2000

Applications have also been received from Gillotts School and Bartholomew School for technology college status. This may not be a comprehensive list of unsuccessful applicants as there is no central record of all applications since 1994.

Mr. Cameron: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many teacher vacancies there were in Oxfordshire in each of the years from 1997 to 2001. [5626]

Mr. Timms: The number of vacancies for full-time teachers in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in Oxfordshire is shown in the table.

	Number of vacancies	*Vacancy rate*[1]
January		
1997	1	0.0
1998	7	0.2
1999	11	0.3
2000	8	0.2
2001	16	0.4

[1] The vacancy rate is calculated by dividing the number of vacancies by the sum of full-time qualified regular teachers plus teachers on full-time secondment for a term or more.

Graduates (Salaries)

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what her most recent estimate is of the average salary of graduates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Wales upon leaving education. [5887]

Margaret Hodge: The annual survey of members of the Association of Graduate Recruiters, "Graduate Salaries and Vacancies 2001", reported typical starting salaries for newly qualified first degree graduates in the UK ranging from £12,000 to £32,000 in 1999–2000. The median starting salary for new graduates in 1999–2000 was £18,000 compared to £17,500 in 1998–99. Comparable figures for Wales are not available.

Labour Force Survey statistics show that, on average, graduates working full-time earn around 20 per cent. more than workers with two or more 'A' levels as their highest qualification.

Performing Arts

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the levels of applications for performing arts courses and the funding available to such students; and if she will make a statement. [5752]

Margaret Hodge: The level of applications for performing arts courses continues to be high. We do not collect national totals for applications. There were 9,662 full-time undergraduate drama students and 9,922 undergraduates of music in 1999. While we do not have figures for students applying for performing arts subjects in FE, the Arts continue to be one of the largest curriculum areas.

Students on HE courses which are designated for student support may apply for help with student fees and loans. Students on FE courses may apply for learner support funds and those aged 16–19 in the 56 Education Maintenance Allowance pilot areas have access to the allowances.

Over 1,600 students are currently participating in the Dance and Drama Award Scheme which provides the standard HE support for fees and loans or maintenance to help with fees and living costs for those on the vocational route. Competition for these places continues to be high.

The Music and Ballet Scheme trains over 750 pupils and offers assistance towards fees calculated relative to parental income.

Computers within Reach Scheme

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the Computers within Reach scheme; and if she will make a statement. [5657]

John Healey: The Department has commissioned an external research evaluation of the Computers within Reach scheme. This evaluation has been undertaking research with the relevant partners and customers of the scheme. The work is on-going and alongside information from contractors and officials is forming the basis of a review of the first phase of the scheme that I am currently undertaking before making decisions on next steps.

Youth Education and Training

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds were in education or training in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999 and *(c)* 2000. [5238]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I will write to my right hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Maintained Schools

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many teachers were employed in maintained schools in England in each year since 1997, *(a)* in absolute terms, *(b)* expressed as full-time equivalents and *(c)* per hundred pupils in maintained schools. [5903]

Mr. Timms: The data requested are contained in the table.

Number and FTE of teachers in maintained schools in England 1997–2001—position in January each year

	Headcount of teachers	*FTE of teachers*[1]	*Number of teachers per 100 pupils*
Nursery schools			
1997	1,784	1,572	3.5
1998	1,740	1,537	3.6
1999	1,712	1,516	3.6
2000	1,706	1,500	3.7
2001	1,704	1,504	3.8
Primary schools			
1997	208,020	182,442	4.7
1998	207,093	181,394	4.6
1999	207,657	182,646	4.7
2000	208,303	183,762	4.7
2001	211,761	185,505	4.8
Secondary schools			
1997	197,291	181,692	6.5
1998	197,518	181,853	6.4
1999	198,783	183,578	6.4
2000	200,173	185,429	6.3
2001	204,064	188,951	6.3
Pupil referral units			
1997	2,254	1,740	29.9
1998	2,440	1,801	31.5
1999	2,435	1,851	29.5
2000	2,624	1,986	30.9
2001	2,826	2,118	30.4
Special schools			
1997	15,125	13,884	16.3
1998	15,129	13,759	16.2
1999	15,118	13,731	16.2
2000	15,132	13,695	16.5
2001	15,221	13,697	16.7

[1] Includes full-time and the full-time equivalent of part-time qualified teachers

Source:
Annual Schools' Census

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many teachers have taken early retirement from maintained schools in England in each year since 1997, *(a)* for health reasons and *(b)* for other reasons. [5904]

Mr. Timms: Ill-health and premature retirements from the maintained schools sector in England are shown in the following table.

Financial year	*Ill-health*	*Premature*	*Total*
1997–98	3,290	11,480	14,770
1998–99	2,310	2,420	4,720
1999–2000	2,330	2,670	5,010
2000–01	2,420	3,170	5,590

Note:
Totals may not equal the sum of component parts because of rounding.

Some teachers may have returned to teaching after receiving a pension.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many teachers from maintained schools in England have left the profession for each year since 1997. [5948]

Mr. Timms: Regular qualified teachers leaving[1] the maintained schools sector in England.

	1996–97	*1997–98*	*1998–99*
Full-time	26,320	28,140	20,860
Part-time	7,410	8,480	7,650
Total	33,730	36,620	28,510

[1] Leaving between 1 April and 31 March of the years shown.

Acting and Dance Schools

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list all acting and dance schools approved by her Department for grant purposes; if she will list all those applying for this status; and if she will make a statement. [5907]

Mr. Timms: The DfES approves acting and dance schools as providers for the vocational element of the Dance and Drama Awards and for the Music and Ballet Scheme. All other further and higher education provision is arranged and approved by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Learning and Skills Council.

The schools currently providing the vocational element of the Dance and Drama Awards are:

Academy of Live and Recorded Arts
Arts Educational Schools (London)
Arts Educational School (Tring)
Central School of Ballet
Doreen Bird College of Performing Arts
Elmhurst, The School for Dance and the Performing Arts
English National Ballet School
Hammond School
Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts
Laine Theatre Arts
Liverpool Theatre School
London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art
Merseyside Dance and Drama Centre
Midlands Academy of Dance and Drama
Millennium Dance 2000
Northern Ballet
Oxford School of Drama
Performers College
Stella Mann College
Studios La Pointe
Urdang Academy
Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art.

The schools in the Music and Ballet Scheme providing dance training are:

The Royal Ballet School
Elmhurst the School for Dance and Performing Arts
The Arts Educational School, Tring Park.

It is not possible for the Department to list schools applying to be providers of Dance and Drama Awards or within the Music and Ballet Scheme as their applications are treated as "Commercial-in-Confidence".

Bullying Online

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what help she plans to give from public funds to the charity Bullying Online. [5958]

Mr. Timms: We are aware of the work of Bullying Online in supporting bullied pupils, but we have no record of any application for funding from the organisation.

Education (Henley)

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the supply of *(a)* teachers and *(b)* school places for the next academic year in Henley. [6093]

Mr. Timms: We collect and publish data annually on the numbers of teachers and on vacancy levels, both nationally and by local education authority. However, we do not collect or publish projections of demand or possible shortages, either nationally or by Parliamentary constituency. On the supply of places, local education authorities have a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places within their area, and the Government believe that decisions on these are best taken locally.

School Places

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the shortage of school places for the next academic year in *(a)* England and *(b)* Billericay. [6218]

Mr. Timms: Assessments of this kind are made by each local education authority and not by my Department. Local education authorities have a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area. They must publish annually a School Organisation Plan, which sets out how they plan to deal with any surplus or deficit of school places over a rolling five-year period.

Teachers (Billericay)

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate she has made of the shortage of teachers for the next academic year in *(a)* England and *(b)* the Billericay and district constituency. [6222]

Mr. Timms: We collect and publish data annually on the numbers of teachers and on vacancy levels, both nationally and by local education authority. However, we do not collect or publish projections of demand or possible shortages, either nationally or by Parliamentary constituency.

Chief Inspector of Schools

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps she has taken to appoint a permanent Chief Inspector of Schools. [6284]

Mr. Timms: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 410W.

General Teaching Council

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills from whom she has received recent representations about the General Teaching Council's Code of Practice; and if she will make a statement. [6290]

Mr. Timms: I have recently received three letters from Members of Parliament and three letters from members of the public about the General Teaching Council's (GTC's) Professional Code for Teachers. The content of the Code is a matter for the GTC. It has distributed its current draft of the Code widely for consultation and will be considering the responses in due course.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what discussions she has had with the National Union of Teachers about teacher recruitment and retention; and if she will make a statement. [6318]

Mr. Timms: My right hon. Friend meets representatives of the National Union of Teachers from time to time to discuss a range of issues, including teacher recruitment and retention. The next such meeting will take place on Monday 23 July.

School Buildings (Colchester)

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the condition of the school buildings in the Colchester constituency; and if she will make a statement. [6335]

Mr. Timms: Information on the condition of school buildings should be currently available from the local education authority.

Authorities' condition data, supplied to support the Department for Education and Skills' arrangements for appraisal of Asset Management Plans, are being validated with a view to publishing national benchmarking data later this year.

Teacher Vacancies (Colchester)

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many teacher vacancies there were in *(a)* Essex and *(b)* the Colchester constituency in each year from 1997 to 2001 in (i) infant schools, (ii) junior and primary schools and (iii) secondary schools. [6336]

Mr. Timms: The number of vacancies for full-time teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in Essex are shown in the tables.

Vacancy numbers

	January				
	1997	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*
Essex					
Nursery/primary	45	56	48	83	105
Secondary	33	46	34	73	110
Total	78	102	82	156	215
Southend-on-Sea					
Nursery/primary	n/a	n/a	6	5	8
Secondary	n/a	n/a	3	16	16
Total	n/a	n/a	9	21	24

Vacancy numbers

	January				
	1997	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*
Thurrock					
Nursery/primary	n/a	n/a	9	19	39
Secondary	n/a	n/a	12	9	29
Total	n/a	n/a	21	28	68
Total Essex					
Nursery/primary	45	56	63	107	152
Secondary	33	46	49	98	155
Total	78	102	112	205	307

Vacancy rates[1]

	January				
	1997	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*
Essex					
Nursery/primary	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.8	2.3
Secondary	0.6	0.8	0.7	1.6	2.4
Total	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.7	2.3
Southend-on-Sea					
Nursery/primary	n/a	n/a	1.1	0.9	1.4
Secondary	n/a	n/a	0.5	2.8	2.8
Total	n/a	n/a	0.8	1.8	2.1
Thurrock					
Nursery/primary	n/a	n/a	1.7	3.4	7.0
Secondary	n/a	n/a	2.9	2.2	6.9
Total	n/a	n/a	2.2	2.8	6.9
Total Essex					
Nursery/primary	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.9	2.7
Secondary	0.6	0.8	0.9	1.7	2.7
Total	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.8	2.7

[1] The vacancy rate is calculated by dividing the number of vacancies by the sum of full-time qualified regular teachers plus teachers on full-time secondment for a term or more

Essex local authority was affected by the local government reorganisation (LGR) on 1 April 1998, when it became three authorities; Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock. Figures for 1997 and 1998 are for the Essex local authority prior to LGR.

Specialist Schools (Essex)

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills which secondary schools in Essex have applied for specialist status; and what awards have been made to date. [6337]

Mr. Timms: The following Essex schools successfully applied for designation:

	Designation
Anglo European School	Language—1995
Brentwood Ursuline Convent School	Arts—1999
The Bromfords School	Technology—1996
Chalvedon School and Sixth Form Centre	Technology—1994
Chelmsford County High School for Girls	Technology—2000
Clacton County High School	Arts—2001
Colne School	Sports—2000
Davenant Foundation School	Sports—1999
The Deanes School	Sports—1998
The FitzWimarc School	Language—2000
Greensward School	Technology—1995
The Harwich School	Language—2000
The Notley High School	Technology—2001
Philip Morant School	Technology—1994
The Saffron Walden County High School	Technology—1994
Sir Charles Lucas School	Arts—2001
St. Martin's School	Technology—1995
St. Peter's High School and Technology College	Technology—1996
Tendring Technology College	Technology—1996
Thomas, Lord Audley School	Language—2001

Applications have also been received from: Newport Free Grammar School, The Rickstones School, Burnt Mill School, Debden Park High School and The King John School for Arts College status, The John Bramston School, Hylands School and William De Ferrers School for Technology College status and The Endeavour School for Sports College status. This may not be a comprehensive list of unsuccessful applicants as there is no central record of all applications since 1994.

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the total cost of performance-related pay is for each of the years *(a)* 2000–01 and *(b)* 2001–02; what the cost of assessing teachers' entitlement to performance-related pay was; and if she will make a statement. [5827]

Mr. Timms: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Graduation Certificate

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on the graduation style certificate proposed by her Department at the end of June; and what the cost implications are. [6285]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The proposed award would be for all young people to attain by 19 years of age, and would recognise a range of activities—including voluntary work—as well as formal qualifications. Further substantial work on the proposal, including the cost implications, will need to be undertaken before decisions are made.

Advanced Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proposals she has for amendments in the testing regime in advanced vocational qualifications with a view to reducing their intrusiveness and achieving a broad parity with their academic counterparts. [5687]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: As part of the review announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 14 June, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has been asked to look at the standards and structure of the Vocational A level and to report its conclusions in December.

Sixth Forms

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will publish the guidance given by her Department to LEAs on the passporting of funds from the Learning and Skills Council to schools with sixth forms. [5820]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We stated clearly in May 2000, in our consultation paper "Post-16 Funding", that LEAs would not be able to top-slice the funds they receive from the Learning and Skills Council for school sixth forms.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what work her Department has undertaken on the formula for top-slicing funding from LEAs to fund school sixth forms under the new arrangements to be introduced in 2002–03 for funding sixth forms through the Learning and Skills Council. [5819]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Work is proceeding on the sixth form baseline funding transfer from the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions to the Department for Education and Skills; and on the implications of this for local authorities. Ministers will announce the transfer arrangements in due course.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools have seen a fall in the number of pupils in their sixth forms in each of the last three years; and if she will list those schools. [5823]

Mr. Timms: Of the 1,719 maintained secondary schools with sixth forms[1] for which information is available for each of the last three years, 313 show a decrease in pupils of sixth form age in each year.

A table showing the 313 maintained secondary schools has been placed in the Library.

[1] For the purpose of this exercise a school with a sixth form has been defined as being a maintained secondary school with eight or more pupils aged 16 and eight or more pupils aged 17.

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on differences in performance at GCSE between state secondary schools *(a)* with and *(b)* without a sixth form. [6095]

Mr. Timms: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Connexions Service

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many people appointed as advisers and in other capacities under the Connexions scheme, are qualified teachers; and of these how many were teaching immediately before their appointment to Connexions. [5822]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on developments in the Connexions Service. [5676]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The first 12 Partnerships began delivering the Connexions Service on 1 April 2001. A further four Partnerships will start in September 2001, with the remaining 31 Partnerships starting during 2002–03, subject to the production of satisfactory business plans that demonstrate their readiness to deliver the Service effectively.

It is very early days, but information from the first 12 Partnerships is encouraging. For example, reports from Partnerships at the end of May 2001 show that there are almost 1,000 full-time equivalent Personal Advisers in post; almost 150,000 young people have been assisted; and over 40 Connexions 'one-stop' shops have been opened.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will set out the salary levels for personal advisers/mentors under the Connexions Scheme. [5824]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Personal Advisers will be drawn from a range of professional backgrounds, including the Careers Service and Youth Service, as well as those who are newly recruited by Connexions Partnerships. Personal Advisers from Careers and Youth Services will be employed under existing terms and conditions. Salary rates for new Personal Advisers are being determined by local Partnerships, taking account of their local labour market situation.

Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme

Mr. Denis Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the time scale is for the review of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme; and if she will amend the financial assessment process to ensure that it is based on a household's actual income. [6300]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) pilots are being evaluated extensively over a three-year period and the final report is not likely to be available before early 2003. The first interim reports were published in summer this year and the next is due early in 2002. We are looking at emerging evidence from this evaluation and practical experience from the pilots to inform our thinking about future development of EMAs.

The evaluation will include an assessment of the impact of eligibility criteria, including the income assessment rules. This, and the views of stakeholders, will be carefully considered if designing a model for a national rollout of EMAs.

Further Education

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what studies she has conducted into the implications of phasing out GNVQ Foundation on intermediate qualifications in favour of vocational GCSEs for participation in education post-16, with particular reference to young people with a predominantly vocational aptitude. [5677]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Ministers considered very carefully the advice from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on the introduction of vocational GCSEs. The advice was informed by an extensive public consultation exercise. It was agreed to delay the withdrawal of the Foundation and Intermediate GNVQs for two years, to secure learning opportunities particularly for post-16 students, while other work goes ahead on the development of coherence and breadth in publicly funded programmes of vocational study.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what studies he has conducted into the comparative burden of administration and regulatory compliance by *(a)* further and *(b)* higher education; and what action he is taking to alleviate these burdens. [5680]

Margaret Hodge: The Department has conducted no studies of this kind; neither has the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) nor its predecessor the Further Education

Funding Council. The creation of the LSC has reduced the number of public bodies further education colleges need apply to for funding and the number of audits they need to undergo. The LSC has already reduced the audit burden in further education by appointing the auditors of student numbers and by developing a common audit approach for all colleges. The LSC is also reviewing the funding processes for further education colleges and is working with other public sector funding bodies to reduce further the audit burdens on the sector.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) commissioned, last year, a review from PA Consulting on the accountability burden in the HE sector. The review, published in August 2000, identified four areas of burden—assessments carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency in HE Institutions (HEIs), the bidding process for HEIs, the Research Assessment Exercise and the provision of information. A HE forum, chaired by the HEFCE and composed of the major HE stakeholders, has undertaken five projects to look at these issues.

The HEFCE have already taken the following actions:

to lower transaction costs for the Science Research Investment Fund (SRIF) to 0.5 per cent. compared to 5 per cent. under Joint Infrastructure Fund (JIF);

to reduce the number of days for carrying out transparency audits, from 15–20 to 2–10;

to drop an element of the research activity survey.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what studies she has conducted into fringe imports between *(a)* areas piloting educational maintenance allowances and *(b)* those outside into providers of post-16 education. [5683]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) pilot, eligibility for an EMA is determined on the basis of where a student lives, rather than according to the school or college attended. Students who live in an area where EMA is available qualify for an award whichever school or college they attend—even if it is in a different LEA area. There is a very extensive evaluation under way looking at all aspects of EMA. It has not identified fringe imports as a significant feature.

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time students there were in the further education sector in (i) 1993, (ii) 1997, (iii) 2000 and (iv) 2001. [2407]

John Healey: Full and part-time student numbers in the FE sector from 1994–95 to 1999–2000 were as follows:

Student numbers in further education sector colleges in England from 1994–95 to 1999–2000 by mode of attendance

Thousand

Mode of attendance	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*[1]	*1999–2000*[2]
Full-time	750.6	777.9	799.3	746.3	738.1	745.5
Part-time	2,282.9	2,741.4	3,130.1	3,149.3	3,044.8	2,975.5
Total	3,033.6	3,519.3	3,929.5	3,895.6	3,782.9	3,720.9

Notes:
[1] 1998–99 figures are affected by three mergers between FE colleges and higher education institutions.
[2] 1999–2000 figures are affected by the merger of one college with a higher education institution.

The table counts all students who attended FE sector colleges at some time in the year in question. It does not therefore include funded students in external institutions, specialist designated institutions and higher education institutions. Data are not available on a consistent basis for the year 1993–94, when a count was made on a given date. Data for 2000–01 are not yet available on a consistent basis either.

Diana Organ: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what the average level of funding was per full-time equivalent student in the further education sector in England in *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2000, *(c)* 1997 and *(d)* 1993; [2402]

(2) what has been the percentage increase in the amount of funding per full-time equivalent student in the further education sector since *(a)* the incorporation of further education colleges and *(b)* 1997 in (i) England and (ii) Gloucestershire; [2404]

(3) what has been the real term percentage increase in the amount of funding per full-time equivalent further education student since *(a)* incorporation of further education colleges, *(b)* 1997 and *(c)* 2001. [2406]

John Healey: Funding per full-time equivalent student in the further education sector for Gloucestershire could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Funding to individual colleges is not allocated on a uniform full-time equivalent basis but through a formula taking detailed account of the types of courses and students involved.

The unit of funding for further education based on total funding for the sector is as follows:

Year	*Unit of funding (£)*	*Real-terms index*
1993–94[1]	3,210	110
1994–95[1]	3,170	107
1995–96[1]	3,040	100
1996–97[1]	3,050	97
1997–98[1]	3,070	95
1998–99[1]	3,130	94
1999–2000[2]	3,400	100
2000–01[3]	3,420	99

[1] Actual
[2] Provisional
[3] Plans

Note:
Unit of funding is rounded to nearest £10. Figures include assumed additional employer contributions and exclude FEFC administration and student support.

Source:
Further Education Funding Council's individualised student record and DfES estimates and projections.

The incorporation of further education colleges was at 1 April 1993.

The percentage decrease in unit funding between 1993–94 and 1997–98 is 4.1 per cent.; the real terms decrease is 13.4 per cent.

The percentage decrease in unit funding between 1993–94 and 2000–01 is 6.7 per cent.; the real terms decrease is 10 per cent.

The percentage increase in unit funding between 1997–98 and 2000–01 is 11.3 per cent.; the real terms increase is 3.9 per cent.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the unit of funding for full-time equivalent students in further education is in 2001–02; and what it was in the two previous years and is forecast to be in the next two years. [3188]

John Healey *[holding answer 11 July 2001]:* The unit of funding for the further education based on total funding for the sector is as follows:

£

	Unit of funding
1999–2000[1]	3,400
2000–01[2]	3,420
2001–02[2]	3,660
2002–03[2]	3,760
2003–04[2]	3,910

[1] Provisional

[2] Plans

Note:

Unit of funding is rounded to nearest £10. Figures include assumed additional employer contributions and exclude FEFC administration and student support.

Source:

Further Education Funding Council's individualised student record and DfES estimates and projections.

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to reduce the number of sources from which *(a)* further education colleges and *(b)* schools have to bid for funds. [4709]

John Healey: The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) took over responsibility for the funding of further education, work based learning for young people and adult and community learning. This has reduced the number of public bodies colleges need apply to for funding. The LSC is reviewing the funding processes for further education colleges and is working with other public sector funding bodies to reduce audit burdens. The reforms introduced from April 2001 to the Schools Standards Fund have done away with almost all forms of bidding for funds, so that nearly all recurrent funding is allocated to schools via transparent formulae.

Mr. Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what has been the percentage increase in the amount of funding per full-time equivalent student in the further education sector since *(a)* the incorporation of further education colleges and *(b)* 1997 in (i) England and (ii) Bedfordshire. [4710]

John Healey: Funding per full-time equivalent student in the further education sector for Bedfordshire is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Funding to individual colleges is not allocated on a uniform full-time equivalent basis but through a formula taking detailed account of the types of courses and students involved.

The unit of funding for further education based on total funding for the sector is as follows:

	Unit of funding (£)	*Real-terms index*
1993–94[1]	3,210	110
1994–95[1]	3,170	107
1995–96[1]	3,040	100
1996–97[1]	3,050	97
1997–98[1]	3,070	95
1998–99[1]	3,130	94
1999–2000[2]	3,400	100
2000–01[3]	3,420	99

[1] Actual

[2] Provisional

[3] Plans

Note:

Unit of funding is rounded to nearest £10. Figures include assumed additional employer contributions and exclude FEFC administration and student support.

Source:

Further Education Funding Council's individualised student record and DfES estimates and projections.

The incorporation of further education colleges was at 1 April 1993.

The percentage decrease in unit funding between 1993–94 and 1997–98 is 4.1 per cent.; the real terms decrease is 13.4 per cent.

The percentage increase in unit funding between 1993–94 and 2000–01 is 6.7 per cent.; the real terms decrease is 10.0 per cent.

The percentage increase in unit funding between 1997–98 and 2000–01 is 11.3 per cent.; real terms increase is 3.9 per cent.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to encourage improvements in the pay and status of non-lecturer staff in the further education sector. [5686]

Margaret Hodge: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many further education colleges to date have *(a)* cleared arrangements for incentive payments under the teaching pay initiative and *(b)* made such payments to their lecturers. [5685]

Margaret Hodge: I understand that 56 colleges had submitted 'Declarations of Intent' forms to their local Learning and Skills Councils by 18 July 2001. The Learning and Skills Council will make first payments to colleges by the end of July. Detailed arrangements for making payments to individual teachers will be implemented locally by each college.

Learning and Skills Council

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on progress with the Learning and Skills Council and local LSCs. [5678]

Margaret Hodge: The Learning and Skills Council is a single unitary organisation. It has made a good start, helping to introduce real and lasting change, and I look forward to the publication of its first Corporate Plan.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when the LSC will publish its funding allocation framework. [5681]

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for the Learning and Skills Council. I have therefore asked John Harwood, the Council's Chief Executive, to write to the hon. Member with the information requested and to place a copy of his reply in the Library.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what arrangements have been made to secure financial accountability by the further education sector to the Learning and Skills Council. [5682]

Margaret Hodge: The LSC has a responsibility to ensure the proper accountability of all its providers, including those in the FE sector, and will be building on the FEFC's accountability and audit arrangements.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of staff posts have been filled by *(a)* the Learning and Skills Council and *(b)* local LSCs. [5679]

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for the Learning and Skills Council. I have therefore asked John Harwood, the Council's Chief Executive, to write to the hon. Member with the information requested and to place a copy of his reply in the Library.

Teachers

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to relate teaching pay initiative moneys in further education to performance indicators. [5684]

Margaret Hodge: Colleges receive a Teaching Pay Initiative allocation in proportion to their main funding allocation from the Learning and Skills Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for England. We will explore with the Learning and Skills Council and college representative bodies whether it would be right to refine the arrangements from 2002–03 for distributing funding above these minimum annual allocations, to recognise the different retention and achievement rates at different colleges while having regard to the prior attainment of their students.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when her Department will next publish figures for *(a)* teacher vacancies and *(b)* admission appeals. [5821]

Mr. Timms: Provisional January 2002 figures from the annual survey of teacher vacancies in England are due to be published in April 2002.

Provisional admission appeals figures for maintained primary and secondary schools in England 2000–01 are due to be published in June 2002.

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many teachers in England have applied for performance-related pay; how many of these received such a payment; what percentage of eligible teachers this constitutes; and if she will make a statement. [5826]

Mr. Timms: Just over 200,000 teachers applied for the performance threshold in the first round. This was equivalent to about 80 per cent. of eligible teachers. Applications were assessed by headteachers or, for teachers employed directly by LEAs, heads of service. Heads' assessments were verified by external assessors. Assessor visits to schools and LEAs have recently been completed. The Department is still analysing the results and it is too early to be precise. But it seems clear that well over 150,000 teachers have passed the threshold.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what target she has set for the share of national income which is spent on education for each of the next five years; and if she will make a statement. [5689]

Estelle Morris: United Kingdom education spending is forecast to rise from 5.0 per cent. of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2001–02 to 5.3 per cent. in 2003–04. By comparison the share in 1996–97 was 4.7 per cent. of GDP. The Government have a manifesto pledge to increase the share of national income for education in this Parliament, so that education spending as a share of GDP will be higher than 5.0 per cent., the figure for 2001–02, in the final year of the Parliament. We are therefore on course to meet this pledge.

Plans for later years up to 2005–06 will be set in the 2002 Spending Review, announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 25 June 2001, *Official Report,* column 39W.

Construction Industry Training Board

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the benefits of aligning the levies for the CITB and the ECITB. [5843]

John Healey: I do not believe there is any basis for aligning the levies of the CITB and the ECITB. It is for each board, in consultation with the employers in its industry, to propose its own levy arrangements, including the rate of levy. These proposals are subject to the approval of Ministers and Parliament. The levy rate must reflect the board's general policy and plans for training in the industry and the costs of those plans. Just as the plans of each board will vary, so also will the levy rate.

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what representations she has received from tool hire companies regarding the CITB requiring them to pay the CITB levy. [5844]

John Healey: I have received representations from 21 companies in the plant and tool hire sector.

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will review the operation of the CITB levy in order to identify if there are operations which are required to pay the levy but do not qualify for benefits. [5845]

John Healey: I have just approved the new CITB grants scheme which will operate from 1 August 2001. This will include grants for all types of training, including management and IT, identified in individual company training plans. All construction employers who train should benefit from the new scheme.

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of the CITB levy raised is spent on training provision within tool hire companies. [5846]

John Healey: In 2000, companies involved in the plant and tool hire sector paid around £1.8 million in levy to the CITB and those who trained and claimed grants

received direct financial support from the board of around £2.2 million. This equated to 2.57 per cent. of the board's total levy income. In addition to direct grants the CITB maintains substantial plant training facilities in four locations throughout the UK, sets standards to help raise skill levels in the industry, offers advice to companies on training and administers a certification scheme for plant operators on behalf of the industry.

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what representations she has received from companies paying the levy regarding the forthcoming review of the CITB levy. [5847]

John Healey: I have received representations from 36 companies concerning the fact that they are required to pay a training levy to the CITB.

Welsh Universities

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many students from the UK were educated at Welsh universities in the last five years. [6404]

Margaret Hodge: The information requested is shown in the following table.

UK domiciled students[1] studying in higher education institutions in Wales

	Postgraduates		*Undergraduates*		*Total*	
	All years	*First years*	*All years*	*First years*	*All years*	*First years*
1996–97	10,955	6,434	67,521	29,801	78,476	36,235
1997–98	11,182	5,729	68,807	28,655	79,989	34,384
1998–99	11,027	6,418	70,038	29,637	81,065	36,055
1999–2000	11,451	6,699	71,357	30,807	82,808	37,506
2000–01[2]	12,465	7,237	72,803	32,707	85,268	39,944

[1] Full-time and part-time students, as at 1 December
[2] Provisional

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what guidelines have been issued to schools and local education authorities concerning the rights of children and young people to participate in decisions that affect them, as defined by Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. [5020]

Mr. Timms: The Government strongly support the need to ascertain the views of young people in relation to decisions that affect them. Citizenship, a statutory secondary subject from September 2002, will teach young people about their rights and responsibilities and how to participate in the decision-making processes. This month, guidance written by teachers to support the effective delivery of citizenship in secondary schools was made freely available in draft form. This includes tried and tested teaching and learning ideas to encourage active participation by young people, for example through local democratic processes and student councils. It will be sent to all schools and LEAs in the autumn and is on the Department's Standards website.

School Management (Pupil Participation)

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what guidance documents are available to schools and local education authorities concerning pupil participation in the management of schools. [5021]

Mr. Timms: Many schools already involve pupils in management issues that concern them. With the introduction of citizenship, a statutory part of the secondary curriculum from September 2002, active participation in decision making at school will be encouraged. Good practice already exists in many schools, for example through school councils where pupils represented on governing bodies are involved in staff recruitment, school policies and catering decisions. Guidance for secondary schools is available on the DfES website and the Department has funded Schools Councils UK to produce primary and secondary school council toolkits.

Supply Teachers

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what representations she has received about uncompetitive practices operating within the provision of agency supply teachers to maintained schools. [5453]

Mr. Timms: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is responsible for regulating employment agencies, including those supplying teachers to schools. My Department has received no recent representations on this matter.

Excellence in Cities

Mr. Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on delays in funding projects for Excellence in Cities City Learning Centres Phase 3; and if she will provide details of the progress made. [5674]

Mr. Timms: There are no such delays. The allocation of Phase 3 City Learning Centres was confirmed in March of this year and Phase 3 Excellence in Cities areas were told in May that all Centres would open by September 2003. This remains the case. Officials are at present considering the funding arrangements for those Centres.

Class Sizes

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what targets for a reduction in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school class sizes she has set for each of the next five years; and if she will make a statement. [5690]

Mr. Timms: We have introduced legislation to ensure that the size of infant classes for 5, 6 and 7-year-olds is limited to 30 or fewer by this September at the latest. Since January 1998 the Government have reduced the

number of infants in large classes by around 450,000: in January 2001 as few as 36,000 (2 per cent.) infants were in classes of 31 or more compared to 485,000 (29 per cent.) in January 1998. No further class size targets have been set.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what funding is available to schools with special educational needs; and how much is available under each stream. [5374]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Funding for schools is allocated and distributed via local education authorities (LEAs) under local arrangements for the Fair Funding of schools. It is for individual LEAs and schools to decide spending priorities for pupils with special educational needs.

In the current year more than £22 billion is available for the education of school children including children with special educational needs. Over £1 billion of this is used by LEAs to provide additional support for children with special educational needs. In addition, when allocating budgets to schools in 2000–01, LEAs identified over £1.7 billion as notionally allocated towards special educational needs.

We have also made £82 million of supported expenditure available for special educational needs in this year's Standards Fund. This compares to £55 million last year. The fund can be used for a range of activities including training for staff in special educational needs, improvements in speech and language therapy provision for children with communication difficulties, the provision of information and advice to parents and the greater inclusion of children with special educational needs in the mainstream.

In addition to their normal funding, all schools in England have received funding through the School Standards Grant. The Grant will total £640 million in the current financial year. A typical secondary school will receive an extra £70,000 and a typical primary £24,000. Special Schools with up to 100 pupils will receive £20,000 in the 2001–02 financial year and those with over 100 pupils will receive £28,000.

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children with special educational needs were on roll in each local education authority in *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999, *(d)* 2000 and *(e)* 2001 broken down by those without and those with statements. [5375]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The available data are contained in tables, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Grant-maintained Schools

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what funding per pupil was provided to grant-maintained schools in Surrey in the year immediately prior to the end of grant-maintained status; and what funding per pupil those schools receive in the current financial year. [2543]

Mr. Timms: In the financial year 1998–99, grant-maintained (GM) schools in Surrey received recurrent funding from the former Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) amounting on average to £1,810 per pupil in the case of primary schools and £2,410 per pupil in the case of secondary schools. For the financial year 2001–02, the most closely comparable figures currently available in respect of these schools are £2,060 per pupil and £2,660 per pupil respectively. All figures have been calculated to the nearest £10 on the basis of pupil numbers from the Annual Schools Census for January 1998 and January 2001.

The calculations for 1998–99 are based on financial information supplied to the Department by FAS. The figures include annual maintenance grant together with special purpose grants for development, nursery education, premises insurance, primary support and the purchase of books, but not other special purpose grants or capital grants. Most GM schools' annual maintenance grant included an element to compensate the schools for their inability to reclaim VAT: appropriate adjustments have been made to reflect this.

The calculations for 2001–02 are based on information from the budget statement published by the local education authority under section 52 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, supplemented and updated (in the case of specific grants) by information separately provided by the LEA. The figures include the schools' budget shares (including School Standards Grant and transitional funding); Standards Fund resources devolved to the schools (but excluding capital grants, and other grants relating to school security and the National Grid for Learning); and Infant Class Size grants devolved to schools otherwise than through their budget shares.

In 1998–99, under arrangements specific to the GM sector, the GM schools received formula capital allocations from FAS amounting on average to £46 per pupil (primary) and £31 per pupil (secondary). Under the NDS devolved formula capital arrangements which apply to all schools, the Surrey ex-GM schools' allocations for 2001–02 amount on average to £37 per pupil (primary and £28 per pupil (secondary); all these figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

Blenheim School has been excluded from the calculations because its funding levels are significantly affected by the school's recent establishment. The calculations also exclude Nonsuch High School for Girls, which is situated in Surrey but maintained by the London Borough of Sutton.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many PFI transactions have been overseen by her Department in each of the last 10 years; what her estimate is of the cost savings made in each of these transactions in comparison with the public sector alternative; what are the outstanding payments to be made in relation to these transactions for each of the next 15 years; and if she will make a statement. [5722]

Mr. Timms: The first local authority schools PFI project was signed in 1998. A total of 56 schools PFI

projects have been approved by this Department and the Treasury chaired Project Review Group. Of these, 30 have so far reached commercial and financial close, as follows: 1997–98 (1), 1998–99 (6), 1999–2000 (9) and 2000–01 (14).

Published guidance on Public Sector Comparators (PSCs) notes that: "Accounting Officers should not rely solely on a straight comparison of a PFI bid to its PSC, which should never be regarded as a pass/fail test but instead as a quantitative way of informing judgment." (Treasury Taskforce Technical Note No 5: How to construct a public sector comparator).

As agreed with the National Audit Office, payments to contractors under PFI contracts are commercially in confidence. Aggregate figures of estimated payments under all PFI contracts for the years 2000–01 to 2025–26 were published in Table C18 of the Budget 2001 "Red Book".

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the Private Finance Initiative; and if she will make a statement. [5723]

Mr. Timms: Local authorities are generally responsible for monitoring the performance of Private Finance Initiative contracts in schools. The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the *(a)* type, *(b)* length and *(c)* value of contract of each Private Finance Initiative in England and Wales; and if she will make a statement. [3362]

Mr. Timms: The table shows those local authorities in England that currently have a signed schools Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract. One other project has reached commercial close, but has not yet reached financial closure. The table shows the type of contract and the PFI credit value for each project. Typically, the length of a PFI contract in the schools sector is of the order of 25 to 30 years, although contracts which provide services not directly related to buildings are for shorter periods.

PFI in Welsh schools is the responsibility of the National Assembly for Wales.

Project	*Type*	*PFI credit value in £million*
Birmingham—10 schools	Refurbishment	50.6
Brent (FAS)—Jews Free School	New School	9.0
Cornwall—grouped	Refurbishment/Rationalisation	60.7
Derbyshire	Refurbishment	29.0
Dorset—Colfox School	New School	15.6
Dudley	ICT Services	29.5
East Riding—Bridlington	Refurbishment	26.0
East Sussex—Peacehaven	New School/Refurbishment	19.0
Enfield—Worlds End Lane Secondary	New School	15.9
Essex—Loughton	New School	11.1
Haringey—secondary schools	New School/Refurbishment	62.5
Hillingdon	New School	18.8
Kent—Swanscombe	New School	11.6
Kingston-upon-Hull—Victoria Dock	New School	2.8
Kirklees—grouped	Refurbishment	59.2
Lancashire—Fleetwood High	Refurbishment	13.4
Leeds—Cardinal Heenan	Refurbishment	4.1
Lewisham	Catering	4.3
Liverpool—Speke/Garston	Replacement	10.8
Manchester—Temple School	Replacement	3.7
Newham	New School	30.0
North Yorkshire—four schools	Replacement	7.2
Portsmouth—Miltoncross Secondary	New School	12.4
Sheffield—six schools	Refurbishment	58.8
Staffordshire—two schools	Refurbishment	13.7
Stoke-on-Trent—grouped	Energy Management	93.0
Torbay—two Torquay schools	Refurbishment	14.2
Waltham Forest—Leyton	New School	18.5
Wiltshire—three schools	New School	38.6
Wirral—nine schools	Refurbishment	58.5

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many private finance initiatives have been underestimated, detailing in each case the amount by which the original cost expectation was exceeded. [3363]

Mr. Timms: The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) procurement process is a negotiated procedure which, by its nature, involves changes in the scope and cost of a project as it is developed by a Local Education Authority. Current PFI projects have many years still to run. All schools PFI projects in England require approval from the Treasury chaired Project Review Group (PRG). Financial support from the Department is in the form of PFI credits. The level of PFI credits for each project is set by PRG, after a rigorous review which ensures that projects are financially viable and offer value for money to the public sector. If, due to circumstances beyond an Authority's control, an increase in funding is required, PRG approval must be obtained.

Departmental Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the top 10 companies to which her Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6424]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events her Department and its predecessors participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5032]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Absence

David Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many days on average were lost per employee in her Department because of sickness, and how many officials retired early from her Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5058]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The average number of days per employee lost through sickness in my Department was as follows:

	Days
1999	[1]7.6
1998	[1]9.8
1997	[1]9.8
1996	[1]10.3
1995	[1]10.3
1994	[2]8.2
1994	[3]11

[1] Department for Education and Employment
[2] Department for Education
[3] Employment Department Group

The figures for 2000 have not yet been published. No reliable information is available for 1993. Records for 1992 and earlier years have not been retained.

The number of officials who retired early was as follows:

Year	*Number*
2000	45
1999	38
1998	49
1997	52
1996	181
1995	79
1994	89
1992–93	342

No reliable information is available for ill-health retirements prior to 1996. Separate information is not available for 1992 and 1993.

Medical Students

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the number of A-level students applying to medical schools in each of the last three years; and if she will make a statement. [3714]

Margaret Hodge: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Social Security Benefits

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the impact of withdrawing social security benefits from adults unwilling to have their basic skills levels tested; and if she will make a statement. [3370]

John Healey: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, column 686W.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Justices of the Peace (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women from ethnic communities were appointed justice of the peace for magistrates courts covering the Greater London area during the last 12 months. [4783]

Mr. Wills. In the last 12 months, 38 people (15 men and 23 women) from ethnic communities have been appointed as magistrates in the Greater London area out of a total of 145 new appointments; that is 26.2 per cent. of the total.

The Middlesex and Inner London Advisory Committees will take part in a scheme involving job shadowing, education and training to encourage people from ethnic minorities to apply for appointment. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor announced the scheme, which will be run with the help of Operation Black Vote, on 2 May and it will be launched shortly. Any assistance my hon. Friend can give to assist in the recruitment of people from ethnic minority backgrounds would also be welcome.

Damages Act

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the average gross redemption yield on Index Linked Government stock was for the three years to 8 June. [3654]

Mr. Wills: A figure of 2.61 per cent. for the average yield on index linked government stock for the three years up to 8 June 2001 was quoted in the Lord Chancellor's reasons for setting the discount rate for personal injury awards at 2.5 per cent. Those reasons were placed in the Library of this House when that decision was announced on 27 June 2001.

Since then some questions have been raised about that figure, and the Debt Management Office, an executive agency of HM Treasury, which supplied it, have been providing advice to the Lord Chancellor on the calculation

performed. The Lord Chancellor is considering that advice. He proposes to make a further announcement as soon as possible and will lay his further reasons in the Library of the House during the recess.

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 27 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 115W, on the Damages Act 1996, what account was taken of the guidance provided by the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords in Wells *v.* Wells [1999] 1 AC 345. [3656]

Mr. Wills: The Lord Chancellor's reasons for setting the discount rate for personal injury awards at 2.5 per cent. were laid in the Library of this House on 27 June 2001. In those reasons the Lord Chancellor made clear that the legal principle that guided him, which was confirmed in the judgment in Wells *v.* Wells (1999) 1AC 345, was that:

> "...the object of the award of damages for future expenditure is to place the injured party as nearly as possible in the same financial position he or she would have been in but for the accident. The aim is to award such a sum of money as will amount to no more, and at the same time no less, than the net loss".

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 27 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 115W, on the Damages Act 1996, what method was used to calculate the discount rate. [3653]

Mr. Wills: The Lord Chancellor's reasons for setting the discount rate at 2.5 per cent. were placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 27 June 2001.

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 27 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 115W, on the Damages Act 1996, what consultation was conducted with *(a)* HM Treasury and *(b)* the Government Actuary; on what date; and what the outcome was of the consultation. [3655]

Mr. Wills: The consultation document "Damages: the Discount Rate and Alternatives to Lump Sum Payments" was sent to HM Treasury along with other interested parties when it was published in March 2000. HM Treasury responded to the paper on 31 May 2000. Subsequently particular questions about the market in index-linked government stock were addressed to HM Treasury on 13 February 2001 and a reply received on 23 February 2001. There were a number of subsequent exchanges on technical issues concerning index-linked government stock.

The Government Actuary's Department provided a report to the Lord Chancellor's Department in December 1998. This was used to inform the Lord Chancellor's consultation paper which was published in March 2000, a copy of which was sent to the Government Actuary. The Government Actuary made further comments in a letter of 26 October 2000.

The Debt Management Office, a Treasury executive agency, supplied the figure for the average yield of index-linked government stock for the three years to 8 June 2001 which was quoted in the Lord Chancellor's reasons for setting the discount rate at 2.5 per cent.

The Lord Chancellor also took account of views received in response to the consultation and further evidence obtained from external advisers in arriving at his decision, which was announced to this House in the answer referred to in the question. Copies of the Lord Chancellor's reasons were placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 27 June 2001.

The decision was the Lord Chancellor's and the Lord Chancellor's alone. No regard whatsoever was had to public expenditure implications.

Mediation Services

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the cost of Government funding to the mediation services was in England in each of the past five years. [5365]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The amounts paid by the Legal Services Commission as remuneration for publicly funded family mediation work for the last five years are as follows.

Year	*£*
1996–97	2,066,000
1997–98	5,266,000
1998–99	9,580,000
1999–2000	7,137,000
2000–01	10,719,784

In addition the following funding was provided by the Legal Services Commission to national family mediation bodies for the development of family mediation:

Year	*£*
1996–97	15,400
1997–98	497,250
1998–99	679,000
1999–2000	374,000
2000–01	315,000

These figures relate to England and Wales, and separate figures for England alone are not available.

Additionally, in both 2000–01 and 2001–02 Mediation UK received grants of £90,000, which were funded jointly by the Legal Services Commission, the Home Office, the Department of Health and the Treasury.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps she is taking to ensure that mediation services in England receive adequate funding to continue their work. [5327]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Publicly funded family mediation is available throughout England and Wales and mediation services receive remuneration for mediation work carried out under contract from the Legal Services Commission. Some funding has been provided for service start-up costs, and mediation services also receive income from private clients. Some mediation services also receive funding under local partnership agreements with the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. In addition, the Lord Chancellor's Department funded an advertising campaign in January this year to help raise awareness of family mediation.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if she will list for each

week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental Ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4903]

Ms Rosie Winterton: A Minister in the Lord Chancellor's Department will be on duty throughout the parliamentary summer recess, in line with paragraph 68 of the current Ministerial Code.

Departmental Events

David Maclean: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events the Lord Chancellor's Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5042]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The information requested by the right hon. Gentleman could be provided only at disproportionate cost. If he requires specific information relating to a particular event I would be happy to assist if he could write to me.

Juries

Harry Cohen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what guidance he has issued on the composition of juries in areas with high proportions of ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement. [5650]

Mr. Wills: There is no guidance on the composition of juries in areas with high proportions of ethnic minorities. Jury service is governed by the principle of random selection, subject to the law on disqualified and ineligible jurors. Under the Juries Act 1974, jurors are chosen at random from the electoral register.

Religious Discrimination

Paul Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress he has made in reviewing changes to anti-Catholic terms contained in the Act of Settlement 1701 and the Bill of Rights 1688. [5890]

Mr. Wills: The Government have always stood firm against discrimination in all its forms, including discrimination against Roman Catholics, and will continue to do so. We have a heavy legislative programme and no immediate plans to legislate in this area, but we are monitoring the debate and shall be considering this matter further.

Queen's Golden Jubilee

David Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the competitions for civic honours to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee will be launched; and if she will make a statement. [6533]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The competitions for grants of city status to one town in each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and for a Lord Mayoralty, will be launched next Wednesday, 25 July, by means of press notices. Letters will be posted on 24 July to the towns and cities known to be interested in applying for these honours. Both the letters and the press notices will provide some guidance on the main factors that will be taken into account in identifying the successful towns and city. The honours will, however, continue to be rare marks of distinction conferred, on Ministerial advice, under the Royal Prerogative, rather than rights to be earned by the meeting of specific criteria.

Applications submitted for the grant of city status to mark the Millennium will be reconsidered if the local authorities so wish, with or without additional material. The closing date for the submission of applications and any fresh material will be 12 October 2001. The Government hope to announce the results of the competitions in the early months of 2002.

Advisory Board on Family Law

Dr. Desmond Turner: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when she will publish the Fourth Annual Report of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Board on Family Law. [6535]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Advisory Board on Family Law has today published its Fourth Annual Report and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Tribunals

Mrs. Fitzsimons: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when she will publish the report of Sir Andrew Leggatt's review of tribunals. [6534]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Sir Andrew Leggatt sent his report to the Lord Chancellor on 31 March 2001. The Government intend to publish the report shortly, together with a consultation paper seeking views on its principal recommendations. Copies of both documents will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Property Rights

Mr. Drew: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if she will introduce legislation so that greater protection is given to unmarried partners following the break-up of a relationship and in particular so that they have additional rights in the apportioning of property if that person's name is not formally registered in joint ownership of that property. [5562]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Government have no current plans to legislate in this area. However, the Law Commission is currently reviewing the law as it relates to the property rights of people who share homes. This covers a wide category of person including all those who live in the same household other than by reason of one of them being the other's employee, tenant, lodger or boarder. It is expected that the Law Commission will be in a position to publish a consultation paper in the spring of 2002. The Government will of course be interested in the Law Commission's proposals, and in the response to them.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Local Government

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if his plans for further powers for regional Government in England will entail other changes to the local government structure. [4122]

Mr. Raynsford: I have been asked to reply.

As my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister announced on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 80W, the Government intend to publish a White Paper on regional governance in England. This will set out the Government's thinking on these issues.

No decisions have yet been taken on what—if any—changes in local government structure might be involved in taking forward the Government's proposals in relation to elected regional assemblies.

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has for reforming local government. [4120]

Mr. Raynsford: I have been asked to reply.

The White Paper "Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People", published in 1998, set out a 10-year programme for the reform and modernisation of local government in England so that councils everywhere can be effective leaders of their communities and can deliver the highest quality local services. We have already made considerable progress through the introduction of best value, local public service agreements (LPSAs), new political management structures and a new ethical framework for local government.

We are now building on these achievements, easing the burden of regulation on councils, reforming the local government finance regime and developing our commitment to give freedoms and flexibilities to high performing councils. We intend during the autumn to publish a new White Paper setting out an up-to-date picture of our plans.

Ministerial Duties

David Maclean: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list for each week from Monday 23 July to Monday 8 October which departmental ministers will be on duty *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in London. [4905]

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is not normal practice of Government to publish the daily ministerial duty roster. This Department will ensure that it has sufficient cover through the summer recess in line with the requirements of the Ministerial Code.

Work Permits

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what representations were made, and when, to Government Departments on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Authority regarding the applications for work permits by Mr. Hector Sam and Mr. Carlos Edwards. [2089]

Mr. Leslie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Angela Eagle), on 27 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 97W.

Departmental Units

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the cross-departmental and other units run from within his Department, listing in each case *(a)* the reports which they have published to date and *(b)* the topics on which they are engaged; and if he will make a statement. [2678]

Mr. Leslie: I shall write to the hon. Member with a full answer as soon as the information is available, and place a copy in the Libraries of the House.

Green Ministers

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) if he will set out the terms of reference for the role of the Green Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement; [4821]

(2) on what date a Green Minister was first appointed in his Department; when subsequent appointments were made; and if he will make a statement. [4822]

Mr. Leslie: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to him by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 13 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 689–90W.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister on what dates his Department's Green Minister attended meetings of the Green Ministers' Committee during the current Session of Parliament; on what dates subsequent meetings are planned to take place; and if he will make a statement. [4820]

Mr. Leslie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 165W.

Electronic Communications

Brian White: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans the Cabinet Office has to revise the guidance to Departments on the use of electronic communications at work. [5737]

Mr. Leslie: The second edition of guidance to Departments entitled "Electronic Communications at Work: What you Need to Know" will be published shortly by the Office of the e-Envoy. It seeks to support Departments in encouraging the responsible use of e-mails and the internet by their staff. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will be available on the e-Envoy's website.

e-Government

David Taylor: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what progress has been made on the second e-Government International Benchmarking Study. [5736]

Mr. Leslie: The second e-Government International Benchmarking Study has now concluded and the report is published today on the website of the e-Envoy at http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/publications/reports/benchmarkingV2/intro.htm. Copies of the report have been laid in the Libraries of the House.

Archway Tower

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the rental income is for Archway Tower N19; what the expenditure by public sources was in the last 12 months; and how much capital expenditure there has been on the building in each of the last three years. [5362]

Ms Rosie Winterton: I have been asked to reply.

Archway Tower is owned by a commercial landlord, so there is almost no rental income to the Exchequer. However, the annual rent payable is £884,000 for Archway Tower plus a further £29,400 for 49 adjoining car parking spaces. There is a nominal annual rent income to the Exchequer of £13,295 from Vodaphone transmitter aerials located on the roof of the building. There is no intention to generate rental income from sub-letting because the building is currently being fitted out for full beneficial occupation by the Public Guardianship Office (PGO) and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) within the next nine months. The expenditure by public sources in the last 12 months was £1,346,805. The capital expenditure on the building in each of the last three years was £458,449 in 2000–01, £2,511,430 in 1999–2000 and £4,572,656 in 1998–99.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 14 September 2001

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animal Experiments

Linda Perham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Home Office inspectors were employed with (*a*) veterinary and (*b*) medical qualifications to implement the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in each of the last five years; and how many establishments are designated under the Act. [2563]

Angela Eagle: The information in respect of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate is as follows.

Year	*Number with veterinary qualifications*	*Number with medical qualifications*	*Total*
1996	11	6	17
1997	13	5	18
1998	16	5	21
1999	17	4	21
2000	17	4	21

The number of establishments designated under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 as at 22 June 2001 was 253.

Salvia Divinorum

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the legal status of the hallucinogen *Salvia divinorum.* [5783]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: The Government are not aware of any evidence of significant misuse of this plant and have no current plans to review its legal status. The Medicines Control Agency investigates the trade in so-called "herbal highs" and can prosecute suppliers of unlicensed medicinal products.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 4 October 2001

HOME DEPARTMENT

Chief Constables (Eligibility)

Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when military officers became ineligible for appointment as chief constables; and by what means. [4793]

Mr. Denham: The appointment of a chief constable is a matter for decision by the appropriate police authority, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State. In making an appointment, a police authority will want to be fully satisfied that the individual selected has the necessary abilities and experience to lead an effective and efficient police force. Since the 1960s, regulations under the Police Act 1964 have included a requirement that no person may be appointed as a chief constable without prior experience in a supervisory police rank. Since 1979 that requirement has been for an appointee to have had at least two years' experience in the rank of superintendent or in a higher rank.

Current guidance to police authorities indicates that appointment to all chief officer ranks in forces will only receive approval from the Secretary of State where the individual has attended the strategic command course for senior police officers. This guidance reflects a recommendation by the Home Affairs Committee (Third Report, Session 1988–89) that this should be a compulsory requirement for all applicants for posts at chief officer rank.

Antisocial Behaviour Orders

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of antisocial behaviour orders have been breached by individuals where that breach led to a custodial sentence. [4982]

Mr. Denham: Provisional data taken from the Home Office court proceedings database up to December 2000 show that 48 per cent. of offenders who have breached antisocial behaviour orders have been given a custodial sentence for the breach.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many antisocial behaviour orders have been issued in Sussex; and how many have led to subsequent court proceedings. [5937]

Mr. Denham: Available data show that up to 31 March 2001 four antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) have been issued within the Sussex area.

Provisional data taken from the Home Office court proceedings database show that up to December 2000 two persons within the Sussex police force area have been proceeded against for the criminal offence of breaching an ASBO.

Recorded Crime (North Oxfordshire)

Mr. Cameron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the level of recorded crime was in the North Oxfordshire area of the Thames Valley in each year from 1996 to 2000. [5757]

Mr. Denham: Overall numbers of recorded crimes at basic command unit (BCU) level are not collected centrally. Total numbers for certain categories of recorded crime have been collected centrally at BCU level since 1 April 1999. The information for the North Oxfordshire BCU is as follows:

	Number of Offences (in financial years)	
Offence Group	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*
Violence against the person	1,323	1,291
Sexual offences	74	73
Robbery	72	42
Burglary of a dwelling	692	572
Theft of a motor vehicle	964	740
Theft from a motor vehicle	1,695	1,797

Police (Working Conditions)

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the working conditions of police inspectors and chief inspectors; what measures he plans to introduce to address the concerns raised; and if he will make a statement. [5203]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The inspectors central committee wrote to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Clarke) in March regarding the effects of changes made in 1994 to the working conditions for inspecting ranks.

Decisions relating to the number of officers and the rank in which they are employed, together with assessing and addressing health and safety issues, are matters for chief officers.

Prisons

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what records he keeps of the number of prisoners with psychiatric problems in each prison. [5501]

Beverley Hughes: All Prison Service establishments are required to submit monthly statistical returns on a range of health care activity to the prison health policy unit. The information provided includes the total number of prisoners receiving treatment in prison for mental health reasons, either as out-patients or in the health care centre; and national health service activity, including the numbers of prisoners who had been seen by a psychiatrist, and who had been transferred to hospital or who were awaiting such a transfer.

Firearms

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates he has made of the number of illegally held firearms in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [5787]

Mr. Denham: There is no reliable means of estimating the number of illegally held firearms in the United Kingdom.

The existence of any illegal firearms is of great concern to the Government and we are fully committed to supporting the police and other law enforcement agencies in their efforts to combat the illegal possession and criminal use of firearms.

The use of firearms in crime is small in relation both to overall national crime figures (0.1 per cent.) and to other comparable countries. We are liaising closely with the police to establish the source of illegal weapons. There is no evidence at present of organised and large-scale smuggling; nor does there appear to be a single main source of firearms.

Armed crime cannot be tackled in isolation from other criminal activities, in particular drug trafficking and robbery. Tackling these crimes is one of the Government's highest priorities.

Police Duties

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is available to him to determine the percentage of a police constable's time spent on average *(a)* on patrol, *(b)* undertaking duties within a police establishment, *(c)* off sick, *(d)* on leave and *(e)* otherwise engaged, for the last year for which figures are available. [5484]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* I wrote to the hon. Member on 20 September and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

Police (Manpower Targets)

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what targets he has set for the total size of the police force in England for each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement. [5691]

Mr. Denham *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* On the basis of force projections, we expect police strength to reach record numbers by March 2003 (more than 128,300) and at least 130,000 officers by March 2004.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 372**

SESSION 2001–02

16th July—19th October 2001

Printed indexes to Hansard

The volume index is one of three printed indexes to Commons Hansard produced from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Indexing Service (POLIS). It contains references to material in the bound volumes of Hansard. The other indexes produced are:

- The fortnightly index to Hansard. This covers the same date range as the volume index but references are to the column numbering in the daily parts and weekly edition of Hansard.
- The sessional index to Hansard. This contains references to material in the bound volumes for a whole session.

Indexes on the Parliamentary website

Fortnightly, volume and sessional indexes covering material from the beginning of the 1999/2000 session will also appear on the Parliamentary website at http://www.parliament.uk with links to the full text of Hansard.

SCOPE

The indexes include entries covering:

- The content of all material recorded in Hansard, including debates, procedural motions and questions.
- The names of all Members contributing to the Parliamentary business recorded in Hansard.
- The names of some types of Parliamentary business whenever they occur in Hansard. These are 'Ministerial statements', 'Business statements', 'Opposition days' and 'Estimates days'.

ARRANGEMENT

- All headings are in one word-by-word alphabetical sequence, with Members' contribution entries distinguished from other entries by italics.
- Where a Member contributes to Parliamentary business and is the subject of Parliamentary business there are separate contribution and subject entries, the subject entry coming first.
- Entries beginning 'Mac' and 'Mc' are sorted in one sequence as 'Mac'.
- 'St', when abbreviated for Saint, is filed as 'Saint'.
- Numbers are filed as if spelt out, e.g. '10 Downing Street' as if 'Ten Downing Street'.

HEADINGS

Choice of headings

- *Specificity*—Entries summarise the overall content of a debate or question as specifically as the various POLIS thesauruses allow. For example, Education, Higher education, Universities or the name of a particular university is used depending on the breadth of the item.
- *Name headings*—Specific entries are included for the names of people, places, institutions, organisations, committees, programmes, initiatives, publications and legislation when these constitute the overall subject of an item.
- *Organisations and subjects*—Organisation entries are preferred for material about the general performance, administration and staffing of an organisation (for example, United Kingdom Passports Agency, Standards). Subject entries are preferred for what organisations do as part of their duties (for example, Passports, Fees and charges).

Geographical coverage

- *Subject headings*—Subject headings are assumed to refer to the whole of England, Great Britain or the United Kingdom unless otherwise stated.
- *Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales*—Material relating to the whole of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales is indexed under these headings.
- *Places within the UK*—Material about specific towns, areas and institutions is entered under the name of the specific town, area or institution.
- *Foreign countries*—Most material relating to foreign countries is collected under the name of that country. Some additional material may be found under the names of—groups of countries, areas within countries, geographical features, place names associated with particular issues, politicians and heads of state, international bodies, and institutions and companies operating in those countries.
- *EC/EU material*—General material about the European Communities and European institutions as bodies is entered under 'European Communities' and 'EC institutions'. Organisational material about specific communities and institutions is entered under the name of the body, for example 'European Coal and Steel Community' or 'European Parliament'. Material about what the Communities and institutions are doing or propose to do is entered under various subject headings beginning 'EC' such as 'EC environmental policy'.

Parliamentary material and business

- *Material about Parliament*—This is indexed under 'Parliament', the names of the two Houses, the 'Palace of Westminster' and parts of the Parliamentary estate (such as 'Portcullis House').
- *Committees*—Material about committees is indexed under 'Committees', types of committee (such as 'Select committees') and the names of individual committees (such as 'Home Affairs Select Committee').
- *Parliamentary proceedings/procedures*—Material discussing these is indexed under the specific type of proceeding (such as 'Parliamentary questions' or 'Oral questions'), procedure (such as 'Calling of Members') or issue (such as 'Unparliamentary expressions').
- *Legislation*—Entries for Parliamentary proceedings on bills and statutory instruments are entered under their titles. Where the lead word of the bill or statutory instrument does not provide a full or clear indication of the subject there are additional subject entries when the bill or instrument is debated. For example, debates on the 'Child Support Pensions and Social Security Bill' have entries under 'Pensions' and 'Social security benefits' as well as under the title of the Bill.
- *Members' names*—These are given in the form by which the Member prefers to be known.
- *Speaker and Chair*—Contributions by the Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker and deputies'. Contributions from the chair during Committees of the Whole House are brought together under 'Chairman of Committee of the Whole House'. Significant rulings and statements (as opposed to routine comments) are indicated by the sub-heading 'Rulings and statements' in both cases.

Guidance on headings

- *Cross references*—'See' references indicate all the material has been entered under another heading. 'See also' references indicate that additional information may be found under another heading.
- *Concept thesaurus*—A copy of the subject thesaurus to POLIS, listing the concept entries used in the index, is available on the Parliamentary website. A hard copy is available from the Head of the POLIS Unit, House of Commons Library, 1 Derby Gate, London, SW1A 2DG (020 7219 6456).

REFERENCES

- References in the indexes are to columns rather than pages.
- References to debates, but not questions, are accompanied by the date of the item.
- There are separate sequences in Hansard for the material taken on the floor of the House, Westminster Hall sittings and written questions:
  - References consisting of a number by itself indicate material taken on the floor of the House.
  - References ending in 'wh' indicate Westminster Hall sittings.
  - References ending in 'w' indicate written questions.
- References under all headings except the names of Members contributing to Parliamentary business and the titles of legislation are listed in one numerical sequence irrespective of whether the material is taken on the floor of the House, is discussed at a Westminster Hall sitting or is a written question.
- References under the names of Members contributing to Parliamentary business and the titles of legislation are listed in numerical sequence under the following headings:
  - *Debates etc.* (which includes interventions and points of order as well as significant contributions to debates);
  - *Sittings in Westminster Hall* (covering all debates held as part of the Westminster Hall sittings); and
  - *Questions* (which includes written, oral and private notice questions).

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in connection with the progress of bills:

- 1R=First reading
- 2R=Second reading
- Com=Committee stage
- Rep=Report stage
- 3R=Third reading
- res=resolution
- amendt(s)=amendment(s)
- *=matter taken formally without debate or division.

Parliamentary background

- The Parliamentary website at http://www.parliament.uk contains a range of information about Parliament and the full text of some Parliamentary papers and proceedings including Hansard.
- Information on current Parliamentary business is provided in the House of Commons Information Office *Weekly Information Bulletin*, available on the website and from The Stationery Office (020 7873 8499).
- Further information on Parliamentary proceedings and procedures is available from the House of Commons Information Office (020 7219 4272).

A3
Hindhead 1164–8w

A11
524–5w

A21
Flood control 96w

A30
536w

A35
536–7w

A40M
Road traffic control 1201w

A46
Road works 533–4w

A69
Road works 525w

A303
536w

A590
Bypasses 1315w

Abandoned vehicles
1173w, 1318–9w
Luton 292w
Stroud 1091–2w
Waste disposal 292w

Abbott, Ms Diane
Debates etc.
Select committees (19.07.01) 510
Terrorism (15.10.01) 931–2, (16.10.01) 1081
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Community relations, Urban areas (17.07.01) 18wh
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 24wh, 32wh, 36–7wh
Questions
Business questions 436

Absent voting
11w

Academic year
Tourism 811–2w

Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth
1232w

Access to Justice Act 1999
Questions
1023–4w

Accident and emergency departments
Elderly 735–7w

Accidents
Chapelcross power station 580–2w
Elderly 1345w
Essex 1225–6w
Fees and charges 112w
Fireworks 605–6w
Fisheries 16w
Jet skis 886–7w
Nuclear weapons 140–1w
Railways 91–2w
Roads 14w, 527w, 1225–6w

Accommodation and Works Select Committee
(16.07.01) 76

Acquittals
1019–20w

Act of Settlement 1700
Questions
787w, 1024w

Acute beds
East Sussex 117–8w
St George's Hospital Tooting 430w

Adair, Johnny
482w

Addresses to the Crown
Equitable Life Assurance Society (16.10.01) 1031

Administration of justice
Nigeria 307w
Northern Ireland 314w

Administration Select Committee
(16.07.01) 76

Adoption and Children Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (19.10.01) 1360

Advertising
Prescription drugs 223w
Tobacco 228w

Advisory Board on Family Law
see Family Law Advisory Board

Advisory bodies
Crops 1268w

Advisory Committee on Business Appointments
see Business Appointments Advisory Committee

Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Research Overseas
see Economic and Social Research Overseas Advisory Committee

Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service
Annual reports 321w

Advisory services
Finance 786w

Advocacy
Mental health services 220–1w

Advocate General for Scotland
European Court of Human Rights 142–3

Aerials
326w, 882–3w, 1355w
Planning permission 204w, 531–2w, 883w
Public safety radio communications project 274w

Aerospace industry
1142w

Afghanistan
969w
Armed conflict 819–20w, 1161–5, 1168–9, 1284–5w, 1307w, 1372w
EC aid 1234w
Females 1168
Heroin 1382w
Hinduism 261w
Overseas aid 1284w
Recognition of states 1382w
Refugees 799–801w

Africa
(18.07.01) 127–34wh
Non-governmental organisations 804w

Age Equality Commission Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 306

Agriculture
see also Farmers
1292–5
Census 173w
Environment protection 1265w
Greater London 564w
Kosovo 478w
North East region 564w
Subsidies 1085w
Sustainable development 387w
Trade agreements 595w

Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission
456–7w

Ainger, Mr Nick, Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 810

Ainsworth, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary, Home Office
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 1021–4
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Police, Hertfordshire (17.07.01) 49–52wh
Questions
Auchi, Nadhmi 126w
Corruption 131w
Drugs, Crime 1191w
Drugs, Imports 283w
Drugs, Misuse 349w, 916w, 1397–8w
Drugs, Research 283–5w
Extradition, France 126w
Hallucinogens 794w
Proceeds of crime 1398w
Witnesses, Protection 643–4w

Ainsworth, Mr Peter
Questions
Agriculture 1294–5
Athletics, Picketts Lock 739w
BBC, Digital broadcasting 55w, 739w
BBC, Public appointments 816–7w
British Museum, Manpower 76–7w
Culture, Finance 54–5w
Digital broadcasting 56w
Duchy of Lancaster, Farms 1005w
English Heritage, Public appointments 1285w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1302–3
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 7–8, 189w
Freedom of expression, Hyde Park 1143w
Incinerators 1058w
Manpower, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 746w
Millennium Exhibition 52w, 193w, 200w, 500w
Millennium Exhibition, Property transfer 500–1w
Motor sports 79w
Museums and galleries, Finance 75w
National Lottery, Film 740w
National Lottery, Millennium capital projects 52w
Office of Communications 14, 1377–8w
Planning permission 869w
Sellafield, Security 1152w
Television, Disability aids 807w
Theatre, Finance 54w
Tipping of waste 1290
Tourism, Finance 75–6w
Towers Perrin 1377w
Transport, Environmental impact assessment 869w
Wembley Stadium 3–4
Work permits, Trinidad and Tobago 304w, 789w

Air force
942w
Manpower 1369–70w

Air pollution
621–2w
Gloucestershire 621–3w
Pollution control 620–1w

Air routes
Auctions 534w
Scotland 150w

Air traffic control
885w
Prestwick 884–5w, 1295w

Aircraft carriers
335w
Manpower 146w
Portsmouth Harbour 144–5w
Procurement 1140w

Airlines
Competition 981w

Airport tax
856–7w

Airports
Security 1366w

Alcoholic drinks
749w
Licensing (20.07.01) 566–8
Measurement 1376w
Misuse 1355w
Young people 1201–2w

Alcoholism
Milton Keynes 231–2w

Alexander, Mr Douglas, Minister for E-commerce and Competitiveness, Dept of Trade and Industry
Questions
Aerials 326w
Bank services, Rural areas 601w
Broadband 982–3w, 1157–8w, 1278w, 1374–5w
Broadband, Fees and charges 1374w
Dolphin Telecommunications, Wiltshire 984w
Electronic signatures 610w
Email, Unsolicited goods and services 320w
Information technology 38–9w
Office of Communications 981w
Post offices 596–7w, 601w
Post offices, Closures 606w, 986w, 1157w, 1375w
Post offices, Greater London 267w
Post offices, Standards 35w
Postal services, Elections 267w
Radio, Illegal broadcasting 40–3w
Radio, Licensing 321w
Royal Mail, Redundancy 604w
Telecommunications 599–600w, 1277–8w
Telecommunications, Data protection 30–1w
Telecommunications, Licensing 326w, 599w
Telecommunications, Rural areas 600w

Allan, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 706–7, 768–70, (08.10.01) 827
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Community relations, Urban areas (17.07.01) 14–6wh
Questions
Email, Unsolicited goods and services 320w
Telecommunications, Data protection 30–1w

Allen, Mr Graham
Questions
Abandoned vehicles 1173w
BBC External Services 965w
Breast feeding 1326–7w
Broadband 1374–5w
Broadband, Fees and charges 1374w
Church schools, Northern Ireland 998w
Civil disorder, Bradford 920w

Allen, Mr Graham—continued
Curriculum, Personal and social education 1187w
Curriculum, Religion 1185w
Departmental reorganisation 818w
Drugs, Crime 1191w
Economic and monetary union 847–8w
Electoral Commission 869–70w
Extradition 1325w
Government, Annual reports 1220–2w
Greenhouse effect 817w
Habitual offenders 1325w
Leader of the Opposition 1001w
Legislation, Parliamentary scrutiny 999–1001w
Mass media, Prime Minister 817w
Ministerial policy advisors, Prime Minister 1361–2w
Mother and baby units 1235w
Pakistan, Blasphemy 966w
Peers 818w
Population estimates 817w
Prime ministers, Ministerial powers 818w
Public sector net cash requirement 848w
Regional government 1004–5w
Schools, Finance 989w
Select committees 1001w
Terrorism 818w
Terrorism, Finance 861w, 1212w
United Nations, USA 1149–50w
Voting behaviour 870w

Alternative dispute resolution
1023w

Alternative energy
36–7w, 264–5w, (17.10.01) 297–306wh, 326–7w, 584–5w, 600–1w, 623w, 862w, 1152–3w, 1271w, 1373–4w
Standards 264w
Wales 600–1w
Wastes 1068w, 1152w

Alternative medicine
General Medical Council 1036–7
Prisoners 921w

Alzheimer's disease
119w
Prescription drugs 68–9w

Amendments and new clauses
Rulings and statements (16.07.01) 21

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Cellular phones, Safety (20.07.01) 532–6
Driving, Young people (19.10.01) 1406–11
EC grants and loans, Southend (17.07.01) 264–7
Questions
Climate change levy 411
Fisheries, Leigh on Sea 1299–300
NHS, Wales 1152–3
Social security benefits, Disabled 824w

Ammunition
331w
Luce Bay 956–7w
River Tamar 142w

Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1181–4, 1185–91
Terrorism (14.09.01) 620–4, (04.10.01) 696–702, (16.10.01) 1063–70
Questions
Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference 1296w
Kashmir 966w
Terrorism 966w
Terrorism, UN resolutions 1150w

Ancram, Rt Hon Michael—continued
Zimbabwe, Politics and government 1296–7w

Anderson, Rt Hon Donald
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1176
Select committees (16.07.01) 72
Terrorism (14.09.01) 629–30, (04.10.01) 787–9
Questions
Transport, Wales 1252w

Angola
802–3w
Sanctions 969w

Animal experiments
129w, 131w, 341w
Defence 209w
Departmental responsibilities 469w
Disclosure of information 1396–7w
Drugs 1353w
Genetic engineering 905w
Genetically modified organisms 921–2w
Primates 675–6w

Animal feed
Fish products 612w
Genetically modified organisms 732w
Isle of Wight 1086–7w

Animal Procedures Committee
Annual reports 341w

Animal Sanctuaries (Licensing) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 308

Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
Questions
793–4w

Animal welfare
169w, 1063w, 1269w, 1298–9
Cumbria 1269w
Pheasants 1093w
Prosecutions 1062w

Animals
Diseases 1097w
Genetic engineering 172w

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
Questions
129w, 341w, 905w

Animals Scientific Procedures Inspectorate
see Scientific Procedures Inspectorate

Anniversaries
Queen Elizabeth II 1190w

Annuities
423–4, 700–1w, 865w, 905–6
Stakeholder pensions 701w

Antarctic
Tourism 490w

Antarctic Treaty
490w

Anthrax
Emergency services 1048–50

Antibiotics
Genetically modified organisms 629w

Antidepressants
69–70w, 110–1w

Antisocial behaviour orders
287w, 650–2w, 795w
Sussex 795w, 1206–7w
Wiltshire 1206w

Antitank missiles
148w, 946–7w

Apache AH-64 helicopter
6w, 146–7w, 951w
Flight simulation 716w

Apprentices
Defence Evaluation and Research Agency 210–2w
QINETIQ 143w

Arab states
Refugees 1238w

Arbitration
1023–4w
Finance 786w

Arbroath
Assisted areas 152w

Areas of outstanding natural beauty
Motorcycles 1059w

Argentina
821w

Armed conflict
Afghanistan 819–20w, 1161–5, 1168–9, 1284–5w, 1307w, 1372w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 104w
Indonesia 968w

Armed forces
Canada 961–2w
Colombia 494w, 715w
Compensation 332w
Death 947–8w
Dependants 1308–9w
Disciplinary proceedings 937w
Health services 5w, 1223–4w
Housing 717w, 938–41w
India 952w
Insurance 1305–6w, 1372w
Legal profession 960–1w
Maintenance 1372w
Manpower 713–4w
Motor vehicles 947w
New deal schemes 1303–4w
Northern Ireland 947–8w
Pensions 4w, 715–6w, 941w
Reviews 710–1w

Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency
Standards 711w

Armenia
498w

Armoured fighting vehicles
New Zealand 952w
Poland 952–3w

Arms control
803w

Arms trade
210w
Export controls 425w
Export credit guarantees 582–3w
Firearms 1138w
Indonesia 981–2w
Israel 39–40w
Kosovo 1298–9w
Sudan 975w
USA 4w

Army
4w
Helicopters 1140w
Manpower 957w, 1135–6w

Army Training and Recruiting Agency
Standards 137w

Arthritis
Prescription drugs 1354w

Arts
Finance 185–6w, 749w, 807w
Schools 1–2

Arts festivals
52w

Asbestos
68w, 512w

Ashcroft, Lord
263w, 308w, 484w, 976w

Ashley, James
48w, 125w, 344w, 680–1w

Asians
Nurses 223–4w

Assisted areas
1280w
Arbroath 152w
Scotland 325–6w

Assisted Areas Order 2000
Questions
1280w

Associated Newspapers
Defamation 587w

Astute class submarines
149w

Asylum
see Refugees

Atherton, Ms Candy
Debates etc.
Age Equality Commission Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 306
Questions
Animal experiments 129w
Chemicals, Waste disposal 708–9w
Council tax 555–6w
Nancekuke 334w
Non-domestic rates, Small businesses 362w

Athletics
814–5w, 1144w, 1378–9w
Picketts Lock 15, 739w, 815–6w, 1378w

Atkins, Charlotte
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 320–3wh, 337wh, 340wh

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Imitation guns 668w
Porton Down, Human experiments 142–3w, 653w
Turkmenistan, Prisoners 122w
Youth Hostels Association, Finance 1288w

Atkinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 239
Sixth form colleges, Transport (20.07.01) 578–80
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Hill farming, Northern region (18.07.01) 90–3wh, 104wh, 106wh
Questions
Further education, Transport 251w

Attendance allowance
Administrative delays 688w

Auchi, Nadhmi
126w

Auctions
Air routes 534w

Auld Review
see Criminal Courts Review

Aung San Suu Kyi
261w

Austin, Mr John
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 885–6
Questions
Health visitors, Manpower 734w
Members, Correspondence 1362w

Australia
Rugby 1288w
Social security benefits 64w

Automated credit transfer
Social security benefits 825w

Aviation
359w, 891w
Cabinet Office 1006–7w
Compensation 1169w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 1144w
Dept for Education and Skills 989w
Dept for International Development 1283w
Dept for Work and Pensions 1383w
Dept of Health 1350–1w
Finance 1212–3w, 1261w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1151w
Health hazards 1365w
Home Office 1204w
Inverness 1368w
Ministry of Defence 1139w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1146w
Prime Minister 822–3w
Security 933w, 1368w
Treasury 866w

Avon
Cancer 719w

Azerbaijan
498w

Babies
Hearing 738w

Bacon, Mr Richard
Questions
Disability working allowance 698–9w
Disabled person's tax credit 569–70w
Livestock, Transport 1092w
Sixth form education 1231w
Sixth form education, Curriculum 1180w
Sixth form education, Student numbers 987w
Working tax credit 571w

Badgers
see Bovine tuberculosis

Bailey, Mr Adrian
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 1016–9
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Credit unions (18.07.01) 80–3wh
Questions
Care trusts 1120–1w
Local government finance 556w

Bailiffs
451w

Bain Commission
see Low Pay Commission

Baird, Vera
Questions
Young offenders, Redcar 668w
Youth offender referral orders 668w

Baker, Norman
Questions
Alternative energy, Wastes 1152w
Animal experiments, Departmental responsibilities 469w

***Baker, Norman**—continued*
Animal experiments, Genetically modified organisms 921–2w
Animal experiments, Primates 675–6w
Animal welfare, Pheasants 1093w
Animal welfare, Prosecutions 1062w
Ashley, James 125w, 680–1w
Associated Newspapers, Defamation 587w
Auchi, Nadhmi 126w
Birt, Lord 819w
Census 572–3w
China, Foreign relations 491w
Civil servants, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1087w
Civil service 819w
Drugs, Licensing 233w
Extradition, France 126w
Firearms 921w
Firearms, Young people 921w
Flood control 1096w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 1104w
Gifts and endowments, Prime Minister 74w
Hinduja, Srichand 56–7w, 468w
Hinduja Passport Inquiry 468w
Hunting 635w
Huntingdon Life Sciences, Bank services 601–2w
Incinerators, Planning permission 1056–7w
Insurance, Floods 860w
Meteorology 956w
MI5, Equal opportunities 47–8w
MI5, Prosecutions 47w
Military exercises, USA 7w, 956w
Millennium Exhibition, Sponsorship 747–8w
Ministerial policy advisors, Prime Minister 818–9w
Motor vehicles, Licensing 870w
Parliamentary scrutiny, Recess 1001w
Police 798w
Police, Data protection 921w
Police, Firearms 680w
Post offices 601w
Prisoners, Alternative medicine 921w
RAF Feltwell 956w
RAF Fylingdales 956w
RAF Menwith Hill 6–7w
RAF Menwith Hill, Bye laws 995w
RAF Menwith Hill, Contracts 954w
RAF Menwith Hill, Ministry of Defence Police 954w
RAF Menwith Hill, Security 955w
RAF Menwith Hill, USA 955w
Railways, Construction 503w
Railways, Lewes 9w
Recycling, OECD countries 1051–2w
Royal prerogative 967w
South Coast Corridor Multi-Modal Study 542w
Sussex Police 274w
Taxation, Official residences 20w
Taxation, Pheasants 851–2w
TT Smith (Mink) 618w
United Nations, Voting behaviour 45w
Vaccination, Compensation 739w
West-East pipeline 979–80w

Balance of payments
852w

Balance of trade
845w

Baldry, Tony
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 972
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1069
Questions
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 6–7

Ballistic missile defence
333w, 715w, 819w
Iraq 330w
USA 715w

Ballot papers
General Election 2001 1172w

Ballots
Grammar schools 993–4w

Bank services
377w
Competition 847w
Disadvantaged 862w
Huntingdon Life Sciences 601–2w
Post offices 1303w
Rural areas 601w

Banks
Proceeds of crime 385w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Japan (20.07.01) 554–8
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 543
Terrorism (04.10.01) 782–3
Questions
Animal welfare 1063w
Church Commissioners, Investment 18–9
Mirror Group Newspapers 602w
Police, Football 1197–8w
Royal parks, Birds 807w
Royal parks, Pest control 752–3w
Wembley Stadium 3

Banner Committee
see Animal Procedures Committee

Barker, Mr Gregory
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 746–7, 751
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 331–3wh, 345wh
Questions
Acute beds, East Sussex 117–8w
Bypasses, Bexhill 17w
Flood control, A21 96w
Flood control, Robertsbridge 170w, 396w
Hospitals, Infectious diseases 232w
Reprotech 1090–1w
Surgery, East Sussex 117w

Barlinnie Prison
European Convention on Human Rights 154w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Electoral register (20.07.01) 572–5
Select committees, Points of order (17.07.01) 155
Terrorism (08.10.01) 819–20, (15.10.01) 947–8
Questions
Business questions 1321
Industrial disputes 602–3w
National Lottery 50w
Plutonium 602w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 272

Baron, John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1259–60
Maiden speech (20.07.01) 538–41
Small businesses, Tax burden (20.07.01) 538–41
Terrorism (04.10.01) 752–4, (15.10.01) 950
Questions
Drugs, Misuse 916w
Essex Police, Manpower 916w, 1198w

***Baron, John**—continued*
Housing, Construction 554w
Incinerators, Essex 1243–6w
Incinerators, Pollution control 1058w
Landfill tax 1080–1w
Police, Pay 1198w
Police stations, Essex 1401–2w
Property development 554w
Recycling 1053–4w
Schools, Admissions 765w
Small businesses, Regulation 597–8w
Teachers, Manpower 765w
Waste management 1246w

Barrett, John
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 763–4

Barron, Rt Hon Kevin
Questions
General Medical Council 1036

Basic education
Social security benefits 685–6w, 784w

Bass
399w

Baton rounds
Northern Ireland 311–2w, 479–80w

Battle, Mr John
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 642–3

Bayley, Hugh
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 25–6
Terrorism (04.10.01) 745–6, (08.10.01) 838, 895
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Africa (18.07.01) 127–30wh
Questions
Flood control, Vale of York 1297
Police, Manpower 673–4w
Racial discrimination, Conferences 423w

BBC
Commercial activities 188w
Digital broadcasting 55–6w, 77w, 739w, 809–10w
Finance 188w
Oneword (20.07.01) 580–2
Public appointments 816–7w
Standards 77w

BBC External Services
426w, 965w

***Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret**, Secretary of State for Environment Food and the Regions*
Questions
Animal welfare 1298–9
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Creutzfeld Jakob Disease Inquiry 400–1w
Central Science Laboratory, Annual reports 400w
Climate Change Convention 1048w, 1050w
Crops, Advisory bodies 1268w
Farmers, Income 1269w
Food, Waste disposal 1268w
Foot and mouth disease 1266w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1301–6
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 297w, 1265–6w, 1295–7
Foot and mouth disease, Settle 1098w
Greenhouse effect, Departmental responsibilities 1046–7w
Intervention Board, Annual reports 400w
London Underground, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1059w

Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret—continued
Pesticides Safety Directorate, Annual reports 289w
Radioactive wastes 1290–2
Rural Payments Agency, Standards 1247w
Tipping of waste 1269w, 1283–5
United Nations 1270w
Veterinary Laboratories Agency, Annual reports 400w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Annual reports 400w

Bed and breakfast accommodation
Homelessness 545w

Bedfordshire
Class sizes 406–7w
Free school meals 406w
Further education 248w
Health education 248w
Pre-school education 248w
Primary education 406w
Rural areas 1267w
Schools 136–7w
Sixth form education 248w
Teachers 249w

Begg, Miss Anne
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 826–7
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Energy, Scotland (16.10.01) 214–8wh
Questions
Dental services 1122–3w
Employment, Disabled 910
European Court of Human Rights, Advocate General for Scotland 142–3
Parliamentary scrutiny 152

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 824–5
Questions
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 276
National Lottery 12
Northern Ireland government 1170
Roads, Northern Ireland 312w

Beith, Rt Hon A J
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Hill farming, Northern region (18.07.01) 91wh, 93–5wh, 103–4wh, 109wh
Questions
Agriculture, North East region 564w
Cereals, Subsidies 1217w
Excise duties, Fuels 214w
Foot and mouth disease, Scotland 135–6
Petrol alternatives 182w
Schools, Transport 409w
Sheep premiums 1118w

Belfast
Civil disorder 163–5w
Terrorism 483w

Belgium
EC presidency 497–8w

Belize
Financial services 26w, 308w, 484w

Bell, Mr Stuart, Second Church Estates Commissioner
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 657–8, (04.10.01) 687
Questions
Bishops, Pay 16–7
Church Commissioners, Hagg Wood 19–20
Church Commissioners, Investment 18–9
Church Commissioners, Property 26w
Churches, Repairs and maintenance 17–8, 426–7w

Bell, Mr Stuart—continued
Clergy, Conditions of employment 15–6
Clergy, Pay 25w
Redundant churches, Property transfer 25–6w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 619, (04.10.01) 742–4, (08.10.01) 823
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Wright, Lauren (16.10.01) 226wh
Questions
Parliamentary scrutiny 153–4
Tax burden, Trade competitiveness 372w

Bellwin scheme
Hertfordshire 100–1w
North Yorkshire 289–90w

Ben Sedrine, Sihem
485w

Benefit Fraud Inspectorate
Manpower 418–9w

Benn, Hilary, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept for International Development
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Africa (18.07.01) 130–4wh
Questions
Afghanistan, Overseas aid 1284w
Ashcroft, Lord 308w
Aviation, Dept for International Development 1283w
Belize, Financial services 26w, 308w
Botswana, Overseas aid 307w
Buildings, Dept for International Development 1282w
Correspondence, Dept for International Development 1283w
Developing countries, Debts 308w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for International Development 307w
Manpower, Dept for International Development 1280–1w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept for International Development 1282–3w
Mozambique, English language 26–7w
Pay, Dept for International Development 1281–2w
Public expenditure, Dept for International Development 1282w

Bennett, Andrew
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 44, 67–9
Sittings in Westminster Hall
National Lottery (17.10.01) 294–6wh
Questions
Former prime ministers, Tax allowances 318w
Manchester Prison, Telephone services 681–2w
Ordnance Survey, Standards 543w
Prison governors, Correspondence 682w
Public footpaths, Cycleways 543w

Benzodiazepines
69–70w, 110–1w

Bercow, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 27
Business questions intervention (19.07.01) 429
Economic policy (16.07.01) 124–5
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 158, 169, (18.07.01) 313, 315–7, 319–20, 322, 326, 332–3, 345–6, 359–60, 388
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1174

Bercow, Mr John—continued
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 3R (18.10.01) 1327–41, 1345–7
Ministerial statement intervention (15.10.01) 952, 964
Oral question time intervention (17.07.01) 148
Questions
Airport tax 857w
Aviation, Finance 1212–3w
Bank services, Disadvantaged 862w
Business questions 440
Churches, Repairs and maintenance 17–8
Criminal Courts Review 156w
Income tax 868w
Insurance, Terrorism 1262–3w
Local authorities, Debts 898–9w
London Underground, Public private partnerships 1169–70w
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 841–3w
NHS, Finance 1212w, 1242w
Office of Communications 981w
Personal savings 845w
Private finance initiative 861–2w
Public expenditure, Scotland 1260–1w
Public safety radio communications project, Aerials 274w
Social security benefits 1208–10w
Social security benefits, Abuse 823–4w
Stop and search 46–7w
VAT, Health insurance 855w

Beresford, Sir Paul
Debates etc.
Dental services, Somerset (17.10.01) 1280

Bermuda Regiment
257w

Berry, Mr Roger
Questions
Regional assemblies 100w

Best, Mr Harold
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 825, (16.10.01) 1080

Best value
883w

Beta-interferon
1027w, 1120w, 1240w

Betts, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 992–5
Railtrack (15.10.01) 971

Bewdley
Flood control 1285–6

Bexhill
Bypasses 17w

Billing
Government departments 322–3w

Biosafety Protocol
629w

Biotechnology
Teaching aids 249w

Biotechnology and Genetic Modification Ministerial Group
Membership 74w

Birchwood Park
Planning permission 1320w

Birds
Conservation 1088–92w
Import controls 857w
Royal parks 807w

Birds of prey
Conservation 170w

Birmingham
Housing (17.07.01) 53–9wh

Birmingham Relief Road
1173w

Birt, Lord
819w

Bishops
Pay 16–7

Black Police Association
74w

Blackman, Mrs Liz
Questions
China, Foreign relations 424–5w
Elections, Northern Ireland 1147w
Northern Ireland Policing Board 1147–9w
Oversight Commissioner, Annual reports 1147w
Probation Board for Northern Ireland, Annual reports 1147w
Remploy, Standards 1256w
Social security benefits, Abuse 1256w

Blaenau Gwent
Unemployment 1254w

Blair, Rt Hon Tony, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Debates etc.
Terrorism, Ministerial statements (14.09.01) 604–16, (04.10.01) 671–88, (08.10.01) 811–29
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 819–20w, 1161–5, 1168–9
Afghanistan, Females 1168
Argentina 821w
Aviation, Prime Minister 822–3w
Ballistic missile defence 819w
Biotechnology and Genetic Modification Ministerial Group, Membership 74w
Birt, Lord 819w
Black Police Association 74w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 104w
Business Appointments Advisory Committee, Annual reports 318w
Cancer 279–80
Chechnya, Human rights 823w
Children and Young People's Services Ministerial Group 318–9w
Civil service 819w
Cleave Camp, Disclosure of information 469w
Climate Change Convention 819w
Climate Change Convention, USA 284
Correspondence, Prime Minister 206w, 821–2w
Council housing, Standards 287
CRUSE 823w
"Defeating International Terrorism" 1362w
Delivery Unit 1363w
Departmental reorganisation 818w
Departmental responsibilities, Animal experiments 469w
Departmental responsibilities, Elections 319w
Departmental responsibilities, Poverty 319w
Departmental responsibilities, Sustainable development 103w
Departmental responsibilities, Tourism 820w
Dredging 74w
Economic situation 288
Energy Policy Review 103w
Falconio, Peter 283–4

Blair, Rt Hon Tony—continued
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 821w
Foot and mouth disease, Public inquiries 281, 820w
Foot and mouth disease, Small businesses 286–7
Former prime ministers, Tax allowances 318w
GCE AS level 280–1
General practitioners 1166–8
Genetically modified organisms, Maize 319w
Gifts and endowments, Prime Minister 74w
Government, Annual reports 206w, 280
Government departments, Databases 468w
Great North Eastern Railways 286
Greenhouse effect 817w
Group of Eight, Genoa Summit 820–1w
Hinduja, Srichand 468w
Hinduja Group, Millennium Exhibition 468w
Hinduja Passport Inquiry 468w
Hospital beds, Oxfordshire 1257w
Incapacity benefit 74w
Incinerators 284
Intelligence and Security Committee 318w
Intelligence and Security Committee, Public appointments 1119w
Local government finance 1165–6
London Underground, Prime Minister 102–3w
London Underground, Public private partnerships 279, 282–3
Mass media, Prime Minister 817w
Members, Correspondence 1362w
Metropolitan Police, Training 285
Middle East, Peace negotiations 1160–1
Ministerial changes 287–8
Ministerial policy advisors 467w
Ministerial policy advisors, Prime Minister 818–9w, 1361–2w
Ministers, Travel 467w
Ministers, Visits abroad 467w
Moore, Jo 1165
Multiple sclerosis 285
Northern Ireland government 285–6, 1165, 1170
Pakistan, Terrorism 1169–70
Peers 103–4w, 469w, 818w
Performance and Innovation Unit 317–8w
Population estimates 817w
Prime ministers, Ministerial powers 818w
Prime Minister's questions 281–2
Public sector, Private sector 285
Railways, Public sector 1166
Recycling 286
Refugees, Dover 282
Regional planning and development 73w
Select committees 281
Select committees, Prime Minister 1257w
Sellafield, Mixed oxide fuel 469w
Sellafield, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 103w
Social Exclusion Unit 1363w
Staffordshire 206w
Starter home initiative, Greater London 1257w
Stillman, Ian 288
Terrorism 818w
USA, Foreign trade 317w
Voluntary work 1257w
Ynys Mon 1256w

Blasphemy
Pakistan 966w

Blears, Ms Hazel, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Dental services, Somerset (17.10.01) 1278–82

Blears, Ms Hazel—continued
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Carers (16.10.01) 187–91wh
Grantham Hospital (17.10.01) 285–9wh
Wright, Lauren (16.10.01) 226–8wh
Questions
Accidents, Fees and charges 112w
Acute beds, East Sussex 117–8w
Aerials 1355w
Alcoholism, Milton Keynes 231–2w
Antidepressants 110–1w
Aviation, Dept of Health 1350–1w
Beta-interferon 1027w
Cancer, Health services 1124w
Cervical cancer, Screening 1120w
Consent to medical treatment, Young people 227–8w
Dental services 1122–3w, 1336–40w, 1346–7w
Dental services, Derbyshire 1350w
Dental services, Fees and charges 228w, 723–4w, 1335–6w
Dental services, Mercury 222w
Diagnosis 1121w
Diseases, Research 722w
Drugs, Animal experiments 1353w
Drugs, Licensing 233w
Drugs, Misuse 1341w
Drugs, Prices 1357w
Drugs, Safety 440w
Electromagnetic fields 1343–4w
General Medical Council, Complaints 1341–2w
General practitioners, Huntingdon 1125w
General practitioners, West Sussex 1125–6w
Green Ministers Committee 726w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept of Health 225w
Health hazards, Greenhouse effect 1356w
Health services, Disadvantaged 1123w
Health services, Reciprocal arrangements 1328–30w
Hepatitis, Disease control 1035–6
Hospices, Finance 1328w
Hospital beds, East Sussex 1350w
Hospitals, Infectious diseases 232w
Hospitals, Liskeard 221w
Hospitals, Purley 1031–2
Hospitals, Waiting lists 1327–8w
Human embryo experiments 1121w
Infant foods 720w, 1345w
London Underground, Dept of Health 721–2w
Lorazepam 1356–7w
Manpower, Dept of Health 1352–3w
Medical treatments, Marketing 725–6w
Members, Correspondence 1030w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Health 1034–5w
Multiple sclerosis, Cannabis 727w
Negligence 735w, 1039–40w
NHS, Catering 1040–1w
NHS, Complaints 735w
NHS, Energy 1349w
NHS, Equal opportunities 70–1w
NHS, Public participation 110w
NHS Appointments Commission 728w
NHS Direct 731w
NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency, Annual reports 427w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 448w
Osteopathy 1125w
Out-patients, Attendance 1047–8
Parkside NHS Trust 1031–3w
Patients, Surveys 234w
Pay, Dept of Health 1035w, 1351–2w
Pharmaceutical Industry Competitiveness Task Force 222w
Prescription drugs, Children 1133–5w

Blears, Ms Hazel*—*continued
Prescriptions, Fees and charges 222w, 723w
Prozac 722w
Radiotherapy 1124w
Recess, Dept of Health 727w
Retirement, Dept of Health 1028w
St Leonard's Hospital Dorset 237–8w
Sick leave, Dept of Health 439w
Surgery, East Sussex 117w

Bletchley Park Trust
740w

Blind
see sight impaired

Blizzard, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1095–8, 1136
Questions
Business questions 444
Community service orders, Litter 682w
EC Research Council 272w
Fish, Conservation 870–1w, 1269–70w
Fisheries, Subsidies 320w
Gibraltar 489w
Government departments, Correspondence 174w
Industry, Government assistance 603–4w
Neurology, Consultants 1032–3
Schools, Vandalism 405w
Teachers, Resignations 760w
Teachers, Training 1177–8w
Wilton Park, Standards 489–90w

Bloody Sunday Tribunal of Inquiry
139–40w

Blunkett, Rt Hon David*, *Secretary of State for the Home Dept
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 1R (19.07.01) 460
Proceeds of Crime Bill, 1R (18.10.01) 1325
Terrorism, Ministerial statements (15.10.01) 923–39
Questions
Aviation, Home Office 1204w
Commission for Racial Equality, Annual reports 46w
Construction, Home Office 1202w
Electronic government, Home Office 670w
HM Inspectorate of Prisons 675w
Huntingdon Life Sciences 1192w
Information technology, Home Office 127–8w
MI5, Equal opportunities 47–8w
MI5, Prosecutions 47w
National Black Police Association 651w
Pay, Home Office 1204w
Private finance initiative, Home Office 349–50w, 903–4w
Recess, Home Office 345w
Refugees, Appeals 342–3w
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 353w
Retirement, Home Office 1203–4w
Sakina Security Services 1238w
Select committees, Home Office 1325–6w
Terrorism 933w, 1236–7w, 1358w, 1363w
Terrorism, Training 1237w
Terrorism Act 2000 353w

Blunt, Mr Crispin
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 646–8

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Boateng, Rt Hon Paul*, *Financial Secretary, Treasury
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 42–4wh
Questions
Airport tax 856–7w
Aviation, Finance 1261w
Census 572–3w
Climate change levy 373w, 411–2, 426–8, 1211w
Climate change levy, Combined heat and power 568w
Community investment tax credit 183w, 576w
Confiscation orders 575–6w
Correspondence, Treasury 858–9w
Customs and Excise, Disciplinary proceedings 558w
Customs and Excise, Shrewsbury 1259–60w
Customs and Excise, Terrorism 857–8w
Death rate 566w
Debts, Developing countries 373w
Drug seizures 182–3w
Drugs, Misuse 568w
EC grants and loans 577w
Economic situation, Borders region 564–6w
Education, Qualifications 577w
Employment 577–8w
Excise duties, Fuels 214w, 376w
Excise duties, Motor vehicles 858w
Excise duties, Whisky 576w
Green Ministers Committee, Treasury 182w, 213w
Heavily indebted poor countries initiative 568w
Import controls, Birds 857w
Insurance premium tax 20w
Landfill tax, Tax yields 1118w
Members, Correspondence 383w
New deal for lone parents 375–6w
Petrol alternatives 182w, 377–8w
Planning, Treasury 559–60w
Regional assistance 561–2w
Smuggling 378–9w
Smuggling, Cannabis 383w
Smuggling, Petrol 855w
Stamp duties 564w
Stamp duties, Property transfer 837w
Tax allowances, Sports 215w
Tax allowances, Urban regeneration companies 856w
Taxation, Pesticides 569w
Taxation, Pheasants 851–2w
Teenage pregnancy 567w
Trade competitiveness 372w
Unemployment 566–7w
Unemployment, Borders region 565–6w
VAT, Climate change levy 849w
VAT, Food 852w
VAT, Health insurance 855w
VAT, Home care services 213w
VAT, Housing 558w
VAT, Institutional care 559w
VAT, Ophthalmic services 576w
VAT, Religious buildings 215w
VAT, Sheltered housing wardens 181w

Boating
50w

Body searches
Holloway Prison 928–9w

Bombs
1372w
Epping Forest 206w

Borders region
Economic situation 564–6w

Borders region*—*continued
Unemployment 565–6w

Borrow, Mr David
Questions
"Culture Media and Sport Select Committee on Tourism and Foot and Mouth" 1224w
Employment Tribunals Service 1276w
Farmers, Codes of practice 1275–6w
Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Public appointments 273w
Intellectual property 475–6w
Parental leave 1276w
Parliamentary scrutiny 155w
Prisoners, Contraceptives 902w
Prisoners, HIV infection 902w

Boscombe Down
Roads 941w

Bosnia-Herzegovina
Armed conflict 104w

Boswell, Mr Tim
Questions
Connexions Service 769–70w
Disability living allowance, Phobias 1302w
Educational maintenance allowance 772w
Employment, Disabled 175w
Further education 770–2w
Further education, Pay 774–5w
Further education, Per capita costs 773w
Further education, Student numbers 403w
GCE AS level 1185–6w
Hearing aids 1327w
Learning and Skills Council for England 774–5w
Magistrates 1024–5w
Maternity services 1038
Pensioners, Income support 917–8
Police, Manpower 1324w
Prisons, Fire prevention 1235w
Schools, Repairs and maintenance 990w
Sexual offences, Learning disability 1393w
Teachers, Pay 774w
Vocational education 770w
Vocational education, GCE A level 768w

Botswana
259w
Foreign relations 259w
Overseas aid 307w

Bottomley, Peter
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 964
Terrorism (04.10.01) 683
Questions
Armed forces, Disciplinary proceedings 937w
Armed forces, Legal profession 960–1w
Black Police Association 74w
Courts martial 937–8w
Dizaei, Ali 345–7w, 922w
Equitable Life Assurance Society 850w
General practitioners, West Sussex 1125–6w
Local government finance 504w, 611–2w
Metropolitan Police, Racial discrimination 652–3w
Metropolitan Police, Surveillance 347w
National Black Police Association 345–6w, 651–2w
Police, Ethnic groups 1202–3w
Police, Public appointments 795w
Police, Racial discrimination 652w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Employment tribunals 1285–6w

Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Questions
A3, Hindhead 1164–8w

***Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia**—continued*
Community centres, Farnham 740w
CRUSE 823w
Hospices, Finance 1328w
Hospitals, Waiting lists 1327–8w
Members, Correspondence 1239w
Teachers, Vacancies 1190w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
Japan 1047w

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Creutzfeld Jakob Disease Inquiry
400–1w

Bovine tuberculosis
1272–3w
Disease control 1095w

Bowel cancer
67–8w

BOWMAN combat radio system
336–7w, 449–59

Boyd-Carpenter Board
see Family Law Advisory Board

Bradford
Civil disorder 920w, 1200–1w
Regional planning and development 579–80w

***Bradley, Rt Hon Keith**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Questions
Community service orders, Habitual offenders 1199w
Court orders 351w
Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 350–1w
Extradition 1325w
Fines, Defaulters 351–2w
Homosexuality 128w
Homosexuality, Convictions 101–2w
Miscarriages of justice, Compensation 927–8w
Sex Offences Review 666w
Sexual offences, Learning disability 1393w
Treason Felony Act 1848 1202w

Bradley, Peter
Questions
Proceeds of crime 844–5w

***Bradshaw, Mr Ben**, Parliamentary Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*
Debates etc.
Rochester, Christopher (18.10.01) 1357–8
Questions
Afghanistan 969w
Afghanistan, Heroin 1382w
Afghanistan, Hinduism 261w
Afghanistan, Recognition of states 1382w
Angola, Sanctions 969w
Antarctic, Tourism 490w
Antarctic Treaty 490w
Arms trade, Export controls 425w
Ashcroft, Lord 976w
Ben Sedrine, Sihem 485w
Bermuda Regiment 257w
Botswana 259w
Botswana, Foreign relations 259w
Burma 971w
Burma, Human rights 261w
Burundi, War crimes 120w
Chagos Islands 493–4w, 970–1w
Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference 1296w
Corporate Risk International 261w
Diplomatic relations 1383w
Egypt, Christianity 259–60w
Embassies, Pay 485w
Entry clearances 1298w

***Bradshaw, Mr Ben**—continued*
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 45w, 496–7w
Entry clearances, Appeals 348–9w
Entry clearances, Applications 487–9w, 971–2w
Entry clearances, Ministerial powers 496w
Group of Eight, Genoa Summit 1149w
India, Embassies 485–6w
Indian subcontinent, Entry clearances 496w, 682w
Indonesia, Armed conflict 968w
Indonesia, Human rights 968–9w
Indonesia, Oil 492w
International Army Fair 970w
Iraq, Military aircraft 492–3w
Iraq, Sanctions 493w
Irian Jaya, Prisoners 492w
Israel, Kidnapping 486–7w
Jordan, Human rights 1381w
Kashmir 260w, 966w
Kashmir, Human rights 966–7w
Laos 495w
Levy, Lord 486w
Malaysia, Human rights 495w
Manpower, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1150–1w, 1297w
Middle East 1297w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 260–1w
Nadia, Naira 258w
Namibia 259w
Occupied territories 121w
Pakistan, Blasphemy 966w
Pakistan, Christianity 258w
Pakistan, Entry clearances 971w
Pakistan, Prisoners 258w
Palestinians, Kidnapping 122–3w
Paramilitary forces 972w
Pay, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 974w
Prisoners 1239w
Religious freedom, Christianity 1299–300w
Retirement, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 967–8w
Rwanda, War crimes 120–1w
Saunders, Stephen 258–9w
Sick leave, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 491w
Sri Lanka, Referendums 498–9w
Stillman, Ian 121w, 421w
Sudan, Arms trade 975w
Terrorism 966w
Terrorism, International cooperation 972–4w
UN Register of Conventional Arms 426w
Western Sahara 43–4w
Western Sahara, Self-determination of states 969–70w
Zimbabwe 495w
Zimbabwe, Politics and government 257w, 1296–7w

Brady, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 299
Questions
Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth 1232w
Beta-interferon 1027w
Bletchley Park Trust 740w
Brazil 967w
Business questions 442
Devolution, Referendums 181w
Domestic service 843–4w
Education, Northern Ireland 993w
Employment schemes 912
Exports, Licensing 980w
Football, Sportsgrounds 1143w

***Brady, Mr Graham**—continued*
General certificate of secondary education 1188–9w
General Teaching Council 993w
Grammar schools, Ballots 993–4w
Headteachers, Training 994w
Health services, Reciprocal arrangements 1328–30w
Hospitals, Transport 110w
Illegal immigrants, Employment 922w
Insurance, Terrorism 1262–3w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 1159
Mental health 1027–8w
Primary education, Non-teaching staff 992–3w
Primary education, Standards 1186–7w
Prisons, Television 922–3w
Pupils, Contraceptives 1188w
Queen Elizabeth II Anniversaries 1190w
Refugees, Trafford 923w
Retirement, Cabinet Office 1011–2w
Retirement, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 809w
Retirement, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1218–9w
Retirement, Dept for International Development 802w
Retirement, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 871–3w
Retirement, Dept of Health 1028w
Retirement, Dept of Trade and Industry 1154w
Retirement, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 967–8w
Retirement, Home Office 1203–4w
Retirement, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1025–6w
Retirement, Ministry of Defence 942–6w
Retirement, Northern Ireland Office 997w
Retirement, Scotland Office 1256w
Retirement, Treasury 848w
Schools 991–2w
Schools, Admissions 991w
Schools, Finance 990–1w
Schools, Music 1290–1w
Schools, Security 1232–3w
Sixth form education, Finance 992w
Special education 989–90w
Special education, Standard assessment tasks 1185–6w
Specialist schools 991–2w
Transplant surgery 1126–7w
Vaccination, Children 1126w
Weapons, Northern Ireland 217w

Brake, Tom
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1367, 1375–7
Sittings in Westminster Hall
London Underground (17.10.01) 262wh, 266wh, 273–5wh
Questions
Birds of prey, Conservation 170w
Incinerators, Dioxins 1068–9w, 1087–8w
London Underground 873w
London Underground, Administrative delays 370–2w
London Underground, Crimes of violence 368–9w
London Underground, Escalators 529–30w
London Underground, Finance 368w
London Underground, Manpower 364–7w, 530w
London Underground, Railway signals 365–6w
London Underground, Sick leave 364w
London Underground, Standards 364–70w, 527–8w, 530–1w
Public transport, Standards 371w

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 634–5
Questions
Sewers, Kent 1081w

Brazil
967w

Breast cancer
66–7w
Herceptin 67w
Nottingham 225w
Screening 229–30w

Breast feeding
1326–7w

Breasts
Plastic surgery 427w

Breed, Mr Colin
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Hill farming, Northern region (18.07.01) 99–100wh
Questions
Ammunition, River Tamar 142w
Animal welfare 1298–9
Biotechnology and Genetic Modification Ministerial Group, Membership 74w
Birds, Conservation 1091–2w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 1102w
Future of Farming and Food Policy Commission 169w
Genetically modified organisms 1063w
Genetically modified organisms, Crops 629w
Genetically modified organisms, Research 396w
Hospitals, Liskeard 221w
Police custody, Devon 274–5w
Standards, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1051w

Brennan, Kevin
Debates etc.
Cellular phones, Points of order (18.07.01) 305
Questions
Annuities 906
Business questions 447
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1295–6
Manufacturing industries, Wales 1252w
National Lottery 50w

Brent
Social security benefits 298w

Brett, Jean
(15.10.01) 1025–30

Bridges
River Wye 553w

Brinton, Mrs Helen
Questions
Combined heat and power 592w
Digital broadcasting, Radio 79w
Petrol alternatives 512–3w
Prisons, Education 901w
Transport, Regional planning and development 531w

Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry
Ministerial statements (18.07.01) 289–304

British citizenship
130w

British Coal Corporation
Equal pay 985w

British Gas TransCo
see Transco

British Museum
Manpower 76–7w

British Nuclear Fuels
1059–60w

British Overseas Territories Bill (HL) 2001/02
Questions
441–2

British Rail Property Board
Railtrack 1315w

British Telecom
1277–8w

Broadband
982–3w, 1157–8w, 1278w, 1374–5w
Fees and charges 1374w

Broadcasting
Competition 105w

Broadcasting programmes
Welsh language 188–9w

Broadcasting Select Committee
(16.07.01) 89

Bromley
Census 1213–4w

Brooke, Mrs Annette L
Debates etc.
Dental services, Somerset (17.10.01) 1277–8
Questions
Freedom of Information Act 2000 288w
Marconi, Redundancy 262–3w, 580w
NHS, Employment agencies 441–2w
Nurses, Foreign workers 441w

Brown, Rt Hon Gordon, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Debates etc.
Terrorism, Ministerial statements (15.10.01) 940–53
Questions
Debts, Developing countries 373–4w, 419–21
EC Finance Council 383–4w
Poverty, International assistance 412–7
Public expenditure 378w
Research and development tax credit 421–2

Brown, Rt Hon Nicholas, Minister for Work, Department for Work and Pensions
Questions
Employment 828w
Employment, Disadvantaged 824w, 827w, 920–2
Employment, Females 828–9w
Employment schemes 911–2
Jobcentres 825–6w, 903–5
Manpower, Dept for Work and Pensions 62w, 686–7w
Members, Correspondence 693–4w
New deal for disabled people 64w
New deal schemes, Greater London 300w
New deal schemes, Huntingdon 1210w
Older workers 828w
Public relations, Dept for Work and Pensions 695w
Social security benefits, Interviews 64w
Social security benefits, Working mothers 824–5w
Unemployment 914–5
Unemployment, Southend 830w

Brown, Mr Russell
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Energy, Scotland (16.10.01) 217wh

Brown, Mr Russell—continued
Questions
Dept for National Savings 383w
Drugs, Proceeds of crime 150w
Equitable Life Assurance Society 1261–2w
European Convention on Human Rights, Barlinnie Prison 154w
Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 574–5w
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 1270w
Foot and mouth disease, Scotland 136
Office for National Statistics, Annual reports 383w
Open government 573–4w
Stocks and shares 212w

Browne, Mr Desmond
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order (16.07.01) 92–3, 103–4
Questions
Administration of justice, Northern Ireland 314w
Elections, Northern Ireland 310–2w, 1147w
Human rights, Northern Ireland 219w
Northern Ireland government 483w
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission 217–8w, 313w
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Public appointments 313w
Polling stations, Disabled 313–4w
Racially aggravated offences, Northern Ireland 314w
Victim support schemes, Northern Ireland 274–5

Browning, Mrs Angela
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 25, (19.07.01) 506
Business questions (16.07.01) 91
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1172, 1179, 1190–1, 1215–24, 1267
Recess motions (20.07.01) 583–9
Select committees (16.07.01) 40–3
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 534
Questions
Business questions 429–31, 1312–3
Employment, Disabled 910
Members, Information technology 150

Bruce, Malcolm
Questions
Air pollution 621–2w
Air pollution, Pollution control 620–1w
Alternative energy 623w
Climate Change Convention 1048w, 1050w, 1060w
Climate change levy 1048w
Common agricultural policy, Reform 171–2w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 171w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 171w
Flood control 93–4w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1304
Fuel poverty 619w
Green Ministers Committee 8w, 165w, 587w, 726w
Green Ministers Committee, Cabinet Office 304–5w, 790w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 187w

Bruce, Malcolm*—*continued
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for Education and Skills 243w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for International Development 307w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 16w, 204w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for Work and Pensions 301w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept of Health 225w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept of Trade and Industry 272w
Green Ministers Committee, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 123w, 261w
Green Ministers Committee, Home Office 280w, 344w
Green Ministers Committee, Ministry of Defence 209–10w
Green Ministers Committee, Solicitor-General 207w
Green Ministers Committee, Treasury 182w, 213w
Greenhouse effect 1048–51w
Incinerators 620w, 1057w
Integrated pollution control 620w
Organic food 399–400w
Radioactive wastes 1060w, 1291–2
Recycling 624–5w
Sites of special scientific interest 620w
Sustainable development 58–9w
Transport, Pollution 17w
Waste management 58w
Waste management, Standards 619w

Bryant, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 211, 231–2, 238–40, 249
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1192, 1207, 1217, 1239–43
Questions
Intelligence and Security Committee, Public appointments 1119w
NHS, Wales 1251–2w
Office of Communications 14–5

BSE and CJD Inquiry
see Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Creutzfeld Jakob Disease Inquiry

Buck, Ms Karen
Questions
Heart diseases, Health services 1034–5
Housing, Standards 194–6w
Housing registers, Greater London 193–4w
Immigration, Administrative delays 653–4w
Immigration rules 347–8w
National childcare strategy, Disadvantaged 241–2w
Shared ownership schemes 193w

Buckinghamshire
General practitioners 446–7w
Hospitals 728–9w
Institutional care 445–6w

Bucklow of Carlisle Committee
see Business Appointments Advisory Committee

Burden, Richard
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 754–6
Questions
Disability living allowance, Fibromyalgia 832w
Elections, Departmental responsibilities 319w
Homeworking 104w

Burden, Richard*—*continued
Local Government Commission for England 100w

Bureaucracy
Education 1392w
Farmers 1078w

Bureaux de change
862w

Burgon, Colin
Debates etc.
Pensioners (20.07.01) 575–8
Questions
Animal welfare 1298
Export Control Bill 2001/02 1154–5w
Ground water, Sheep dipping 611w
Group of Eight, Genoa Summit 1149w
Industrial diseases, Compensation 1162w

Burma
971w
Human rights 261w

Burnett, Mr John
Questions
Magistrates 147

Burnham, Andy
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 1004–6
Questions
Industrial diseases, Compensation 591w
National Lottery 54w
Pensioners, Income support 302w
Working families tax credit, Leigh 214w

Burnley
Dental services 1122w

Burns, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 988, 1002–4
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 207–9wh
Questions
Government departments, Databases 468w
Hospitals, Security 1028–9w
Maternity services 1041
Members, Correspondence 669w
Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust, Waiting lists 118w, 1028w
Negligence 735w
NHS, Complaints 735w
Roads, Accidents 1225–6w
Urban areas, Royal charters 1025w

Burnside, David
Debates etc.
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 497–8
Terrorism (04.10.01) 711
Questions
Agriculture 1294
Police, Northern Ireland 218–9w

Burstow, Mr Paul
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 204–7wh
Questions
Accident and emergency departments, Elderly 735–7w
Breast cancer, Screening 230w
Children and Young People's Services Ministerial Group 318–9w
Disability aids 429w
Elderly 1036–7w, 1332–6w
Health and Social Care Act 2001 1120w
Health authorities, Standards 117w
Health services, Elderly 108–9w, 233w, 1036w
Home care services 109–10w

Burstow, Mr Paul*—*continued
Hospital beds 118–9w, 1036w
Incapacity benefit 175w, 178w
Incapacity benefit, Medical examinations 416–7w
Influenza, Vaccination 233–4w
Institutional care 448w
Institutional care, Fees and charges 442w, 1329–31w
Institutional care, Income support 833w
Mentally ill, Drugs 442–5w, 1035–6w
Multiple sclerosis 285
National service frameworks 436–7w
National service frameworks, Elderly 437w
Patients, Surveys 234w
Pensioners, Income support 916–7
Pensioners, Social security benefits 827w
Sleeping rough 98w
Social security benefits, Departmental coordination 1042w
Social security benefits, Disabled 832–3w
State retirement pensions, Patients 65w
VAT, Sheltered housing wardens 181w

Burt, Alistair
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 658–60
Questions
Rural areas, Bedfordshire 1267w
Spinal injuries 1029w

Burundi
War crimes 120–1w

Bus services
13w, 886w
Fares 204–5w
Huntingdon 1174w
Rural areas 13–4w

Buses
Fuels 549w

Business
269–70w
Corruption 21–2w
Higher education 580w
Investment 851w
Local authorities 1376w
Regulation 106–7w
Tax burden 417–9

Business Appointments Advisory Committee
Annual reports 318w

Business motions
(16.07.01) 24–34, (19.07.01) 506–7, (08.10.01) 871

Business Recovery Fund
Worcestershire 397–8w

Business statements
(16.07.01) 91, 429–47, (15.10.01) 974–8, 1307–23

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 628–9

Butterflies
57–8w

Byers, Rt Hon Stephen, Secretary of State for Transport Local Government and the Regions
Debates etc.
Railtrack, Ministerial statements (15.10.01) 954–73
Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill, 1R (17.10.01) 1171
Questions
Buildings, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1364w
Housing, Standards 504w

Byers, Rt Hon Stephen—continued
Information technology, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 98w
London Underground, Finance 527w
London Underground, Public private partnerships 87w
Public relations, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 525w
Railtrack, Finance 1230w
Recess, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 205w
Road traffic 499–500w
Sick leave, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 525w
Train operating companies, Prosecutions 508w
Transport, Planning 521–4w
Transport, Public inquiries 521–4w

Bypasses
535w
A590 1315w
Bexhill 17w
Construction 535w
Petitions (17.10.01) 1274

C2C
Industrial disputes (18.07.01) 119–26wh

Cabinet Office
Aviation 1006–7w
Construction 462w, 1003–4w
Correspondence 1005–6w
Departmental responsibilities 304w, 461w, 789–90w
Green Ministers Committee 304–5w, 790w
Information technology 461w
London Underground 457w
Manpower 1007–12w
Merchant Navy Day 458w
Parliamentary questions 1005–6w
Pay 1006w, 1359w
Public relations 458w
Recess 304w, 789w
Retirement 1011–2w
Select committees 1003–4w

Cable, Mr Vincent
Debates etc.
Copyright Etc and Trade Marks (Offences and Enforcement) Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 307
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 249–52wh
Institutional care (16.10.01) 200–2wh
Questions
Airlines, Competition 981w
Alzheimer's disease, Prescription drugs 68–9w
Annuities 700–1w
Antisocial behaviour orders 287w
Arms trade, Export credit guarantees 582–3w
Arthritis, Prescription drugs 1354w
Aviation, Compensation 1169w
Bureaux de change 862w
Cars, Prices 590w
Cervical cancer, Screening 1120w
Construction Industry Training Board 776–8w
Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials 21w
Defence equipment 144w
Defence Export Services Organisation 144w
Equitable Life Assurance Society 385w
Foot and mouth disease, Costs 1260w
Foot and mouth disease, Insurance 1102w
Fuels 590w
Fuels, Temperature 590w
Garages and petrol stations 708w
Garages and petrol stations, Closures 590w

Cable, Mr Vincent—continued
Homosexuality, Crimes against the person 1393w
Independent Insurance 328w, 379–80w
Individual savings accounts 836w
Insurance, Terrorism 860w, 1262–3w
Invalid care allowances 1255–6w
Investment trusts 1258w
Local Government Act 1988 873w
Mass media, Ownership 50w
Pension funds 1211w
Pensioners, Income support 700w
Petrol, Retail trade 557w
Planning 1314w
Planning permission, Appeals 874w
Post offices 596–7w
Post offices, Closures 1375w
Proceeds of crime 277–8w, 385w
Proceeds of crime, Banks 385w
Railways, Franchises 875w
Research and development tax credit 421
Road works, Utilities 1227–8w
Schools, Intimidation 1189–90w
Stakeholder pensions, Annuities 701w
Terrorism, Finance 1212w
Unemployment 914–5
Working tax credit 1258–9w

Caborn, Rt Hon Richard, Minister of State for Sport, Dept for Culture Media and Sport
Sittings in Westminster Hall
National Lottery (17.10.01) 293–6wh
Questions
Arts, Finance 807w
Athletics 1378–9w
Athletics, Picketts Lock 1378w
Boating 50w
Cricket, Public order 51w
English Sports Council 1290w
English Sports Council, Reviews 752w
Football 1286–7w
Football, Sportsgrounds 1143w
Gambling 1381w
Gambling, Young people 748w
Gambling Review Body 316w
Gaming machines, Social clubs 812w
National Lottery 50–2w, 54w, 748w, 1144w, 1224w
National Lottery, Thurrock 8
New Opportunities Fund 186–7w
Olympic Games 1379w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741w
Public relations, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 742–6w
Royal parks, Pest control 752–3w
Rugby 1288w, 1381w
Rugby, Australia 1288w
Rugby, Television 53w
Sport action zones 808w
Sports 53w, 748w
Sports, Drugs 77–9w
Sports, Finance 750w
Sports, Schools 8–10
Sports, Tax allowances 79w
Sports, Training 4–5
Sports, Young people 315–6w
Tennis 1380w
Wembley Stadium 1380–1w

Caerphilly
Manufacturing industries 1254w

Cairns, David
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1180
Questions
Business questions 1311–2
Employment, Disadvantaged 922

Calton, Patsy
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 183–6
Maiden speech (17.07.01) 183–6
Terrorism (04.10.01) 739–41
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 323–4wh

Cambridgeshire
Drugs 1191w
Rural areas 1218w
Schools 1175–6w
Transport 1174w

Cameras
Speed limits 644w, 1399–400w

Cameron, Mr David
Debates etc.
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Points of order (19.10.01) 1359
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 1006–9, 1022
Terrorism (08.10.01) 867–8, (15.10.01) 936
Questions
Cottage hospitals 1043
Crime, Oxfordshire 796w
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 137
Income tax 570–1w
Military aircraft 708w
Northern Ireland government 218w
Specialist schools, Oxfordshire 761w
Tax yields 560–1w
Teachers, Oxfordshire 761w
Thames Valley Police, Manpower 1321w
Thames Valley Police, Special constables 902–3w

Campbell, Mrs Anne
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 40, 46
Questions
Jobcentres 825–6w
Radiotherapy 1124w

Campbell, Mr Gregory
Debates etc.
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 490–1

Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 212–5, 232, 240–2, 252, 254, (18.07.01) 317–9, 344–5, 357–9, 361, 387
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1177, 1196–203
Terrorism (14.09.01) 624–6, (04.10.01) 703–8, 746–7, (08.10.01) 833–4, (16.10.01) 1057,1073–6
Questions
Ballistic missile defence 333w
China, Falun Gong 426w
China, Foreign relations 426w
Exercise Saif Sareea 2, Tornado aircraft 1371w
Military aircraft, Repairs and maintenance 1308w

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Employment, Disadvantaged 827w

Canada
Armed forces 961–2w
Upholder class submarines 717–8w

Cancer
279–80, 718–9w
Avon 719w

Cancer—continued
Health services 1124w
Waiting lists 719w, 1041w

Cann, Jamie
Death (16.10.01) 1031

Cannabis
70w
Medical treatments 1345–6w
Multiple sclerosis 727w
Smuggling 383w

Capital allowances
858w

Capital gains tax
22–3w, 853w

Capital punishment
World War I 146w

Caravan sites
Travelling people 1309–10w

Carbon dioxide
Electricity generation 40w, 264w

Care Homes Regulations 2001
Questions
1342w

Care trusts
1120–1w

Carers
(16.10.01) 171–91wh
Social security benefits 824w

Carers' allowance
913–4

Carmichael, Mr Alistair
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Energy, Scotland (16.10.01) 216wh, 220wh
Questions
Alternative energy 862w
Business questions 1313–4
Electricity generation 1156w
Proceeds of Crime Bill 2001/02, Human rights 153w
Wind power 1155–6w, 1276–7w

Cars
Prices 590w

Casale, Roger
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 168, 171, 176, (18.07.01) 319–22
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1175, 1183–4, 1229–31
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 3R (18.10.01) 1343–5
Terrorism (08.10.01) 862–3, (15.10.01) 952–3
Questions
BBC, Digital broadcasting 809–10w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 157–62, 172–3, 186–8, 190, 193–9, 205, 207–9, 211–7, 220, 227–36, 238, 240, (18.07.01) 316, 321–9, 331–3, 337, 341, 343–4, 356, 359, 362–3, 365–72, 386–7
Select committees (16.07.01) 41, 45

Castle Point
Crime prevention 278w

Category C prisoners
Prison accommodation 931–2w

Catering
NHS 1040–1w

Catering Select Committee
(19.07.01) 516

Caton, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Military bases, Kenya (18.07.01) 393–8
Questions
Ammunition 331w
China, Defence 44w
Entry clearances, Appeals 348–9w
Entry clearances, Overseas visitors 658–9w
Military bases, Kenya 2–4w, 143–4w, 211w, 706w
Railways, Wales 1156

Cattle
Disease control 1059w

Cawsey, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Animal Sanctuaries (Licensing) Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 308

Cellular phone masts
see Aerials

Cellular phones
Safety (20.07.01) 532–6

Cemeteries
Muslims 503w

Census
23w, 572–3w
Agriculture 173w
Bromley 1213–4w
Disclosure of information 288w, 452w

Central Railway
97w, 886w

Central Science Laboratory
Annual reports 400w

Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
Annual reports 289w
Standards 173w

Cereals
Subsidies 1217w

Cerebral palsy
Special education 987w

Certification
Film 747w
Shipping 508–11w

Cervical cancer
Screening 1120w

Chagos Islands
493–4w, 970–1w

Chairman of Committee of the Whole House
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses (17.07.01) 156, 194, 235, 244, 255, (18.07.01) 310, 350
Conduct of proceedings (17.07.01) 186, 234, 236, 239, 257, (18.07.01) 322, 327, 354, 372
Points of order (17.07.01) 186, 229, 236

Challen, Mr Colin
Sittings in Westminster Hall
National Lottery (17.10.01) 290–3wh
Questions
Business questions 1314–5
Climate change levy 427

Challenger tanks
Salisbury Plain 8w, 959w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel tunnel
Illegal immigrants 350w, 677–9w

Channel tunnel railway line
Freight 97w

Chapelcross power station
Accidents 580–2w

Chapman, Mr Ben
Questions
Clergy, Conditions of employment 15–6
Magistrates, Public appointments 159–60w
Northern Ireland government 216w
Schools, Finance 404w

Chapman, Sir Sydney
Sittings in Westminster Hall
London Underground (17.10.01) 270–1wh
Questions
Athletics, Picketts Lock 15
Business questions 1316
Clergy, Pay 25w
Employment 828w, 908
European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals 169w
Magistrates, Complaints 158w
Refugees, Legal representation 144–5

Charities
350w

Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU)
123w

Chaytor, Mr David
Debates etc.
Environmental Audit Bill, 1R (17.10.01) 1171
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 310–1wh
Questions
Local government finance 1165–6
Radioactive wastes 1290–1
Transco, Price controls 263w

Chechnya
Human rights 485w, 823w, 970w

Chemical and biological warfare
1306–7w

Chemicals
268–9w
Waste disposal 708–9w

Cheshire
Police 638–40w

Chessington
Railways 9w

Chhokar, Surjit Singh
466w

Chidgey, Mr David
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1173, 1197, 1202
Questions
Commonwealth of Independent States, Radioactive materials 270w
Nuclear submarines, Russia 587–8w

Child protection registers
438w
Greater London 437–8w

Child Support Agency
Complaints 690–1w
Information technology 302w
Standards 691–2w

Child Trust Fund
374–5w, 835–6w

Children
Abuse 1340w
Contact orders 277w

Children*—*continued
Day care 245w, 409w, 757–8w, 1121–2w
Drugs 1234w
Homicide 277w
Hospices 220w
Hyperactivity 1344–5w
Kidnapping 637–8w
Maintenance 1207–8w, 1302–3w, 1372w
Poverty 694w, 827–8w, 852w
Prescription drugs 1133–5w
Protection 909w
Refugees 126–7w, 281–2w
Vaccination 1126w

Children Act 1989
Questions
113w

Children and Young People's Services Ministerial Group
318–9w

Children in care
69w, 1128–32w
Education 407w

Children With Disabilities (Play Areas) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 307–8

China
Defence 44w
Exports 981w
Falun Gong 426w
Foreign relations 424–6w, 491w
Furs 1382w

Chinook helicopters
711–2w

Chiropody
230w, 430–1w, 1356w

Chope, Mr Christopher
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 252–4wh, 257wh
Questions
Business questions 439–40
Computers within reach programme 252–5w
Electronic equipment, Waste disposal 31–2w, 295w
Equitable Life Independent Inquiry 850–1w
Home energy efficiency scheme 631–4w, 1076w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Dorset 631–2w
Institute of Export 261–2w, 272w
Manufacturing industries, Regulation 32w
St Leonard's Hospital Dorset 204w, 237–8w
Tax allowances, Health insurance 560–1w
Wired up communities initiative, Liverpool 255w
Working families tax credit, Administrative delays 214w

Chorley
Day care 245w
Foot and mouth disease 1265w
Housing 191w
Market town initiative 635w
Pre-school education 244w
Railway stations 191–2w

Christianity
Egypt 259–60w
Pakistan 258w
Religious freedom 1299–300w

Church Commissioners
Hagg Wood 19–20
Investment 18–9

Church Commissioners*—*continued
Property 26w

Church schools
Northern Ireland 998w

Churches
Repairs and maintenance 17–8, 426–7w

City of London (Ward Elections) Bill 1998/99
Debates etc.
Motion to proceed in present session (18.07.01) 271, (17.10.01) 1151

City of Westminster
Police 653w

Civil disorder
Belfast 163–5w
Bradford 920w, 1200–1w

Civil servants
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1087w, 1093w
Political activities 457w
Recruitment 1220w

Civil service
819w, 1359w

Civil service agencies
Annual reports 413w

Civilians
Police 916w

Clapham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1117–9
Questions
Business questions 435

Clappison, Mr James
Debates etc.
European Communities (Finance) Bill, Programme motion and Com (19.07.01) 461–2, 464
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Police, Hertfordshire (17.07.01) 45–8wh, 50wh, 52wh
Questions
Armed forces, New deal schemes 1303–4w
Cancer 718–9w
Flats 874w
Hertfordshire Constabulary, Manpower 279–80w, 647–9w
Inflation 562w
Israel, Kidnapping 486–7w
Jobcentres 904–5
Social security benefits, Proof of identity 1383w

Clark, Mrs Helen
Questions
Combined heat and power 1081–2w
Dental services, Fees and charges 1335–6w
Electricity generation, Markets 1157w
Employment tribunals 981w
Environmental impact assessment 1083w
Green Ministers Committee 1082–4w
Tourism, Rural areas 1289w
Waste management 1051w

Clark, Dr Lynda, Advocate General for Scotland
Questions
Chhokar, Surjit Singh 466w
Delegated legislation, Scotland 143
European Convention on Human Rights, Barlinnie Prison 154w
European Convention on Human Rights, Planning 154w
European Convention on Human Rights, Road traffic offences 153–4w

Clark, Dr Lynda*—*continued
European Court of Human Rights, Advocate General for Scotland 142–3
Euthanasia, Scotland 143–4
Proceeds of Crime Bill 2001/02, Human rights 153w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 962
Terrorism (15.10.01) 931

Clarke, Rt Hon Tom
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 692, 699, (15.10.01) 949
Questions
Disabled 61–2w
Film, Certification 747w
Poverty, International assistance 417
Tourism, Scotland 151w

Clarke, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 983, 1012–4
Questions
Human rights, Annual reports 1298w
Incapacity benefit, Medical examinations 417w

Class sizes
778–9w
Bedfordshire 406–7w
Huntingdon 1176–8w
Primary education 987–8w

Cleave Camp
Disclosure of information 469w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Business questions 437–8
Parliamentary scrutiny 150–1

Clergy
Conditions of employment 15–6
Pay 25w

Cleveland Constabulary
Inquiries (18.07.01) 112–8wh

Cleveleys
Wind power 716w, 1059w

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 828, 883–4, 894
Questions
Church Commissioners, Investment 18
Millennium Exhibition, National Lottery 52w
Public expenditure 378w
Radioactive wastes, Derbyshire 293–5w
Regional assemblies 1314w

Climate Change Convention
446, 631w, 819w, 1048w, 1050w, 1060–2w, 1163w, 1275–6w
USA 284

Climate change levy
373w, 411–2, 426–8, 1048w, 1211w
Combined heat and power 568w
Manufacturing industries 606–7w
VAT 849w

Clothing
Legal profession 156–7w

Clwyd, Ann
Debates etc.
Parliamentary scrutiny, Points of order (16.07.01) 21
Select committees (16.07.01) 55, (19.07.01) 509, 515–6

Clwyd, Ann—continued
Terrorism (04.10.01) 705–6, (08.10.01) 818, (15.10.01) 950
Questions
Afghanistan, Hinduism 261w
Arms trade 210w
Ben Sedrine, Sihem 485w
Burma, Human rights 261w
Business questions 441
Chechnya, Human rights 485w
European Court of Human Rights 44–5w
Export Control and Non-Proliferation Bill (Draft) 604w
Indonesia, Armed conflict 968w
Indonesia, Arms trade 981–2w
Indonesia, Human rights 968w
Indonesia, Oil 492w
Industrial diseases, Wales 32–3w, 104–5w
Irian Jaya, Prisoners 492w
Ministers, Travel 467w
NHS, Wales 1251–2w
Occupied territories 121w
Refugees 275–7w
Refugees, Legal representation 144

Coaker Mr Vernon
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1125–7, 1138
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Young offenders (19.07.01) 146wh, 149–53wh
Questions
Angola 802–3w
Angola, Sanctions 969w
Arts, Finance 807w
Beta-interferon 1240w
Breast cancer, Nottingham 225w
Directors, Pay 1376w
Immigration, Forms 132–3w
NHS, Public participation 110w
Prostate cancer 225–6w, 427–8w
Public transport, Nottingham 17w

Coal
Pollution control 595–6w

Coal Authority
Annual reports 321w

Coastal areas
Flood control 626–8w

Cohabitation
Property rights 788w

Cohen, Harry
Debates etc.
London Underground (20.07.01) 529–32
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 594
Terrorism (04.10.01) 804
Sittings in Westminster Hall
London Underground (17.10.01) 259–68wh
Questions
Arms trade, USA 4w
Business questions 431
Chhokar, Surjit Singh 466w
Corporate Risk International 261w
Criminal investigation 916–7w
Defence Diversification Agency 714–5w
Drugs, Homicide 129w
Guided weapons 714w
Iraq, Military aircraft 492–3w
Iraq, Sanctions 493w
Jobseeker's allowance 699w
Jubilee line 197–9w
Juries, Ethnic groups 787w
London Transport, Finance 531w
London Underground 195–7w
London Underground, Finance 9–10w, 199–200w

Cohen, Harry—continued
London Underground, Public private partnerships 87w
Millennium Exhibition, Property transfer 747w
Police custody, Mentally ill 667w
Railways, Standards 8–9w
Stamp duties 564w
Sweeting, Christian 996–7w
Tax evasion 184w
Television, Fees and charges 740w
UN Security Council, Voting behaviour 492w
Waterloo Station 503w

Colchester
Listed buildings 553w
Schools 766w

Coleman, Mr Iain
Questions
Housing revenue accounts 10w
Refugees, Administrative delays 1394w
Refugees, Housing 1393–4w

Collins, Mr Tim
Questions
A590, Bypasses 1315w
Animal welfare, Cumbria 1269w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1303–4
Social Exclusion Unit 1363w
Tax burden 377w
Terrorism 1363w

Colman, Mr Tony
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 34–6wh
Questions
Climate change levy 411–2
Combined heat and power 593w
Energy, Conservation 1250w
English Heritage 1144–5w
English Sports Council, Reviews 752w
Heathrow Airport, Night flying 875w
Hospital beds, Elderly 1042w
Integrated tax benefit system 847–8w
Kosovo, Arms trade 1298–9w
New Millennium Experience, Annual reports 752w
Royal Parks Agency 751w

Colombia
494w
Armed forces 494w, 715w
Diplomatic service 494w

Combined heat and power
592–3w, 1081–2w, 1250w
Climate change levy 568w
NHS 1242w

Commercial activities
BBC 188w

Commission for Racial Equality
Annual reports 46w

Commission on Future of Farming and Food
see Future of Farming and Food Policy Commission

Committal proceedings
Merseyside 157w
Young offenders 157w

Committee of Selection
(17.10.01) 1151

Committee of the Regions
see EC Committee of the Regions

Committees
Scottish Parliament 156w

Common agricultural policy
Reform 171–2w, 975w

Common Fisheries Policy
Reform 1270w

Commonwealth Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 308

Commonwealth Development Corporation
Overseas investment 308–10w

Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference
1296w

Commonwealth of Independent States
Radioactive materials 270w

Community care
445w

Community centres
Farnham 740w

Community health services
Disability aids 72w

Community investment tax credit
183w, 576w

Community nurses
Manpower 734w

Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Service
see National Probation Service for England and Wales

Community relations
Urban areas (17.07.01) 1–21wh

Community service orders
Graffiti 682w
Habitual offenders 352–3w, 1199w
Litter 682w

Community transport
Excise duties 14w

Community work
Finance 357–8w

Companies
Complaints 1278w

Company law
982w

Competition
Airlines 981w
Bank services 847w
Broadcasting 105w

Compulsory purchase
202w, 549w

Computer networks
Schools 1180w
Traffic areas 11w

Computer terminals
Jobcentres 702–3w

Computers
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1248w
Magistrates' courts 161w
Social Security Contributions Agency 684–5w

Computers within reach programme
252–5w, 762w

Conditional fee agreements
Personal injury 158w

Conditions of employment
Clergy 15–6
Members 155w
Police 796w, 1323–4w
Private sector 609w
Special constables 639–40w

Conduct of Employment Agencies Old Employment Business Regulations 2001
Questions
983w

Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997
Questions
1201w

Confiscation orders
575–6w

Connarty, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 208–9, 215–20, 233
Terrorism (14.09.01) 654–6, (04.10.01) 700
Questions
Debts, Developing countries 419–20
Fuels, Scotland 141–2

Connexions Service
769–70w
Identity cards 256w
Pay 770w

Consent to medical treatment
North Staffordshire Hospital 1037
Young people 227–8w

Conservation
Birds 1088–92w
Birds of prey 170w
Energy 273w, 296–7w, 858w, 1250w
Fish 399w, 870–1w, 1083–4w, 1269–70w

Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
2R* and 3R* (16.07.01) 24
Royal assent (19.07.01) 460

Constitutions
European Communities 976w

Construction Industry Training Board
776–8w

Consultants
Hospitals 435–6w, 446–7w, 728–9w
Neurology 1032–3

Consumer Credit Act 1974
Questions
582w, 984w

Consumers
Credit (16.10.01) 229–36wh, 984w
Protection 606w

Contact orders
158–9w
Children 277w

Contraceptives
Prisoners 902w
Pupils 1188w

Contracts
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1055w, 1104w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 81–5w
Hunting Defence 952w
Ministry of Defence 211w
Private finance initiative 560w
RAF Menwith Hill 954w

Contributions Agency
see Social Security Contributions Agency

Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials
21w

Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage
804–6w

Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage
1300w

Conveyancing
Public records 532–3w

Convictions
Homosexuality 101–2w

Conway, Derek
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 821
Questions
General practitioners, Recruitment 1046

***Cook, Rt Hon Robin**, President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
Business statements (16.07.01) 91, (15.10.01) 974–8
Select committees (16.07.01) 37, 43–9, (19.07.01) 511–4
Select committees, Points of order (17.07.01) 155
Questions
Business statements 429–47, 1307–23
Climate Change Convention 446
House of Commons, Electronic voting 148–9
Information technology, President of the Council 156w
Leader of the Opposition 1001w
Legislation, Parliamentary scrutiny 999–1001w
London Underground, Leader of the House of Commons 215w
Parliamentary scrutiny 150–2, 155w
Parliamentary scrutiny, Recess 1001w
Scottish Parliament, Committees 156w
Select committees 154, 469–70w, 1001w
Speaker's Advisory Panel 317w

***Cooper, Ms Yvette**, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept of Health*
Questions
Asbestos 68w
Bowel cancer 67–8w
Breast cancer 66–7w
Breast cancer, Herceptin 67w
Breast cancer, Nottingham 225w
Breast cancer, Screening 229–30w
Cancer 718–9w
Cancer, Avon 719w
Cancer, Waiting lists 719w
Cannabis 70w
Creatine 719–20w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, Death 726–7w
Dietary supplements 59w
Dietary supplements, Sports competitors 224w
Electric cables, Health hazards 222–3w
Environmental health 734w
Food, Import controls 290–1w
Food, Labelling 70w, 224w, 232w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 220w
General practitioners, Staffordshire 68w
Genetically modified organisms, Animal feed 732w
Gynaecology 227w
Health education, Nutrition 721w
Hearing, Babies 738w
HIV infection, Heterosexuality 731w
Hospices, Children 220w
Hospital beds, Worcestershire 732w
Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority 440–1w
Influenza, Vaccination 233–4w
John Radcliffe Hospital, Surgery 73w
Kidderminster Hospital, Surgery 738–9w

Cooper, Ms Yvette—continued
Meat Hygiene Service, Annual reports 238w
Medical Devices Agency, Annual reports 427w
Medicine, Research 235–6w
Medicines Commission, Annual reports 733–4w
MMR vaccine 720–1w
MMR vaccine, Oxfordshire 721w
NHS, Pilot schemes 738w
Pilgrim Hospital, Waiting lists 71–2w
Plastic surgery, Tattooing 66w
Prescription drugs, Advertising 223w
Prescriptions, Fees and charges 722–3w
Primary education, Standards 756w
Prostate cancer 225–6w, 732–3w
Public relations, Dept of Health 727w
Refugees, Voucher schemes 226w
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital 724w
Shropshire Health Authority, Manpower 724w
Smoking 730w
Social services, Worcestershire 731–2w
Tobacco, Advertising 228w
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust 229w
Worcestershire Health Authority, Pay 733w

Copyright Etc and Trade Marks (Offences and Enforcement) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 307

Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 308

Corbyn, Jeremy
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 29–30
Parliamentary procedure, Points of order (16.07.01) 23
Select committees (16.07.01) 43, 45, 71
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 531, 533, 546, 549, 555, 575
Terrorism (04.10.01) 734–6
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 30–3wh
Questions
Afghanistan 969w
Afghanistan, Refugees 800w
Antarctic, Tourism 490w
Antarctic Treaty 490w
Ballistic missile defence 715w, 819w
Ballistic missile defence, USA 715w
Buildings, Lord Chancellor's Dept 790–2w
Burma 971w
Chagos Islands 493–4w, 970–1w
Chechnya, Human rights 823w, 970w
Climate Change Convention 819w
Colombia 494w
Colombia, Armed forces 715w
Colombia, Diplomatic service 494w
Cycleways, Greater London 879–82w
Dyslexia 1183–4w
Government Office for London 881–2w
Guided weapons 714w
Homelessness, Greater London 877–8w
Housing, Capital investment 876w
Housing, Property transfer 876w, 879–80w
Housing benefit, Islington 696–7w
Housing stock 876–7w
Human rights 493w
Indonesia, Human rights 969w
International Army Fair 970w
Islington Borough Council, Assets 543–4w
Judiciary, Ethnic groups 157–8w
London Underground, Finance 528w

Corbyn, Jeremy—continued
London Underground, Public private partnerships 528w, 1170w
Malaysia, Human rights 495w
Northern Ireland government 216w
Pakistan, Overseas aid 801–2w
Pensioners, Income support 829–30w
Police, Firearms 681w
Railways, Tufnell Park 882w
Refugees, Deportation 923w
Refugees, Detainees 924–5w, 1194w
Refugees, Housing 1324w
Refugees, Voucher schemes 658w, 924w
Royal Mail, Redundancy 604w
Schools, Performing arts 764–5w
Schools, Private finance initiative 1182w
Single regeneration budget 881w
Single regeneration budget, Finsbury Park 881w
Social security benefits 830w
Special education 1292–3w
Starter home initiative, Greater London 1257w
Tibet, Oil 492w
Waste management, Greater London 1070–3w
Western Sahara, Self-determination of states 969–70w
Whittington Hospital, Private finance initiative 1029w

Cormack, Sir Patrick
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 28
Select committees (16.07.01) 36, 69–72, (19.07.01) 514–5
Terrorism (14.09.01) 632–3, (04.10.01) 691, (08.10.01) 823, (15.10.01) 937–8, (16.10.01) 1093–4
Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries (19.07.01) 521–3, 528
Questions
Bishops, Pay 17
Climate change levy 428
General Medical Council, Alternative medicine 1037
Staffordshire 206w

Cornwall
Local government 361w
Police custody 274–5w

Corporate Risk International
261w

Corruption
131w
Business 21–2w

Corston, Jean
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 299
Select committees (16.07.01) 46
Terrorism (14.09.01) 645–6
Questions
Northern Ireland government 216w

Cotswold and Malvern railway line
9w

Cottage hospitals
1043–5

Cotter, Brian
Questions
Business, Local authorities 1376w
Civil servants, Political activities 457w
Company law 982w
Eating disorders 1029–30w
Education, Somerset 760w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 220w
Gambling Review Body 316w

Cotter, Brian—continued
General certificate of secondary education 1291w
Insolvency Service, Pay 320w
Intellectual property 1375–6w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Trade and Industry 982w
Patents, Dept of Trade and Industry 595w
Phoenix Fund 986w
Schools, Buildings 759w
Small Business Council, Annual reports 1277w
Small businesses, Regulation 982w

Council housing
1318w
Greater London 888w
Standards 287

Council tax
555–6w, 1319w
Second homes 95–6w, 502w, 899w

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
Questions
620w

Court orders
351w

Courts
Restraint equipment 157w
Witnesses 157w

Courts martial
937–8w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Terrorism (15.10.01) 951
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 246–7wh, 258wh
Questions
Economic situation, USA 377w
Incapacity benefit 177w, 298–300w
Manpower, Dept for Work and Pensions 686–7w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 65w
Refugees, Voucher schemes 226w
State second pension 180–1w

Coventry
Early years development and childcare partnerships 135w, 240–1w
Housing 18w
Schools 242–4w

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Wandsworth Prison (20.07.01) 548–51
Questions
Asbestos 68w, 512w
Bowel cancer 67–8w
Child protection registers, Greater London 437–8w
Children, Abuse 1340w
Children in care 69w
Climate Change Convention 631w
Doctors, Training 758–9w
Elderly 574w
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 1099w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1055w
Gambling, Young people 748w
Housing benefit, Abuse 705w
Housing benefit, Greater London 696w
Indian subcontinent, Entry clearances 682w
Kidnapping, Children 637–8w
Magistrates, Greater London 784w
Metropolitan Police, Termination of employment 641–2w
New deal schemes, Greater London 300w

Cox, Mr Tom—continued
Police, Homosexuality 642w
Police, Industrial health and safety 1194–5w
Police, Manpower 673–4w
Police, Wandsworth 667–8w
Pornography, Prosecutions 285–6w
Prison Service, Ethnic groups 665w
Prison Service, Vacancies 665–6w
Prisoners, Females 917w
Prisoners, Mentally ill 666w
Prisons 665w
Prisons, Probation and aftercare 665w
Refugees, Appeals 48w
Refugees, Detainees 901w
Refugees, Prisons 654–5w
Refugees, Sri Lanka 130w
Roads, Accidents 527w
St George's Hospital Tooting 430w
St George's Hospital Tooting, Acute beds 430w
St George's Hospital Tooting, Finance 430w
St George's Hospital Tooting, Manpower 729–30w
Secondary education, Wandsworth 249–50w
Set-aside schemes 1087w
Severe disablement allowance, Wandsworth 698w
State retirement pensions 703w
Winter fuel payments 419–20w
Young offenders 347w

Cranston, Ross
Debates etc.
Military bases, Kenya (18.07.01) 397
Questions
Kashmir 966w
Kashmir, Human rights 966–7w
Pakistan, Entry clearances 971w
West Midlands Police, Special constables 903–4w

Crausby, Mr David
Debates etc.
Terrorism (15.10.01) 934
Questions
Employment 906–7
Heart diseases, Health services 1041–2
Parliamentary scrutiny 155w

Creatine
719–20w

Credit
Consumers (16.10.01) 229–36wh, 984w

Credit unions
(18.07.01) 69–89wh, 375w
Regional development agencies 607w

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
Death 726–7w

Cricket
Public order 51w

Crime
Drugs 1191w
Firearms 1322–3w
North Yorkshire 1207w
Oxfordshire 796w
Victims 1198–200w

Crime and disorder partnerships
Wiltshire 1206w

Crime prevention
Castle Point 278w
Railway stations 513–7w

Crimes against the person
Homosexuality 1393w

Crimes of violence
1205–6w

Crimes of violence*—*continued
London Underground 368–9w
Prisons 914w

Crimestoppers
Finance 1326w

Criminal Courts Review
156w, 1027w

Criminal investigation
916–7w

Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000
Questions
350–1w

Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001
Questions
286w

Criminal proceedings
Administrative delays 1019w

Criminal Records Bureau
671–3w
Annual reports 342w

Crops
Advisory bodies 1268w
Genetically modified organisms 59w, 628–9w, 1064–7w

Crown Prosecution Service
Annual reports 315w

Cruddas, Jon
Questions
Plastic surgery, Breasts 427w

CRUSE
823w

Cryer, Mrs Ann
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Community relations, Urban areas (17.07.01) 7–10wh
Questions
Business questions 1317

Cryer, John
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 968
Schools (20.07.01) 560–3
Questions
Disability aids 118w
Jobcentres 905

Cultural heritage
316–7w

Culture
Finance 54–5w

Culture Media and Sport Select Committee
(16.07.01) 76

"Culture Media and Sport Select Committee on Tourism and Foot and Mouth"
1224w

Cumbria
Animal welfare 1269w
Foot and mouth disease 166–7w, 387–8w, 614–6w, 1098–9w, 1104w, 1109w, 1111–2w, 1217w, 1301–6
Institutional care 446w
Local government 361w
Planning 1248w

Cummings, Mr John
Questions
Industrial diseases, Compensation 33w

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Questions
Alzheimer's disease 119w

Cunningham, Mr Jim*—*continued
Animal welfare 169w
Business 269–70w
Defence, Expenditure 145–6w
Early years development and childcare partnerships, Coventry 135w, 240–1w
Economic and Social Research Overseas Advisory Committee 471–2w
Headteachers 754w
Housing, Coventry 18w
Jobcentres 825–6w
Military bases, Cyprus 7w
National parks 293w
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 1190–2w
Regional arts boards, West Midlands 188w
Schools, Coventry 242–4w
Strokes 119w
Teachers, Pay 135w
World War I, Capital punishment 146w

Cunningham, Tony
Questions
Cricket, Public order 51w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1304–5

Curriculum
989w
Personal and social education 1187w
Religion 1185w
Secondary education 239w
Sixth form education 1180w

Curry, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Pension Annuities (Amendment) Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 306
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Hill farming, Northern region (18.07.01) 95–8wh, 101wh, 107wh, 109wh
Questions
Agriculture 1293–4

Curtis-Thomas, Ms Claire
Questions
Broadband 982–3w
Chemicals 268–9w
European Capital of Culture 185w
European City of Culture 806w
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 1251w
Government departments, Codes of practice 455w
Northern Ireland government 277
Private finance initiative 434w
Private finance initiative, Contracts 560w
Private finance initiative, Home Office 904w
Private finance initiative, Leisure facilities 96w
Regulatory impact assessments 457–8w
Research and development tax credit 846w
Schools, Computer networks 1180w
Small Business Council 320–1w

Custodial treatment
Young offenders 911w

Customs and Excise
Disciplinary proceedings 558w
Shrewsbury 1259–60w
Terrorism 857–8w

Cycleways
Greater London 879–82w
Public footpaths 543w

Cyprus
(20.07.01) 582–3
Human rights 45w
Military bases 7w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 632, (04.10.01) 701, 752, 803, (08.10.01) 821, 893, (15.10.01) 944, (16.10.01) 1054, 1064, 1084, 1091–3, 1134
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 610
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 1284–5w, 1307w

Damages
785–6w
Personal injury 784–5w

Damages Act 1996
Questions
784–5w

Darling, Rt Hon Alistair, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Questions
Annuities 905–6
Civil service agencies, Annual reports 413w
Disadvantaged 66w
Employment 906–8
Employment, Disabled 908–11
Employment Service, Annual reports 413w
London Underground, Dept for Work and Pensions 65w
Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority, Publications 66w
Pensioners, Income support 916–8
Post offices, Bank services 1303w
Social security benefits, Abuse 823w, 1256w
Stakeholder pensions 297–8w
Visits abroad, Dept for Work and Pensions 1383w

Dartford
Pensioners 916

Data protection
Police 921w
Telecommunications 30–1w

Data Protection Act 1998
Questions
1031–3w

Databases
Government departments 468w
Personal records 908–9w
United Kingdom Passport Agency 354w, 357w

Davey, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Economic policy (16.07.01) 106, 108, 114, 119–23
European Communities (Finance) Bill, Programme motion and Com (19.07.01) 462–3, 472, 477–80, 482
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 3R (18.10.01) 1326–8, 1335–6, 1338–42
Terrorism (15.10.01) 951
Sittings in Westminster Hall
London Underground (17.10.01) 261wh, 277wh
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 26wh, 35wh, 39–41wh

Davey, Mrs Valerie
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 298
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 316–8wh

David, Mr Wayne
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 322, 324, 328–30, 353, 363, 370–1
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1190, 1192, 1208, 1221

David, Mr Wayne—continued
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 3R (18.10.01) 1344
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 336w, 454–5
Employment, Disadvantaged 824w
Manufacturing industries, Caerphilly 1254w

Davidson, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1174, 1178–9
Terrorism (08.10.01) 900, (15.10.01) 952, (16.10.01) 1141
Questions
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 138
Pensioners, Income support 917

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 161–4, 174, 204–12, 215, 218, 237–41, 253–4
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1191–6, 1204–5

Davies, Geraint
Debates etc.
Economic policy (16.07.01) 117
Terrorism (04.10.01) 706, 808, (08.10.01) 839–40, 886–8, (15.10.01) 936
Questions
Education, Reform 30w
Government departments, Standards 454–6w

Davies, Mr Quentin
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Grantham Hospital (17.10.01) 281–8wh
Questions
Aircraft carriers, Manpower 146w
Antitank missiles 148w
Apache AH-64 helicopter 146–7w
Astute class submarines 149w
BOWMAN combat radio system 451–2
Defence equipment, Procurement 147–8w
EH101 helicopters 708w
Harrier aircraft, Training 148w
Hercules aircraft 147w
HMS Cromer 333w
HMS Ocean 147w
Joint strike fighter aircraft 709w
Meteor missiles 715w
Spearfish 146w
Tomahawk missiles, Submarines 147–8w
Trafalgar class submarines 709–10w
Upholder class submarines, Canada 717w

Dawson, Mr Hilton
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1058
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Young offenders (19.07.01) 141wh, 144wh, 146–7wh, 160–4wh, 168wh

Day care
Children 245w, 409w, 757–8w, 1121–2w
Chorley 245w
Warrington 409w

Dean, Mrs Janet
Questions
General practitioners, Pay 737w

Death
Armed forces 947–8w
Cann, Jamie (16.10.01) 1031
Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease 726–7w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 614w

Death—continued
Prisoners 899–900w
Weather 843w

Death rate
566w
Strokes 213w

Debt Management Office
see UK Debt Management Office

Debts
Developing countries 308w, 373–4w, 419–21
Local authorities 898–9w
NHS 1038w

Deep vein thrombosis
203w, 839–40w

Deer
Foot and mouth disease 166w, 1105–6w

Defamation
Associated Newspapers 587w

Defaulters
Fines 351–2w

"Defeating International Terrorism"
1362w

Defence
1304w
Animal experiments 209w
China 44w
Expenditure 145–6w
Research 955–6w
Training 334–5w

Defence Aviation Repair Agency
Executives 707w
RAF St Athan 706–8w

Defence Diversification Agency
714–5w
Manpower 330–1w
Standards 329–30w

Defence equipment
144w, 1370w
Procurement 147–8w, 716–7w, 953w

Defence Estates
709w

Defence Evaluation and Research Agency
Apprentices 210–2w

Defence Export Services Organisation
144w

Defence Intelligence and Security Centre
Reviews 710w

Defence Select Committee
(16.07.01) 76

Defence Vetting Agency
Standards 1223w

Delegated legislation
Scotland 143

Delivery Unit
1363w

Demonstrations
Northern Ireland 275–7

Denham, Rt Hon John, Minister of State, Home Office
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 979–87, 990–1, 999
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Cleveland Constabulary, Inquiries (18.07.01) 115–8wh
Community relations, Urban areas (17.07.01) 19–21wh
Questions
A40M, Road traffic control 1201w

Denham, Rt Hon John—continued
Alcoholic drinks, Young people 1201–2w
Antisocial behaviour orders 287w, 650–2w, 795w
Antisocial behaviour orders, Sussex 795w, 1206–7w
Antisocial behaviour orders, Wiltshire 1206w
Ashley, James 48w, 125w, 344w, 680–1w
Children, Homicide 277w
Children, Protection 909w
Civil disorder, Bradford 1200–1w
Crime, Firearms 1322–3w
Crime, North Yorkshire 1207w
Crime, Oxfordshire 796w
Crime, Victims 1198–200w
Crime and disorder partnerships, Wiltshire 1206w
Crime prevention, Castle Point 278w
Crimes of violence 1205–6w
Crimestoppers, Finance 1326w
Criminal investigation 916–7w
Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 286w
Criminal Records Bureau 671–3w
Criminal Records Bureau, Annual reports 342w
Dizaei, Ali 345–7w, 922w
Drugs, Children 1234w
Drugs, Crime 1191w
Drugs, Habitual offenders 1234w
Drugs, Homicide 129w
Drugs, Misuse 1321–2w
Essex Police, Manpower 916w, 1198w
Firearms 796–7w, 921w
Firearms, Young people 921w
Habitual offenders 1325w
Hertfordshire Constabulary, Manpower 279–80w, 647–9w
Homosexuality, Crimes against the person 1393w
Imitation guns 668w
Lancashire Constabulary, Emergency calls 666w
Metropolitan Police, Firearms 915–6w
Metropolitan Police, Racial discrimination 652–3w
Metropolitan Police, Surveillance 347w
Metropolitan Police, Termination of employment 641–2w
National Black Police Association 345–6w, 652w
North Wales Police 1195w
Police 798w
Police, Cheshire 638–40w
Police, Civilians 916w
Police, Conditions of employment 796w, 1323–4w
Police, Data protection 921w
Police, Early retirement 132w
Police, Ethnic groups 646–7w, 1202–3w
Police, Firearms 680–1w
Police, Football 1197–8w
Police, Henley 1200w
Police, Homosexuality 642w
Police, Housing 1194w, 1200w
Police, Industrial health and safety 1194–5w
Police, Manpower 282–4w, 642w, 653w, 673–4w, 798w, 1324w, 1402w
Police, Medical examinations 641w
Police, North Yorkshire 666–7w
Police, Pay 1198w
Police, Pensions 659w
Police, Public appointments 795w
Police, Racial discrimination 652w
Police, Radio 675w
Police, Recruitment 128w
Police, Retirement 638w
Police, Sick leave 915w

Denham, Rt Hon John—continued
Police, Vehicles 649–50w
Police, Wandsworth 667–8w
Police authorities 649w, 926w
Police authorities, Public appointments 669w
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 1190–2w
Police custody 1207w
Police custody, Devon 274–5w
Police custody, Mentally ill 667w
Police national computer, Standards 670w
Police stations, Essex 1401–2w
Pornography, Prosecutions 285–6w
Porton Down, Human experiments 653w
Proceeds of crime 277–8w
Public relations, Home Office 1323w
Public safety radio communications project, Aerials 274w
Racial violence, Gloucester 667w
Racial violence, Prosecutions 670w
Religion, Discrimination 1400w
Road traffic control, Lorries 917w
Security Industry Authority 280w
Special constables, Conditions of employment 639–40w
Special constables, Public transport 640–1w
Speed limits, Cameras 644w, 1399–400w
Speed limits, Fines 644w
Speed limits, Lancashire 280w
Stop and search 46–7w, 919–20w
Sussex Police 274w
Thames Valley Police, Manpower 1321w
Thames Valley Police, Sick leave 1200w
Thames Valley Police, Special constables 902–3w
Theft, Garages and petrol stations 918w, 1164w
Travelling people 926–7w, 1398–9w
Travelling people, Trespass 926w
West Midlands Police, Special constables 903–4w
Young offenders, Wirral 1204–5w

Dental services
1122–3w, 1336–40w, 1346–7w
Burnley 1122w
Derbyshire 1350w
Fees and charges 228w, 723–4w, 1335–6w
Mercury 222w
North Yorkshire 1123w
Pendle 1122w
Somerset (17.10.01) 1275–82

Departmental coordination
Regulatory impact assessments 465w
Social security benefits 1042w

Departmental expenditure limits
Forestry Commission 173–4w

Departmental reorganisation
818w
Costs 612w, 1047w

Departmental responsibilities
Animal experiments 469w
Cabinet Office 304w, 461w, 789–90w
Elections 319w
Greenhouse effect 1046–7w
Land use 1047w
Poverty 319w
Registrar General 386–7w
Rural areas 1047w
Sustainable development 103w
Tourism 820w

Dependants
Armed forces 1308–9w

Deportation
Refugees 923w, 1192–3w

Dept for Culture Media and Sport
Aviation 1144w
Buildings 814w, 1379w
Construction 809w
Correspondence 813w
Early retirement 806–7w
Green Ministers Committee 187w
Information technology 80w
London Underground 56w
Manpower 746w
Parliamentary questions 813w
Pay 813w
Private finance initiative 741w
Public expenditure 1224w
Public private partnerships 741w
Public relations 742–6w
Recess 741–2w
Retirement 809w
Sick leave 806–7w

Dept for Education and Skills
Aviation 989w
Construction 783w
Correspondence 1184–6w
Early retirement 783w
Green Ministers Committee 243w
Information technology 134w
London Underground 239w
Parliamentary questions 1184–6w
Private finance initiative 405–6w, 780–2w
Public expenditure 1182–3w
Public private partnerships 405–6w
Public relations 783w
Recess 758w
Sick leave 783w

Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
Civil servants 1087w, 1093w
Computers 1248w
Construction 1090w, 1093w
Contracts 1055w, 1104w
Death 614w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 171w
Dept of Trade and Industry 171w
Early retirement 1078–80w
Helicopters 1055w
Information technology 398w
Internet 1077w
London Underground 1059w
Private finance initiative 1073–4w
Public private partnerships 1073w
Public relations 1077w
Recess 297w
Retirement 1218–9w
Sick leave 1078–80w
Standards 1051w
Training 1096–7w

Dept for International Development
Aviation 1283w
Buildings 803w, 1282w
Correspondence 1283w
Early retirement 474–5w
Green Ministers Committee 307w
Information officers 1282–3w
Information technology 190w
London Underground 189w
Manpower 1280–1w
Ministerial policy advisors 1282–3w
Parliamentary questions 1283w
Pay 1281–2w, 1287–8w
Public expenditure 1282w
Public relations 478–9w
Recess 478w
Retirement 802w
Sick leave 474–5w

Dept for National Savings
383w

Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions
Buildings 897w, 1364w
Construction 553w, 894–5w
Contracts 81–5w
Correspondence 1312w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 171w
Early retirement 525w
Green Ministers Committee 16w, 204w
Information officers 1312–3w
Information technology 98w
London Underground 86–7w
Manpower 1310–1w
Ministerial policy advisors 500w, 1312–3w
Parliamentary questions 1312w
Pay 897–8w
Private finance initiative 96w, 547–9w
Public expenditure 1171–2w, 1312w
Public private partnerships 96w
Public relations 525w, 1311–2w
Recess 205w
Retirement 871–3w
Select committees 1310w
Sick leave 525w
Travel 1311w
Visits abroad 1311w

Dept for Work and Pensions
Aviation 1383w
Construction 703–4w
Early retirement 694–5w
Green Ministers Committee 301w
Information technology 179–80w, 689–90w
London Underground 65w
Manpower 62w, 686–7w
Press releases 698w
Private finance initiative 692–3w
Public private partnerships 692–3w
Public relations 695w
Recess 302w
Sick leave 694–5w
Visits abroad 1383w

Dept of Health
Aviation 1350–1w
Early retirement 439w
Green Ministers Committee 225w
Information officers 1034–5w
London Underground 721–2w
Manpower 1352–3w
Ministerial policy advisors 1034–5w
Pay 1035w, 1351–2w
Private finance initiative 435w
Public relations 727w
Recess 727w
Retirement 1028w
Sick leave 439w
Visits abroad 1350–1w

Dept of Trade and Industry
Buildings 978–9w
Construction 610–1w, 979w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 171w
Early retirement 588w
Green Ministers Committee 272w
Information technology 105–6w
London Underground 107w
Orders and regulations 982w
Patents 595w
Pay 977w
Private finance initiative 268w, 607–8w
Public appointments 268w
Public private partnerships 268w
Public relations 591w, 1225w
Recess 271w
Retirement 1154w
Select committees 986w
Sick leave 588w
Standards 606w

Derbyshire
Dental services 1350w
Radioactive wastes 293–5w, 1069–70w

Deregulation and Regulatory Reform Select Committee
(16.07.01) 89

Derelict land
Lanarkshire 149w

Detainees
Refugees 338–9w, 901w, 924–5w, 1194w

Detention centres
Heathrow Airport 654w

Developing countries
see also Heavily indebted poor countries initiative
Debts 308w, 373–4w, 419–21

Development plans
889w

Devolution
Referendums 181w

Devon
Foot and mouth disease 1112w
Police custody 274–5w

Dhanda, Mr Parmjit
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 766–8
Questions
BBC, Digital broadcasting 810w
Rugby, Television 53w

Diabetes
221w, 1046w
Screening 222w

Diagnosis
1121w

Dietary supplements
59w
Sports competitors 224w

Digital broadcasting
51w, 56w
BBC 55–6w, 77w, 739w, 809–10w
Essex 808–9w
Radio 57w, 79w
Worcestershire 745–6w

Dioxins
1075w
Incinerators 633–4w, 1057–8w, 1068–9w, 1087–8w

Diplomatic immunity
425w

Diplomatic relations
1383w

Diplomatic service
Colombia 494w
Scotland 150w

Dir85/337/EEC
869w

Dir89/105/EEC
1357w

Dir90/423/EEC
166–7w

Dir2000/53/EC
618–9w

Direct selling
Utilities 583–4w, 1278–9w

Director of Public Prosecutions
see Crown Prosecution Service

Directors
Financial Services Authority 380w
Pay 1376w

Disability aids
118w, 428–9w
Community health services 72w
Television 807w

Disability Discrimination Act 1995
Questions
61–2w

Disability living allowance
59–60w, 178–9w, 704–5w
Administrative delays 688w
Fibromyalgia 832w
Phobias 1302w

Disability working allowance
698–9w

Disabled
61–2w
Driving 1368–9w
Employment 175w, 908–11
Jobcentre Plus 701–2w
Polling stations 313–4w, 1173–4w
Public transport 550w
Social security benefits 301–2w, 417–8w, 689w, 824w, 832–3w

Disabled person's tax credit
569–70w

Disadvantaged
66w
Bank services 862w
Employment 824w, 827w, 920–2
Health services 1123w
National childcare strategy 241–2w
Transport 465w

Disciplinary proceedings
Armed forces 937w
Customs and Excise 558w

Discrimination
Religion 1400w

Disease control
Bovine tuberculosis 1095w
Cattle 1059w
Foot and mouth disease 166–8w, 297w, 388–93w, 612–8w, 1055w, 1059w, 1086w, 1099w, 1101–11w, 1114–5w, 1216w, 1248–50w, 1265–7w, 1295–7
Hepatitis 1035–6

Diseases
Animals 1097w
Livestock 1080w
Research 722w

Dismore, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1084–8, 1140
Questions
Cyprus, Human rights 45w
EC enlargement 259w
Entry clearances, Applications 971–2w
Immigration 925w
Info 2000 Software 983w
Judges, Housing 1024w
Languages, Qualifications 987w
Legal profession, Clothing 156–7w
Metropolitan Police, Training 285
Palestinians, Kidnapping 122–3w
Paramilitary forces 972w
Private bills 154w
Racial violence, Incitement 925–6w
Sakina Security Services 983w, 1238w
Social security benefits, Abuse 298w
Social security benefits, Ethnic groups 831w
Stakeholder pensions 297–8w
Terrorism 1236–7w
Terrorism, Finance 983w
Terrorism, Training 1237w
Turkey, Human rights 8w

Disposal Services Agency
Standards 328–9w

District line
Repairs and maintenance 528–9w

Dizaei, Ali
345–7w, 922w

Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1236–9
Questions
Aerospace industry 1142w
Bus services, Huntingdon 1174w
Class sizes, Huntingdon 1176–8w
Drugs, Animal experiments 1353w
Drugs, Crime 1191w
Free school meals, Huntingdon 1176w
Further education, Pay 1176w
Further education, Teachers 1177w
Future offensive aircraft 1142w
General practitioners, Huntingdon 1125w
Huntingdon Life Sciences 1192w
Institutional care 1343w
New deal schemes, Huntingdon 1210w
Polling stations, Disabled 1173–4w
Post offices, Closures 1157w
Rural areas, Cambridgeshire 1218w
Schools, Cambridgeshire 1175–6w
Secondary education, Huntingdon 1176w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 218w
Thalidomide Trust Fund 1211w
Transport, Cambridgeshire 1174w

Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 295–6
Tobacco Disclosure Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 308
Questions
Cannabis 70w
Free school meals 133–4w
Information technology, Cabinet Office 461w
Information technology, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 80w
Information technology, Dept for Education and Skills 134w
Information technology, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 398w
Information technology, Dept for International Development 190w
Information technology, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 98w
Information technology, Dept for Work and Pensions 179–80w
Information technology, Dept of Trade and Industry 105–6w
Information technology, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 424w
Information technology, Home Office 127–8w
Information technology, Lord Chancellor's Dept 160–2w
Information technology, Ministry of Defence 149w
Information technology, Northern Ireland Office 162–4w
Information technology, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 124–5w
Information technology, President of the Council 156w
Information technology, Scotland Office 153w
Information technology, Solicitor-General 101–2w
NHS, Equal opportunities 70–1w
NHS Appointments Commission 728w

Docklands light railway line
London City Airport 15w

Doctors
Greater London 758–9w
Manpower 1348w
Private sector 119w
Training 758–9w

Dodds, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 491–4, 504
Questions
Business questions 1319–20
Elections, Northern Ireland 310–2w
Northern Ireland government 277–8, 312–3w, 483w
Northern Ireland Policing Board 481w
Police, Northern Ireland 163w
Prisoners, Northern Ireland 311w
Property, Ministry of Defence 5w
Refugees, Northern Ireland 127w
Riot control weapons, Northern Ireland 480w
Terrorism, Belfast 483w

Dolphin Telecommunications
Wiltshire 984w

Domestic service
843–4w
Immigration rules 1233–4w

Donaldson, Mr Jeffrey M
Debates etc.
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 500–3
Questions
Police Fund (Northern Ireland) 162w

Donohoe, Mr Brian H
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 965

Donors
Ethnic groups 114w

Doran, Mr Frank
Questions
Drugs, Proceeds of crime 150w

Dorset
Home energy efficiency scheme 631–2w
Redundancy 580w

Doughty, Sue
Questions
Alternative energy, Wastes 1068w
Incinerators 1068w
Recycling 1068w
Waste management 1068w

Dounreay
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 271–2w

Dover
Refugees 282

Dredging
19–20w, 74w

Drew, Mr David
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 984
Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries (19.07.01) 527
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Credit unions (18.07.01) 74wh, 82–3wh
Institutional care (16.10.01) 193wh
Young offenders (19.07.01) 142wh
Questions
Abandoned vehicles 1318–9w
Abandoned vehicles, Stroud 1091–2w
Aerials 1355w
Armed forces, Maintenance 1372w

Drew, Mr David—continued
Armed forces, Pensions 715–6w
Bovine tuberculosis 1272–3w
BOWMAN combat radio system 459
Broadband 1278w
Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, Annual reports 289w
Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, Standards 173w
Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage 805w
Council housing 1318w
Council tax 1319w
Dental services 1336–40w
Drugs, Misuse 1355w
English Sports Council 1290w
European Parliament elections 503w
Flood control 1272w
Flood control, Severn estuary 1272w
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 165w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1303
Football 1287w
Forestry Commission, Departmental expenditure limits 173–4w
Further education, Training 1292w
Health visitors 1355–6w
Housing, Planning permission 18w
Housing, Property transfer 1367w
Housing benefit 697w, 1303w, 1384w
Institutional care, Fees and charges 1331–2w
Joint Nature Conservation Committee 289w
Local exchange and trading schemes, Social security benefits 1302w
Local government, Reform 1319w
M5, Noise 544–5w
Maintenance, Children 1302–3w
Manufacturing industries, Rural areas 1277w
Mental health 1354w
Museums and galleries 1289–90w
Noise, EC law 544w
Non-domestic rates 1316–8w
Pension rights, Widowed people 699w
Pesticides Safety Directorate, Annual reports 289w
Planning 1314w
Planning permission 544w
Planning permission, Stroud 882w
Post offices, Bank services 1303w
Property rights, Cohabitation 788w
RAF Aston Down 1307–8w
Railtrack, British Rail Property Board 1315w
Railtrack, Finance 1315w
Refugees, Employment 1326w
Regional planning and development 1366w
Religious freedom, Christianity 1299–300w
Schools, Closures 1293–4w
Schools, Playing fields 1291w
Sheltered housing 1367w, 1369w
Students, Finance 1292w
Telecommunications 1277–8w
Tourist boards 1289w
Traffic Commissioners, Rural areas 1319w
Travelling people 1398–9w
Tree planting 1273w

Driving
Disabled 1368–9w
Working hours 891w
Working Time Regulations 1998 891w
Young people (19.10.01) 1406–16

Driving instruction
Standards 99w

Driving offences
Essex 1399–402w
Fines 1399–402w
Lancashire 644w
Scotland 411w

Driving tests
Public service vehicles 1171w

Droitwich
Inland waterways 627–8w

Drown, Ms Julia
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 683
Questions
Maternity services 1040–1
Speaker's Advisory Panel 317w

Drug seizures
182–3w
Northern Ireland 482–3w

Drugs
Animal experiments 1353w
Cambridgeshire 1191w
Children 1234w
Crime 1191w
Habitual offenders 1234w
Homicide 129w
Imports 283w
Licensing 233w
Mentally disturbed offenders 932w
Mentally ill 442–5w, 1035–6w
Misuse 349w, 568w, 916w, 1321–2w, 1341w, 1355w, 1397–8w
New deal for young people 915–6
Prices 1357w
Prisons 660–4w
Proceeds of crime 150w
Pupil exclusions 759–60w, 1187w
Research 283–5w
Safety 440w
Scotland 150–1w
Sports 77–9w
Young people 349w

Duchy of Lancaster
Farms 1005w

Duke of York's Royal Military School
Standards 138–9w

Duncan, Mr Alan
Questions
Prisoners 1239w

Duncan, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 320–1, 326
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1108–11
Questions
Ammunition, Luce Bay 956–7w
Broadband 1157–8w
Climate change levy 1211w
Excise duties, Fuels 376w
Firing ranges, Dundrennan 957w
Foot and mouth disease 848–9w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1114w
Foot and mouth disease, Meat products 1215w
Fuels, Scotland 140–1
Members, Scotland 1296w
Pensioners 1210w
Post offices, Closures 1157w
Road works, EC grants and loans 217w
Tipping of waste 1284
Uranium, Dundrennan 1139–40w

Duncan Smith, Rt Hon Iain
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 675–8, (08.10.01) 814–6

***Duncan Smith, Rt Hon Iain**—continued*
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 607–8
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 1161–3
General practitioners 1166–8

Dundrennan
Firing ranges 957w
Uranium 1139–40w

Dunstable bypass
1172w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
Members, Points of order (16.07.01) 22
Railtrack (15.10.01) 959–60
Select committees (16.07.01) 47, 57–8
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1060
Questions
Cottage hospitals 1044–5
Highways Agency 499w
Lorries, Licensing 85–6w
Occupational pensions 414w
Swanwick Air Traffic Control Centre 201–2w
Traffic areas, Computer networks 11w

Dyslexia
1183–4w

Eagle, Angela, Parliamentary Secretary, Home Office
Debates etc.
Overseas visitors, Appeals (20.07.01) 600–2
Race relations, Sikhs (16.07.01) 131–4
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 592
Questions
Animal experiments 129w, 131w, 341w
Animal experiments, Disclosure of information 1396–7w
Animal experiments, Genetic engineering 905w
Animal experiments, Genetically modified organisms 921–2w
Animal experiments, Primates 675–6w
Animal Procedures Committee, Annual reports 341w
British citizenship 130w
Charities 350w
Civil disorder, Bradford 920w
Community work, Finance 357–8w
Detention centres, Heathrow Airport 654w
Driving offences, Fines 1399–402w
Entry clearances, Appeals 348w
Entry clearances, Overseas visitors 658–9w
Exclusion orders 930w
Forced Marriages Working Group 126w
Green Ministers Committee, Home Office 280w, 344w
Illegal immigrants, Channel tunnel 350w, 677–9w
Illegal immigrants, Employment 922w
Immigrants, South Africa 929w
Immigration 925w
Immigration, Administrative delays 653–4w
Immigration, Forms 132–3w
Immigration adjudicators, Annual reports 338w
Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 348w
Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Public appointments 273w
Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Standards 642–3w
Immigration officers, France 682w
Immigration rules 347–8w
Immigration rules, Domestic service 1233–4w
Immigration rules, Nurses 125–6w

***Eagle, Angela**—continued*
Members, Correspondence 357w, 668–9w
National Asylum Support Service 339–40w, 926w
Oakington Detention Centre 48–9w, 343–4w
Overseas aid, Kosovo 902w
Overseas visitors 676–8w
Passports 356w, 645–6w
Passports, Administrative delays 354w, 357w
Passports, Applications 49w, 356–7w
Passports, Forgery 1197w
Passports, Fraud 355w, 645–6w
Personal records, Databases 908–9w
Race relations 643w
Racial violence, Incitement 925–6w
Refugees 48w, 275–7w, 280–1w, 658w
Refugees, Administrative delays 127w, 1394–5w
Refugees, Appeals 48w, 130–1w, 287w, 338–9w, 901w
Refugees, Applications 340w
Refugees, Arab states 1238w
Refugees, Children 126–7w, 281–2w
Refugees, Deportation 923w, 1192–3w
Refugees, Detainees 338–9w, 901w, 924–5w, 1194w
Refugees, EC grants and loans 337–8w
Refugees, Employment 1324w, 1326w
Refugees, Essex 1193–4w
Refugees, HIV infection 1395–6w
Refugees, Housing 655w, 1324–5w, 1393–4w
Refugees, Liverpool 1394w
Refugees, Northern Ireland 127w
Refugees, Peterborough 656–8w
Refugees, Prisons 654–6w
Refugees, Southend 340–1w
Refugees, Sri Lanka 130w
Refugees, Suffolk 338w
Refugees, Trafford 923w
Refugees, Voucher schemes 339w, 658w, 924w, 1235w
Refugees, Wales 1394–5w
Scientific Procedures Inspectorate, Manpower 793–4w
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Immigration 174w
United Kingdom Passport Agency 355w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Annual reports 273w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Databases 354w, 357w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Finance 355–6w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Fraud 354–5w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Telephone services 354w
Voluntary organisations, Finance 341–2w

Eagle, Maria, Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions
Questions
Carers, Social security benefits 824w
Carers' allowance 913–4
Disability living allowance 59–60w, 178–9w, 704–5w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 688w
Disability living allowance, Fibromyalgia 832w
Disability living allowance, Phobias 1302w
Disabled 61–2w
Institutional care, Finance 700w
Invalid care allowances 699w, 705w, 1255–6w
Invalid vehicles, Applications 833w
Jobcentre Plus 701w
Jobcentre Plus, Disabled 701–2w

***Eagle, Maria**—continued*
Jobcentres, Computer terminals 702–3w
Remploy, Standards 1256w
Social security benefits, Disabled 301–2w, 824w, 832–3w
Social security benefits, Ethnic groups 831w
Vaccination, Compensation 739w

Early day motions
154w

Early retirement
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 806–7w
Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1078–80w
Dept for International Development 474–5w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 525w
Dept for Work and Pensions 694–5w
Dept of Health 439w
Dept of Trade and Industry 588w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 491w
Ministry of Defence 708w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 470–1w
Police 132w, 638w
Scotland Office 466w
Teachers 756w, 763–4w
Treasury 562–3w

Early warning systems
Warships 1142w

Early years development and childcare partnerships
Coventry 135w, 240–1w

East coast railway line
502w
Electrification 553–4w

East London river crossing
91w

East Sussex
Acute beds 117–8w
Hospital beds 1350w
Hospitals 232w
Housing 545w
Surgery 117w

Eating disorders
1029–30w

EC action
Motor vehicles 267–8w

EC aid
Afghanistan 1284w
Macedonia 121–2w

EC budget
21w

EC Committee of the Regions
Public appointments 555w

EC countries
Film 1143w
Medical treatments 1041–2w, 1240–1w
Rapid deployment forces 712–3w

EC defence policy
333w

EC enlargement
259w

EC external trade
Israel 422w

EC Finance Council
383–4w

EC grants and loans
372–3w, 577w, 608w
Construction 325w

EC grants and loans—continued
Film 1287w
Manchester 325w
Refugees 337–8w
Road works 217w
Small businesses 592w
Southend (17.07.01) 264–70

EC institutions
976w

EC law
Genetically modified organisms 1067w
Noise 544w
Parental responsibility 451w

EC presidency
Belgium 497–8w

EC Research Council
272w

Economic and monetary union
25w, 381w, 847–8w
Exchange rates 561w
Scotland 137–40, 152w

Economic and Social Research Overseas Advisory Committee
471–2w

Economic policy
(16.07.01) 105–27, (18.07.01) 402–5

Economic situation
288
Borders region 564–6w
USA 377w

Edmonton
Incinerators 633–4w

Education
Assessments 251–2w
Bureaucracy 1392w
Children in care 407w
Fees and charges 1294w
Finance 776w, 1212w, 1309w, 1385w
Henley 765w
Hertfordshire 250w
Medicine 784w
Northern Ireland 993w
Plain English 407w
Prisons 660w, 900–1w, 930w
Qualifications 577w, 757w
Reform 30w
Somerset 760w
Staffordshire 250w
Suffolk 135–6w
Wales 1157–8
Worcestershire 1232w

Education action zones
245–7w

Education and Skills Select Committee
(16.07.01) 76

Education Funding Strategy Group
251w

Education of children at home
133w

Educational maintenance allowance
770w, 772w

Edwards, Mr Huw
Questions
Bailiffs 451w
Central Science Laboratory, Annual reports 400w
Intervention Board, Annual reports 400w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Annual reports 311w
Transport, Wales 1252w
Veterinary Laboratories Agency, Annual reports 400w

Edwards, Mr Huw—continued
Veterinary medicine, Student numbers 1179–80w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Annual reports 400w

Efford, Clive
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1060

Egypt
Christianity 259–60w

EH101 helicopters
5–6w, 331w, 708w

Eight minutes rule
Rulings and statements (14.09.01) 617, (04.10.01) 702, (08.10.01) 830

Elderly
574w, 1036–7w, 1332–6w
Accident and emergency departments 735–7w
Accidents 1345w
Health services 108–9w, 233w, 1036w
Hospital beds 1042w
National service frameworks 437w
Slums 415w
Standard spending assessments 547w

Elections
Departmental responsibilities 319w
Northern Ireland 310–2w, 1147w
Postal services 267w

Electoral Commission
869–70w

Electoral register
273–4w, (20.07.01) 572–5

Electric cables
1220w
Health hazards 222–3w, 594–5w
North Yorkshire 593–4w

Electricity
Licensing 264w, 583w

Electricity generation
265–6w, 586w, 1156w
Carbon dioxide 40w, 264w
Markets 263–4w, 322w, 585–6w, 1157w
Scotland 152w

Electrification
East coast railway line 553–4w

Electromagnetic fields
1343–4w

Electronic conveyancing
73w

Electronic equipment
Waste disposal 31–2w, 295w

Electronic government
306w, 579w, 790w
Home Office 670w

Electronic publishing
Treasury 572w

Electronic signatures
610w

Electronic voting
House of Commons 148–9

Ellman, Mrs Louise
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses, Points of order (16.07.01) 22
Refugees, Petitions (18.07.01) 392
Terrorism (14.09.01) 639, (16.10.01) 1062

Ellman, Mrs Louise—continued
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 612
Questions
Ashley, James 48w, 344w
Business Appointments Advisory Committee, Annual reports 318w
EC Committee of the Regions, Public appointments 555w
Miscarriages of justice 128w
National Asylum Support Service 926w
Public expenditure 426
Refugees, Housing 1324–5w
Refugees, Liverpool 1394w
Walton Group 189–90w

Email
Unsolicited goods and services 320w

Embassies
India 485–6w
Pay 145w, 485w

Emergencies
396–7w
Nuclear weapons 953–4w

Emergency calls
Lancashire Constabulary 666w

Emergency services
Anthrax 1048–50
Warwick 1048

Employee Share Schemes Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 306

Employment
577–8w, 828w, 906–8
Disabled 175w, 908–11
Disadvantaged 824w, 827w, 920–2
Females 828–9w
Illegal immigrants 922w
Refugees 1324w, 1326w
Wales 1158–9
West Yorkshire 827w

Employment agencies
Entertainers 983w
NHS 441–2w
Regulation 35–6w
Standards 36w

Employment schemes
823w, 911–2

Employment Service
Annual reports 413w

Employment tribunals
603w, 981w
Higher education 271w
Royal Parks Constabulary 1285–6w

Employment Tribunals Service
1276w

Empty property
202–3w

Endometriosis
1046–7

Endowment mortgages
23–4w

Energy
265w, 586–7w
Conservation 273w, 296–7w, 858w, 1250w
NHS 1349w
Scotland (16.10.01) 214–20wh

Energy Act 1976
Questions
1161w

Energy Policy Review
103w, 604w

Energy supply
Seeboard 271w

Engineering Construction Industry Training Board
776w

English Heritage
1144–5w
Public appointments 1285w

English language
Mozambique 26–7w

English Partnerships Review
1175w

English Sports Council
1290w
Reviews 752w

Ennis, Jeff
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 333–5wh
Questions
Coal, Pollution control 595–6w
Gambling Review Body 80–1w
Railtrack, Finance 1170–1w

Entertainers
Employment agencies 983w

Entry clearances
1298w
Administrative delays 45w, 496–7w
Appeals 348–9w
Applications 487–9w, 971–2w
India 971w
Indian subcontinent 496w, 682w
Ministerial powers 496w
Overseas visitors 658–9w
Pakistan 971w

Environment Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee
(16.07.01) 76, (19.07.01) 517

Environment protection
Agriculture 1265w
Hedges and ditches 1268w
Peat 1217–8w
Prison Service 46w
Wales 1253w

Environmental Audit Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (17.10.01) 1171

Environmental Audit Select Committee
(16.07.01) 90, (19.07.01) 520

Environmental health
734w

Environmental impact assessment
1083w
Transport 869w

Environmental Protection Act 1990
Questions
1073w

Epping Forest
Bombs 206w

Equal opportunities
378w
Construction 325w
MI5 47–8w
NHS 70–1w

Equal pay
British Coal Corporation 985w

Equitable Life Assurance Society
25w, (17.10.01) 237–58wh, 385w, 850–1w, 1261–2w
Addresses to the Crown (16.10.01) 1031

Equitable Life Independent Inquiry
850–1w

Escalators
London Underground 529–30w

Essex
Accidents 1225–6w
Digital broadcasting 808–9w
Driving offences 1399–402w
Incinerators 1243–6w
Magistrates 1012w
Police stations 1401–2w
Refugees 1193–4w
Specialist schools 767–8w
Teachers 766–7w

Essex Police
Manpower 916w, 1198w

Estyn
see Office for Standards in Education

Ethnic groups
Donors 114w
Judiciary 157–8w
Juries 787w
Police 646–7w, 1202–3w
Prison Service 665w
Social security benefits 831w

EU-Israel Association Committee
257w

European Capital of Culture
185w

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
1149w

European City of Culture
806w

European Communities
see also EC headings
Constitutions 976w
Scotland 497–8w

European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993
Debates etc.
(16.07.01) 105–27, (18.07.01) 402–5

European Communities (Amendment) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
Com (17.07.01) 156–261
Com and Rep* (18.07.01) 310–92
3R (17.10.01) 1172–274

European Communities (Finance) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
Programme motion, Com and Rep* (19.07.01) 461–83
3R (18.10.01) 1326–48

European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals
169w

European Convention on Human Rights
Barlinnie Prison 154w
Planning 154w
Road traffic offences 153–4w
Scotland 152w

European Court of Human Rights
44–5w
Advocate General for Scotland 142–3

European Parliament elections
503w

European Scrutiny Committee
(16.07.01) 90

Euthanasia
Scotland 143–4

Evans, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Public Right of Planning Appeal Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 308
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1116

Evans, Mr Nigel*—*continued
Questions
Athletics 1378w
Cannabis, Smuggling 383w
Climate change levy 373w
Foot and mouth disease, Public footpaths 1266–7w
Foot and mouth disease, Ribble Valley 169w
Hospitals, Waiting lists 730w, 1240w
Members, Correspondence 1030w
National Assembly for Wales, Finance 1155–6
NHS, Wales 1153–4
Non-domestic rates, Wales 1147w
Post offices, Closures 1375w
Pre-school education 1294w
Refugees, Wales 1394–5w
Speed limits, Cameras 644w
Tourism, Wales 1002w

Evesham
Market town initiative 635w

Ewing, Annabelle
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Carers (16.10.01) 182–3wh
Questions
Aviation, Dept for Education and Skills 989w
Aviation, Home Office 1204w
Correspondence, Dept for Education and Skills 1184–6w
Delegated legislation, Scotland 143
Housing benefit 697w
Incapacity benefit 62–3w
Licensing laws 1380w
Migration 839–42w
Ministerial policy advisors, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1021w
NHS, Scotland 151w
Pay, Home Office 1204w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 912–3
Public expenditure, Dept for Education and Skills 1182–3w
Public relations, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1020w
Select committees, Home Office 1325–6w
Social security benefits 1209w
Social security benefits, Abuse 1384w
Social security benefits, Scotland 1209w
Visits abroad, Dept for Work and Pensions 1383w

Excellence in cities
778w

Exchange rates
Economic and monetary union 561w

Excise duties
Community transport 14w
Fraud 384w
Fuels 214w, 376w
Motor vehicles 858w
Whisky 576w

Exclusion orders
930w

Executives
Defence Aviation Repair Agency 707w

Exercise Saif Sareea 2
Tornado aircraft 1371w

Export Control and Non-Proliferation Bill (Draft)
Questions
604w

Export Control Bill 2001/02
Questions
1154–5w

Export controls
Arms trade 425w

Export credit guarantees
Arms trade 582–3w

Exports
China 981w
Licensing 980w
Livestock 1077w
North West region 325w
Pakistan 981w
Sheep 1088w

Exservicemen
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 208–10w

Extradition
1325w
France 126w

Fabricant, Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1261, 1267
Oral questions, Points of order (18.10.01) 1324
Protection of Property (Static Devices) Bill, 1R (17.10.01) 1171
Terrorism (15.10.01) 948
Questions
BBC, Commercial activities 188w
Broadcasting, Competition 105w
Business questions 1321
Pensioners, Social security benefits 919
Radioactive wastes 1292

Factortame
399w

Falconio, Peter
283–4

Falkland Islands
Sovereignty 821w

Fallon, Mr Michael
Questions
Business questions 1310–1
Individual learning accounts 405w
Regional planning and development 1267w
Trade competitiveness 372w

Falun Gong
China 426w

Family Law Advisory Board
Annual reports 788w

Fareham
Planning permission 875w, 1226w

Fares
Bus services 204–5w

Farmers
see also Agriculture
Bureaucracy 1078w
Codes of practice 1275–6w
Income 1269w
Markets 869w
Supermarkets 1046w
Tenants 1220w

Farming and Food for England Policy Commission
see Future of Farming and Food Policy Commission

Farms
1077–8w
Diversification 1097w
Duchy of Lancaster 1005w

Farnham
Community centres 740w

Farrelly, Paul
Questions
North Staffordshire Hospital, Consent to medical treatment 1037

Feltham Young Offender Institution and Remand Centre
131w, 918–9w

Females
Afghanistan 1168
Employment 828–9w
Incapacity benefit 683–4w
New businesses 852–3w
Population 866–7w
Prisoners 917w
Science 262w
Students 758w

Ferries
361–2w
Isle of Wight 610w
Rosyth 149w

Fibromyalgia
111w
Disability living allowance 832w

Field, Rt Hon Frank
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses, Points of order (16.07.01) 22–3
Business motions (16.07.01) 27
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 354–7, 378
Select committees (16.07.01) 60–2
Questions
Child protection registers 438w
Children in care, Education 407w
Chinook helicopters 711–2w
Community care 445w
Crime, Victims 1198w
Death rate 566w
Drugs, Misuse 349w
Education, Qualifications 577w, 757w
Elderly, Slums 415w
Employment 577–8w, 907–8
Further education 762w
General certificate of secondary education 407w
Housing, Standards 504w
Housing benefit 1303w
Incapacity benefit 684w
Life expectancy 385–6w
Medical treatments, EC countries 1240–1w
NHS, Retirement 1127w
Nurses, Manpower 1030–2w
Pensioners 1257–8w
Pensions 414–5w, 578–9w, 697w
Police, Pensions 659w
Poverty 415–6w
Poverty, Children 852w
Primary education, Standards 137w, 756w
Pupil exclusions 756w
Schools, Intimidation 765w
Sleeping rough 371w
Smoking 730w
Social security benefits 697–8w
Teenage pregnancy 386w, 567w
Truancy 407w
Unemployment 566–7w, 683w, 694w
Young offenders, Wirral 1204–5w

Field, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1381, 1395–8
Sittings in Westminster Hall
London Underground (17.10.01) 271–3wh, 276wh
Questions
BBC, Digital broadcasting 55–6w
BBC, Finance 188w
Digital broadcasting, Radio 57w

Field, Mr Mark—continued
Employment agencies, Entertainers 983w
Middle East 1297w
Police, Housing 1194w
Refugees, Administrative delays 1395w
Road works, Utilities 1228w

Field sports
1098w

Film
1287w
Certification 747w
EC countries 1143w
EC grants and loans 1287w
National Lottery 740w
Tax allowances 214w

Financial institutions
572w
Regulation 859–60w

Financial services
582w
Belize 26w, 308w, 484w

Financial Services and Markets Act 2000
Questions
574–5w, 859–60w

Financial Services Authority
380–1w
Directors 380w

Fines
Defaulters 351–2w
Driving offences 1399–402w
Speed limits 644w

Finsbury Park
Single regeneration budget 881w

Fire prevention
Prisons 1235w

Fire services
Training 511–2w
West Midlands 132w

Firearms
796–7w, 921w
Arms trade 1138w
Crime 1322–3w
Metropolitan Police 915–6w
Northern Ireland 481w
Police 680–1w
Young people 921w

Firearms (Amendment) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 309

Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981
Questions
311w

Fireworks
Accidents 605–6w

Firing ranges
Dundrennan 957w

First North Western Trains
532w

Fish
Conservation 399w, 870–1w, 1083–4w, 1269–70w
Genetically modified organisms 1067w

Fish farming
Wastes 1271w

Fish products
Animal feed 612w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 36
Questions
Business questions 1320

Fisheries
626w
Accidents 16w
Compensation 37–8w, 327w, 598–9w, 1161–2w
Leigh on Sea 1299–300
Luce Bay 956–7w
Safety 19w
Subsidies 320w

Fishing catches
1094–5w

Fishing vessels
626w

Fitzpatrick, Jim
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1405
Recess motions (20.07.01) 595

Fitzsimons, Lorna
Questions
Immigration adjudicators, Annual reports 338w
Probation Board for Northern Ireland, Annual reports 483–4w
Tribunals, Reviews 788w

Flats
874w

Flight, Mr Howard
Debates etc.
European Communities (Finance) Bill, Programme motion and Com (19.07.01) 471–5, 479, 481
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 3R (18.10.01) 1342–5
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Credit unions (18.07.01) 84–6wh, 89wh
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 41–2wh
Questions
Annuities 905–6
Climate change levy 412
Stamp duties 837w

Flight simulation
Apache AH-64 helicopter 716w

Flint, Caroline
Questions
Antisocial behaviour orders 651w, 795w
Bus services, Fares 204–5w
Children, Day care 757–8w
Health services, Students 438w
Sports, Schools 9
Television, Licensing 746w
Transport, Schools 513w
Working families tax credit 563w

Flood control
93–5w, 1095–6w, 1272w
A21 96w
Bewdley 1285–6
Coastal areas 626–8w
Finance 170–1w
Robertsbridge 170w, 396w
Severn estuary 1272w
Vale of York 630–1w, 1297–8
Yorkshire and Humberside 630w

Floods
Insurance 860w
Wales 124w

Flynn, Paul
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 961
Questions
Act of Settlement 1700 787w, 1024w
Agriculture 1292–3
Antidepressants 111w
BOWMAN combat radio system 457–8

Flynn, Paul—continued
Business questions 443
Butterflies 57–8w
Chapelcross power station, Accidents 580–1w
Churches, Repairs and maintenance 17, 426–7w
Drug seizures 182–3w
Drugs, Children 1234w
Drugs, Habitual offenders 1234w
Drugs, Misuse 568w, 1321–2w, 1341w
Endowment mortgages 23–4w
Energy Policy Review 604w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1305
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1114–5w, 1249–50w
Graduates, Pay 761–2w
Iron and steel, Wales 1255w
Medical treatments, Marketing 725–6w
Mental health services, Standards 221w
Merchant Navy Day, Cabinet Office 458w
Nuclear reactors 605w
Oldbury power station 34–5w
Personal Investment Authority 23w
Pupil exclusions, Drugs 759–60w
Radioactive materials, Japan 605w
Sellafield 605w
Sellafield, Mixed oxide fuel 469w
Treason Felony Act 1848 1202w

Follett, Barbara
Questions
EC budget 21w
Electronic government 579w
Financial institutions, Regulation 859–60w
Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority 440–1w
National asset register 384–5w
Social security benefits, Working mothers 824–5w
"Tax Benefit Reference Manual 2001–02 Edition" 574w
UK Debt Management Office, Annual reports 212w

Food
Health hazards 1093–4w
Import controls 290–1w
Labelling 70w, 224w, 232w, 1074w
VAT 852w
Waste disposal 1268w

Food Labelling Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 307

Foot and mouth disease
(18.07.01) 90–111wh, 389w, 615w, 848–9w, 998w, 1054w, 1100–2w, 1104w, 1214w, 1249w, 1266w
Chorley 1265w
Compensation 165w, 167w, 390–2w, 616–7w, 1099w, 1111w, 1114w, 1249w, 1265w, 1270w, 1317–8w
Costs 1260w
Cumbria 166–7w, 387–8w, 614–6w, 1098–9w, 1104w, 1109w, 1111–2w, 1217w, 1301–6
Deer 166w, 1105–6w
Devon 1112w
Disease control 166–8w, 297w, 388–93w, 612–8w, 1055w, 1059w, 1086w, 1099w, 1101–11w, 1114–5w, 1216w, 1248–50w, 1265–7w, 1295–7
Forest of Dean 1116w
Gloucestershire 1116–7w
Government assistance 1113w, 1116–7w
Gun sports 1105w
Herefordshire 1116–7w
Import controls 1112–3w, 1118w
Inquiries 1249w
Insurance 1102w

Foot and mouth disease—continued
Lancashire 1102w, 1113w
Manpower 1115–6w
Markets 1250w
Meat products 1215w
Military aid 168w
Northumberland 391w
Pigs 617w
Public footpaths 168–9w, 393–4w, 618w, 1266–7w
Public inquiries 281, 820w, 1110w, 1249w
Ribble Valley 169w
Scotland 135–7, 151–2w, 411w
Settle 1098w
Sheep 614w
Slaughterhouses 1114w
Small businesses 266–7w, 286–7, 1266w
Somerset 1250w
South West region 1116w
Throckmorton airfield 1214–5w
Tourism 6–8, 51w, 151w, 189w, 750–1w, 810–1w, 1290w
Veterinary services 394–5w, 1109w
Wales 614–5w, 1251w, 1254–5w, 1265w
Waste disposal 220w, 389w, 392w, 613w, 617w, 1085–6w, 1099w, 1102w, 1104w, 1109–10w, 1267w
Wild animals 390w
Worcestershire 1054w, 1115w
World Organisation for Animal Health 1099w
Yorkshire and Humberside 1110–1w

Foot and Mouth Task Force
1271w

Football
1286–7w
Police 1197–8w
Sportsgrounds 1143w

Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (19.07.01) 460
2R and Money res* (15.10.01) 979–1024
Order relating to Com (17.10.01) 1274
Questions
440

Football Spectators Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 308

Forced Marriages Working Group
126w

Foreign Affairs Select Committee
(19.07.01) 517

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Aviation 1151w
Buildings 1239w
Construction 499w, 976–8w
Correspondence 974–5w
Early retirement 491w
Green Ministers Committee 123w, 261w
Information technology 424w
London Underground 122w
Manpower 1150–1w, 1297w
Parliamentary questions 974–5w
Pay 974w
Private finance initiative 495–6w
Public expenditure 1151w
Public relations 486w
Recess 262w
Retirement 967–8w
Select committees 1297–8w
Sick leave 491w

Foreign investment in UK
North West region 325w
Scotland 498w, 609w
Wales 43w, 1254w

Foreign relations
Botswana 259w
China 424–6w, 491w
Namibia 259w

Foreign trade
USA 317w, 422w

Foreign workers
Nurses 441w

Forest of Dean
Foot and mouth disease 1116w
Regional enterprise grants 107w

Forest products
Imports 984–5w

Forestry Commission
Departmental expenditure limits 173–4w

Forgery
Passports 1197w

Former prime ministers
Tax allowances 318w

Forms
Immigration 132–3w

Forth, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses, Points of order (16.07.01) 22
Business motions (16.07.01) 26–7, (19.07.01) 506–7
Business questions intervention (19.07.01) 431, 436
Economic policy (16.07.01) 110–1, 113
European Communities (Finance) Bill, Programme motion and Com (19.07.01) 462–6
Ministerial and Other Salaries Order (18.10.01) 1349–50, 1352
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 488, 498–500, 502
Private Members' bills (20.07.01) 596
Select committees (16.07.01) 35, (19.07.01) 508–11, 515
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 595
Questions
Business questions 432–3, 1307–9
Census, Bromley 1213–4w
Smuggling 378–9w

Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 29
Select committees (16.07.01) 74

Foster, Mr Don
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 960–1
Questions
Contracts, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 81–5w
Energy, Conservation 273w, 296–7w
Railway signals 508w
Railway stations, Crime prevention 513–7w
Railway track, Standards 93w, 505w
Railways, Speed limits 92–3w, 200–1w
Railways, Travel information 517–8w
Regional development agencies 324–5w
Rolling stock 506–7w
Train operating companies, Standards 504–5w
Trains, Overcrowding 505–8w

Foster, Mr Michael Jabez, (Hastings and Rye)
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 456–7
Refugees, EC grants and loans 337–8w

Foster, Mr Michael John, (Worcester)
Questions
Flood control, Bewdley 1286

Foster care
Income tax 853w

Foulkes, Mr George, Minister of State, Scotland Office
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Energy, Scotland (16.10.01) 218–20wh
Questions
Assisted areas, Arbroath 152w
Derelict land, Lanarkshire 149w
Drugs, Proceeds of crime 150w
Drugs, Scotland 150–1w
Electricity generation, Scotland 152w
European Convention on Human Rights, Scotland 152w
Ferries, Rosyth 149w
Foot and mouth disease, Scotland 135–7
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 151w
NHS, Scotland 151w
Scottish Homes 411–2w
Television, Licensing 153w
Tourism, Scotland 151w
Winter fuel payments, Scotland 150w

Fox, Dr Liam
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 293–4
Questions
Emergency services, Anthrax 1048–50

France
Extradition 126w
Immigration officers 682w

Franchises
Railways 875w

Francis, Dr Hywel
Questions
Education, Wales 1157

Francois, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Points of order (19.10.01) 1359–60
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 174, (18.07.01) 327, 330, 334
Ministerial statement intervention (15.10.01) 959
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1365, 1379, 1393–5
Terrorism (14.09.01) 626, (08.10.01) 833
Questions
Army, Manpower 957w
Non-departmental public bodies 457w
Royal Naval Reserve, Manpower 958w
Territorial Army 959w
Territorial Army, Buildings 958w
Territorial Army, Manpower 958w
Territorial Army, Officers 957–8w
Type 42 destroyers 938w
Type 45 destroyers 1136–7w

Fraud
Excise duties 384w
NHS 113w
Passports 355w, 645–6w
United Kingdom Passport Agency 354–5w

Free school meals
133–4w
Bedfordshire 406w
Huntingdon 1176w

Free trade
478w, 594w

Freedom of expression
Hyde Park 1143w

Freedom of Information Act 2000
Questions
288w, 449–50w

Freight
Channel tunnel railway line 97w
Inland waterways 20w
Railways 88w
Roads 1171w

Fuel poverty
619w

Fuels
590w
Buses 549w
Excise duties 214w, 376w
Lorries 549w
Scotland 140–2
Shortages 1161w
Temperature 590w

Furs
China 1382w

Further education
762w, 770–2w
Bedfordshire 248w
Finance 773w, 1181–2w
Huntingdon 1177w
Pay 136w, 774–5w, 1176w, 1180–1w, 1292w
Per capita costs 238–9w, 771–4w
Student numbers 403w, 772w
Teachers 1177w, 1181w
Training 1292w
Transport 251w

Future large aircraft
5w
Job creation 1141w

Future of Farming and Food Policy Commission
169w, 1078w, 1218w

Future offensive aircraft
1142w

Fybromyalgia
1034w

G8
see Group of Eight

Gale, Mr Roger
Questions
Independent Television News 748w

Galloway, Mr George
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 639–40, (04.10.01) 698, 743–4, (16.10.01) 1083, 1111–4, 1130, 1136

Gambling
1381w
Young people 748w

Gambling Review Body
80–1w, 316w

"Gambling Review Body Report"
80–1w

Gaming machines
Social clubs 812w

Gapes, Mike
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 371–2
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1174, 1182
Terrorism (04.10.01) 741–2, (08.10.01) 836
Questions
Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester 56w

Gapes, Mike—continued
National Lottery 51–2w
Weapons, Northern Ireland 217w

Garages and petrol stations
708w
Closures 590w
Theft 918w, 996w, 1164w

Gardiner, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Economic policy (16.07.01) 123
Terrorism (04.10.01) 774–5, (08.10.01) 875
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Consumers, Credit (16.10.01) 229–33wh
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 242–5wh, 249wh, 258wh
London Underground (17.10.01) 261–2wh, 264wh
Questions
Companies, Complaints 1278w
Consumers, Credit 984w
Equitable Life Assurance Society 850w, 1261w
Financial Services Authority 380–1w
Financial Services Authority, Directors 380w
General Medical Council, Complaints 1341–2w
Independent Insurance 379–80w, 587w, 835w
Insurance companies 1262w
Parkside NHS Trust 1031–3w
Police, Medical examinations 641w

Garnier, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 724–6, (08.10.01) 824, (15.10.01) 932
Questions
Damages 785–6w
Personal injury, Damages 784–5w

Gas supply
see Natural gas

GCE A level
Vocational education 768w

GCE AS level
280–1, 1185–6w

General Agreement on Trade in Services
588–9w, 1279w

General certificate of secondary education
407w, 1188–9w, 1291w

General Election 2001
Ballot papers 1172w

General Medical Council
1036
Alternative medicine 1036–7
Complaints 1341–2w

General practitioners
1042–4w, 1125w, 1166–8
Buckinghamshire 446–7w
Huntingdon 1125w
Manpower 446–7w
Pay 737w
Recruitment 1045–6
Staffordshire 68w
West Sussex 1125–6w

General service medal
Suez Canal 942w

General Teaching Council
993w
Codes of practice 766w
Registration 238w

Genetic engineering
Animal experiments 905w
Animals 172w

Genetically modified organisms
1063w
Animal experiments 921–2w
Animal feed 732w
Antibiotics 629w
Crops 59w, 628–9w, 1064–7w
EC law 1067w
Fish 1067w
Maize 319w, 1065w
Research 396w, 472–4w
Seeds 1063–4w
Soil 1063w

Genoa Summit
Group of Eight 820–1w, 1149w

George, Andrew
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 301
Questions
Bass 399w
Common Fisheries Policy, Reform 1270w
Council tax, Second homes 95–6w, 502w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, Death 726–7w
Disability aids 428–9w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 688w
EC grants and loans 372–3w
EH101 helicopters 5–6w, 331w
Factortame 399w
Fish, Conservation 399w
Fisheries 626w
Fisheries, Accidents 16w
Fishing vessels 626w
Hospitals, Manpower 113–4w
Incapacity benefit 1210–1w
Nurses 227w
Nurses, Qualifications 226w
Nurses, Training 114–5w
Regional assistance 561–2w
Social security benefits, Disabled 301–2w, 417–8w, 689w

George, Rt Hon Bruce
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 635–7
Questions
British citizenship 130w

Germany
Radioactive wastes 637w

Gerrard, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 780–2
Questions
Business questions 1316

Gibraltar
489w

Gibson, Dr Ian
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 1009–12
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Wright, Lauren (16.10.01) 225wh
Questions
Breast cancer 66–7w
Business, Higher education 580w
Employment, Females 828–9w
Health hazards, Greenhouse effect 1356w
Norwich Prison, Overcrowding 285–6w
Science, Females 262w
Sports, Training 4–5

Gidley, Sandra
Questions
Antisocial behaviour orders 650w
Breast cancer, Herceptin 67w
Defence Estates 709w
Maternity services, Midwives 1040

Gidley, Sandra—continued
National Institute for Clinical Excellence 112w

Gifts and endowments
Prime Minister 74w

Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Questions
Income tax, Pensioners 422
Western Sahara 43–4w
Zimbabwe, Politics and government 257w

Gilroy, Linda
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 797–8, (08.10.01) 822
Questions
Combined heat and power 593w
Employment, Disabled 908–9
Fireworks, Accidents 605–6w
Osteoporosis 1121w

Gloucester
Racial violence 667w

Gloucestershire
Air pollution 621–3w
Foot and mouth disease 1116–7w
Teachers 1386w

GNVQS
1188–9w

Godsiff, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Football Spectators Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 308

Goggins, Paul
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Manchester Airport, Noise (17.07.01) 63–4wh
Questions
Cultural heritage 316–7w
Employment Service, Annual reports 413w
National Lottery 11–2

Gold and foreign exchange reserves
569w

Goodman, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 779–80, (16.10.01) 1104–6
Questions
Business questions 1317–8
General practitioners, Manpower 446–7w
Hospitals, Consultants 446–7w, 728–9w
Institutional care, Buckinghamshire 445–6w
Tax burden 377w

Governing bodies
Schools 247w, 1177w

Government
Annual reports 206w, 280, 1220–2w

Government departments
Billing 322–3w
Buildings 850w
Codes of practice 455w
Correspondence 174w
Databases 468w
Information technology 305–6w, 790w
Opposition 458w
Standards 454–6w, 461w, 834–5w

Government Office for London
881–2w

Government offices for the regions
Standards 554w

Graduates
Pay 758w, 761–2w

Graffiti
Community service orders 682w

Grammar schools
Ballots 993–4w

Grant Commission
see Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission

Grant maintained schools
Havering 1179w

Grantham Hospital
(17.10.01) 281–9wh

Gray, Mr James
Questions
Diplomatic service, Scotland 150w
Parliamentary scrutiny 152
Tipping of waste 1289

Grayling, Chris
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1229, 1240, 1252–4
Railtrack (15.10.01) 969
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 531, 563–6
Teachers, Recruitment (20.07.01) 563–6
Terrorism (04.10.01) 705, 785–7
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 336–8wh
Questions
Business questions 1314
Central Railway 97w
Channel tunnel railway line, Freight 97w
Charities 350w
Chiropody 431w
Driving tests, Public service vehicles 1171w
Health visitors 447w
Hedges and ditches 1046w
Income tax, Foster care 853w
Institutional care 71w
Institutional care, Finance 71w
Livestock, Transport 1092w
Millennium Commission, Finance 52–3w
Millennium Exhibition 80w
Office of Communications 13–4
Pensioners, Social security benefits 826w
Premier Christian Radio 810w
Private finance initiative 1158w
Pupil exclusions 408w
Pupil exclusions, Appeals 27–8w
Railways, Chessington 9w
Rehabilitation 1353w
Schools, Finance 27w
Schools, Surrey 401–2w
Sixth form education, Finance 136w
Teachers, Early retirement 756w
Teachers, Resignations 29w
Transport, Infrastructure 518–22w
Transport, Investment 359w

Grazing land
Isle of Wight 1086–7w

Great North Eastern Railways
286

Greater London
Agriculture 564w
Child protection registers 437–8w
Council housing 888w
Cycleways 879–82w
Doctors 758–9w
Health services 1033–4
Homelessness 877–8w
Hospitals (20.07.01) 558–60
Housing benefit 696w
Housing registers 193–4w
Magistrates 784w
Neurology 231w
New deal schemes 300w
Post offices 267w
Railway stations 517w

Greater London—continued
Railways 501–2w
Road traffic control 8w
Starter home initiative 1257w
Waste management 1070–3w
Working families tax credit 374w

Greater London Authority
Transport 1229–30w

Green, Mr Damian
Questions
Greenhouse effect, Conferences 1047–8w
Schools, Finance 1392w
Schools, Standards 1392w
Special education, Closures 1386–9w, 1391w
Special education, Qualifications 1386w
Special education, Vacancies 1389–91w
Specialist schools, Standards 1385w
Teachers, Recruitment 1391w

Green Ministers Committee
8w, 165w, 587w, 726w, 1082–4w
Cabinet Office 304–5w, 790w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 187w
Dept for Education and Skills 243w
Dept for International Development 307w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 16w, 204w
Dept for Work and Pensions 301w
Dept of Health 225w
Dept of Trade and Industry 272w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 123w, 261w
Home Office 280w, 344w
Ministry of Defence 209–10w
Solicitor-General 207w
Treasury 182w, 213w

Greenbelt
Planning permission (20.07.01) 541–4

Greenhouse effect
817w, 1048–51w, 1062w
Conferences 1047–8w
Departmental responsibilities 1046–7w
Health hazards 1356w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Great North Eastern Railways, Points of order (18.07.01) 305
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 237wh, 247–9wh
Questions
Annuities 424
Flood control, Bewdley 1286
Great North Eastern Railways 286
Olympic Games 1379w
Sports 748w
Sports, Non-domestic rates 836w
Sports, Schools 9–10
Tennis 1380w
Tourism 75w
Wembley Stadium 1380–1w

Grieve, Mr Dominic
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 982, 987–92, 1008, 1017–8
Select committees (16.07.01) 74–5, (19.07.01) 513
Questions
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 139–40
Northern Ireland government 219–20w

Griffiths, Jane
Debates etc.
Members, Points of order (17.07.01) 155
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1385–7

Griffiths, Jane—continued
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 455
Endometriosis 1046–7
New deal schemes 375w
Stillman, Ian 288
Wind tunnels, Finance 706w

Griffiths, Nigel, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept of Trade and Industry
Questions
Arms trade, Indonesia 981–2w
Arms trade, Israel 39–40w
Billing, Government departments 322–3w
Buildings, Dept of Trade and Industry 979w
Business, Local authorities 1376w
Export Control and Non-Proliferation Bill (Draft) 604w
Export Control Bill 2001/02 1154–5w
Exports, Licensing 980w
Exports, Pakistan 981w
Fireworks, Accidents 605–6w
Fisheries, Compensation 37–8w, 327w, 598–9w, 1161–2w
Forest products, Imports 984–5w
Free trade 594w
General Agreement on Trade in Services 588–9w, 1279w
Institute of Export 272w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Trade and Industry 982w
Phoenix Fund 986w
Plutonium 602w
Service industries 588w
Small Business Council 320–1w
Small Business Council, Annual reports 1277w
Small businesses, Innovation 39w
Small businesses, Regulation 597–8w, 982w
SMART awards, Kingston upon Hull 1279–80w
Trade agreements 589–90w, 596w
Trade agreements, Agriculture 595w
West-East pipeline 979–80w

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 301
Questions
Aerials 882–3w
Aerials, Planning permission 883w
Crimes of violence 1205–6w
National Assembly for Wales, Finance 1155
Packaging, Recycling 1268–9w

Grogan, Mr John
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 1014–6
Questions
Church Commissioners, Hagg Wood 19–20
Licensing laws 51w

Ground water
Sheep dipping 611w

Group of Eight
Genoa Summit 820–1w, 1149w

Guided weapons
714w, 1138–9w
Procurement 1139w
Research 1137–8w

Gulf War
see Iraq-kuwait conflict

Gummer, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1179–80
Questions
Consent to medical treatment, Young people 227–8w
Education, Suffolk 135–6w
Flood control, Coastal areas 626–8w
Gynaecology 227w
Local government, Reform 303–4w, 789w
Party political broadcasts 187w
Postal services, Elections 267w
Refugees, Suffolk 338w
Regional government 788–9w

Gun sports
Foot and mouth disease 1105w

Gurkhas
1371w

Gynaecology
227w

Habitual offenders
659–60w, 1325w
Community service orders 352–3w, 1199w
Drugs 1234w

Hackney
Sixth form education 1385w

Hagg Wood
Church Commissioners 19–20

Hague, Rt Hon William
Questions
Foot and mouth disease, Public inquiries 281
GCE AS level 280–1
Government, Annual reports 280
Prime Minister's questions 281–2
Select committees 281

Hain, Rt Hon Peter, Minister for Europe, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 164–166, 186–92, 236, 241–3, 251–2, 254–5, 257, (18.07.01) 323, 331–5, 343–5, 379–82, 387–8, 392
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1172–7, 1178–81, 1185–8, 1266–70
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1084
Questions
Azerbaijan 498w
Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU) 123w
Chechnya, Human rights 485w, 970w
Common agricultural policy, Reform 975w
Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage 1300w
Cyprus, Human rights 45w
EC enlargement 259w
EC institutions 976w
EU-Israel Association Committee 257w
European Communities, Constitutions 976w
European Communities, Scotland 497–8w
Gibraltar 489w
Green Ministers Committee, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 123w, 261w
Human rights 493w
Human rights, Annual reports 1298w
Iraq, Sanctions 493w
Israel, EC external trade 422w
Mercenaries 422w
Overseas trade, Human rights 256–7w
Racial discrimination, Conferences 423w
Religious freedom, Christianity 1299w
Rural development plans, Wales 422w
Terrorism, UN resolutions 1150w

Hain, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Treaty of Rome 423–4w
Turkmenistan, Prisoners 122w
UK membership of EC, Publications 421w
UN Security Council, Voting behaviour 492w
United Nations, USA 1149–50w
United Nations, Voting behaviour 45w
Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Annual reports 423–4w
"Your Britain, Your Europe Your Wales" 45–6w
Yugoslavia, Sanctions 425w

Hall, Patrick
Questions
Local government, Disclosure of information 555w
Ministers, Visits abroad 467w
VAT, Home care services 213w

Hallucinogens
794w

Hamilton, Mr Fabian
Questions
Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 286w
Schools, Finance 185w

Hammond, Mr Philip
Questions
NHS, Finance 429w

Hammond Inquiry
see Hinduja Passport Inquiry

Hampshire
537w
Local government 361w
Planning permission 874–5w

Hancock, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 52
Questions
Aircraft carriers, Procurement 1140w
Antitank missiles 946–7w
Armed forces, Canada 961–2w
Armed forces, India 952w
Armed forces, Insurance 1305–6w
Armed forces, Motor vehicles 947w
Armoured fighting vehicles, New Zealand 952w
Armoured fighting vehicles, Poland 952–3w
Arms control 803w
Arms trade, Firearms 1138w
Army, Helicopters 1140w
Aviation, Security 933w
BOWMAN combat radio system 456
Defence, Research 955–6w
Early-warning systems, Warships 1142w
Electromagnetic fields 1343–4w
Fish farming, Wastes 1271w
Future large aircraft, Job creation 1141w
Guided weapons 1138–9w
Guided weapons, Procurement 1139w
Guided weapons, Research 1137–8w
Hunting Defence, Contracts 952w
Hyperactivity, Children 1344–5w
Institutional care 1342–3w
Institutional care, Training 1342w
Livestock, Exports 1077w
NATO enlargement 1137w
Nuclear submarines, Russia 950w
Planning permission, Applications 874w
QINETIQ, Optical equipment 951w
QINETIQ, Research 950–1w
Railways 1363–4w
SA80 rifle 1140–1w
Type 45 destroyers 1–2w

Harbour authorities
538–42w, 893–4w

Harman, Rt Hon Harriet, Solicitor-General
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 1284–5w
Buildings, Solicitor-General 995w
Construction, Solicitor-General 996w
Crown Prosecution Service, Annual reports 315w
Green Ministers Committee 8w
Green Ministers Committee, Solicitor-General 207w
Information technology, Solicitor-General 101–2w
RAF Menwith Hill, Bye laws 995w
Serious Fraud Office, Annual reports 315w
Sweeting, Christian 996–7w
Theft, Garages and petrol stations 996w
Turkey, Human rights 8w

Harrier aircraft
Training 148w

Harris, Dr Evan
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 296–8
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Carers (16.10.01) 177–80wh
Questions
Armed forces, Compensation 332w
Business questions 445–6
Heart diseases, Health services 1042
HIV infection, Heterosexuality 731w
Hospital beds, Oxfordshire 1257w
Hospitals, Waiting lists 730w
Prescription drugs, Children 1133–5w
Prosthetics 1353w
Refugees, Detainees 338w
Sex Offences Review 344w, 666w

Harris, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order (16.07.01) 100
Questions
Business questions 433

Harrow
Teachers 29w

Harvey, Nick
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 300
Questions
Foot and mouth disease 1054w
Wembley Stadium 3

Havard, Mr Dai
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 458

Havering
Grant maintained schools 1179w
Local government finance 551–2w

Hawkins, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 965
Questions
Accidents, Fees and charges 112w
Insurance premium tax 20w
Magistrates' courts, Closures 147–8
Motor vehicles, Insurance 18–9w
Sports 53w
Sports, Training 5

Hayes, Mr John
Questions
Special education 256w

Hayes Committee
see Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority

Headteachers
754w
Training 994w

Heald, Mr Oliver
Questions
Cottage hospitals 1044
Health Select Committee 448w
Police, Retirement 638w

Healey, John, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept for Education and Skills
Questions
Basic education, Social security benefits 784w
Computers within reach programme 252–5w, 762w
Construction Industry Training Board 776–8w
Education, Qualifications 757w
Further education, Bedfordshire 248w
Further education, Finance 773w, 1181w
Further education, Pay 1292w
Further education, Per capita costs 238–9w, 771–4w
Further education, Student numbers 403w, 772w
Further education, Teachers 1177w, 1181w
Individual learning accounts 404–5w
Information technology, Dept for Education and Skills 134w
Public expenditure, Dept for Education and Skills 1182–3w
Schools, Computer networks 1180w
Teachers, Retirement 403–4w
Wired up communities initiative, Liverpool 255w

Health
International cooperation 378w

Health and Social Care Act 2001
Questions
442w, 1120w

Health authorities
116w
Lancashire 1122w
Standards 117w

Health education
Bedfordshire 248w
Nutrition 721w

Health hazards
Aviation 1365w
Electric cables 222–3w, 594–5w
Food 1093–4w
Greenhouse effect 1356w

Health insurance
Tax allowances 560–1w
VAT 855w

Health Select Committee
(16.07.01) 80, 448w

Health services
(20.07.01) 568–72
Armed forces 5w, 1223–4w
Cancer 1124w
Disadvantaged 1123w
Elderly 108–9w, 233w, 1036w
Fees and charges 1133w
Greater London 1033–4
Heart diseases 1034–5, 1041–2
Reciprocal arrangements 1328–30w
Sleaford (20.07.01) 544–8
Strokes 72w
Students 438w
VAT 855w

Health visitors
447w, 1355–6w
Manpower 734w

Hearing
Babies 738w

Hearing aids
1327w, 1377w

Heart diseases
1042–3
Health services 1034–5, 1041–2
Transplant surgery 1242w

Heath, Mr David
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 649–51, (16.10.01) 1060–1
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 192–6wh
Questions
Arts festivals 52w
Business questions 438
Employment, Disadvantaged 920–1
Foot and mouth disease, Markets 1250w
Foot and mouth disease, Somerset 1250w
Livestock, Somerset 1219w
Milk Task Force 1217w
VAT, Ophthalmic services 576w

Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1206–12, 1214–5
Terrorism (15.10.01) 934
Questions
Business, Regulation 106–7w
Manufacturing industries 183w
Post offices, Closures 35w, 106w
Public appointments, Dept of Trade and Industry 268w

Heathrow Airport
Detention centres 654w
Night flying 875–6w
Public inquiries 1172w

Heavily indebted poor countries initiative
568w

Hedgerows Regulations 1997
Questions
169w

Hedges and ditches
884w, 1046w, 1270w
Environment protection 1268w

Helicopters
Army 1140w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1055w
Northern Ireland 949–50w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 166–7
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1185
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1070–3

Henderson, Mr Ivan
Questions
Rural Payments Agency, Standards 1247w

Hendrick, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 167, 172–7, 196–7, 206, 209–12, 219–22, 231, (18.07.01) 315–7, 362
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1189, 1193, 1221–2, 1236, 1243

Hendrick, Mr Mark—continued
Questions
Armed forces, Reviews 710–1w
Arms trade, Export controls 425w

Hendry, Mr Charles
Questions
Aerials, Planning permission 531–2w
Education Funding Strategy Group 251w
Farmers, Income 1269w
Housing, East Sussex 545w
Zimbabwe 495w

Henley
Education 765w
Pensioners 700w
Police 1200w

Hepatitis
Disease control 1035–6
Prisoners 902w

Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 1000–2

Herceptin
Breast cancer 67w

Hercules aircraft
147w

Herefordshire
Foot and mouth disease 1116–7w

Hermon, Lady
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order (16.07.01) 96–7, 101
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 488–90, 496
Questions
Administration of justice, Northern Ireland 314w
Drug seizures, Northern Ireland 482–3w
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission 313w
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Public appointments 313w
Northern Ireland Policing Board 481w
Police, Northern Ireland 479w
Polling stations, Disabled 313–4w
Victim support schemes, Northern Ireland 275

Heroin
Afghanistan 1382w

Hertfordshire
Bellwin scheme 100–1w
Education 250w
Police (17.07.01) 45–52wh

Hertfordshire Constabulary
Manpower 279–80w, 647–9w

Hesford, Stephen
Questions
Community service orders, Habitual offenders 1199w
Curriculum 989w
Northern Ireland government 479w
Prozac 722w

Heterosexuality
HIV infection 731w

Hewitt, Rt Hon Ms Patricia, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
Questions
Arms trade, Export credit guarantees 582–3w
Ashcroft, Lord 263w
Associated Newspapers, Defamation 587w
British Coal Corporation, Equal pay 985w

Hewitt, Rt Hon Ms Patricia—continued
Buildings, Dept of Trade and Industry 978–9w
Business, Higher education 580w
Business, Regulation 106–7w
Coal Authority, Annual reports 321w
Construction, Dept of Trade and Industry 610–1w, 979w
Directors, Pay 1376w
EC Research Council 272w
Foot and mouth disease, Small businesses 266–7w
Foreign investment in UK, Scotland 609w
Huntingdon Life Sciences, Bank services 601–2w
Industry, Government assistance 603–4w
Information technology, Dept of Trade and Industry 105–6w
London Underground, Dept of Trade and Industry 107w
National Weights and Measures Laboratory, Standards 270w
Non-departmental public bodies, Reviews 323–4w
Pay, Dept of Trade and Industry 977w
Post offices, Closures 35w, 106w
Private finance initiative 1158w
Private finance initiative, Dept of Trade and Industry 268w, 607–8w
Public appointments, Dept of Trade and Industry 268w
Public relations, Dept of Trade and Industry 591w, 1225w
Recess, Dept of Trade and Industry 271w
Regional planning and development 580w
Retirement, Dept of Trade and Industry 1154w
Sick leave, Dept of Trade and Industry 588w
Standards, Dept of Trade and Industry 606w

Higher education
770–2w
Business 580w
Employment tribunals 271w
Finance 250–1w
Public private partnerships 135w
Wales 778w, 1253w

Highways Agency
499w

Hill farming
Northern region (18.07.01) 90–111wh

Hills Task Force
1104w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 302
Questions
NHS, Public private partnerships 1120w
Partnerships UK 863–4w

Hindhead
A3 1164–8w

Hinduism
Afghanistan 261w

Hinduja, Srichand
56–7w, 468w

Hinduja Group
Millennium Exhibition 468w

Hinduja Passport Inquiry
468w

Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
see English Heritage

HIV infection
Heterosexuality 731w
Prisoners 902w
Refugees 1395–6w

HM Chief Inspector of Schools
see Office for Standards in Education

HM Customs and Excise
see Customs and Excise

HM Inspectorate of Prisons
675w, 920w

HM Inspectors of Explosives for Northern Ireland
998w

HM Prison Service
see Prison Service

HMS Cromer
333w

HMS Dryad
950w

HMS Ocean
147w

Hoban, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 870–2
Questions
Best value 883w
Cerebral palsy, Special education 987w
General practitioners 1125w
Planning permission, Administrative delays 875w, 1226w
Planning permission, Hampshire 874–5w
Railtrack 1316w
Railtrack, Finance 1315–6w
Railtrack, Public appointments 1315–6w
Railways, Ownership 1319–20w
Roads, Planning 883–4w
"Schools Building on Success" 753–4w
Special education 402–3w, 779w
Special education, Finance 779w
Special Educational Needs Tribunal 403w
Teachers, Vacancies 401w
Transport, Planning 883w

Hodge, Margaret, Minister of State for Universities, Dept for Education and Skills
Questions
Doctors, Training 758–9w
Further education 770–2w
Further education, Finance 1182w
Further education, Pay 136w, 774–5w, 1176w, 1180–1w
Further education, Training 1292w
Graduates, Pay 758w, 761–2w
Higher education, Finance 250–1w
Higher education, Public private partnerships 135w
Higher education, Wales 778w
Learning and Skills Council for England 774–5w
Medical profession, Recruitment 755w
Medicine, Education 784w
Performing arts, Student numbers 762w
Students, Fees and charges 29w, 754–5w
Students, Finance 239–40w, 1292w
Teachers, Pay 774w
Teachers, Vacancies 404w
Veterinary medicine, Student numbers 1179–80w

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 28–9
Health services, Sleaford (20.07.01) 544–8
Select committees (16.07.01) 38, 46–7, 55, 66–7

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas—continued
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Grantham Hospital (17.10.01) 284wh
Questions
Business questions 437
Pilgrim Hospital, Waiting lists 71–2w

Holiday play schemes
54w

Holloway Prison
Body searches 928–9w

Holmes, Paul
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 338–42wh

Holyrood Parliament building
Tax yields 569w

Home Affairs Select Committee
(16.07.01) 81

Home care services
109–10w
VAT 213w

Home detention curfews
919w

Home Energy Conservation Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 306

Home energy efficiency scheme
631–4w, 1076w
Dorset 631–2w
Standards 1076–7w

Home Office
Aviation 1204w
Construction 1202w
Electronic government 670w
Green Ministers Committee 280w, 344w
Information technology 127–8w
Pay 1204w
Private finance initiative 349–50w, 903–4w
Public private partnerships 349–50w
Public relations 1323w
Recess 345w
Retirement 1203–4w
Select committees 1325–6w

Home-Grown Cereals Authority Levy (Variation) Scheme (Approval) Order 2001
Debates etc.
(17.07.01) 262

Homelessness
1226–7w, 1365–6w
Bed and breakfast accommodation 545w
Greater London 877–8w
Oxfordshire 545w

Homeworking
104w

Homicide
Children 277w
Drugs 129w

Homosexuality
128w
Convictions 101–2w
Crimes against the person 1393w
Police 642w

Hoon, Rt Hon Geoffrey, Secretary of State for Defence
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 664–70, (04.10.01) 802–10, (08.10.01) 830–6, (16.10.01) 1131–41
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 1307w, 1372w

Hoon, Rt Hon Geoffrey—continued
Aircraft carriers 335w
Aircraft carriers, Manpower 146w
Arms trade, USA 4w
Ballistic missile defence 333w, 715w
Ballistic missile defence, Iraq 330w
Ballistic missile defence, USA 715w
Bloody Sunday Tribunal of Inquiry 139–40w
BOWMAN combat radio system 336–7w, 449–59
Chemical and biological warfare 1306–7w
Exercise Saif Sareea 2, Tornado aircraft 1371w
Guided weapons 714w
Military aid 333w
Military aircraft, Repairs and maintenance 1308w
NATO enlargement 211w, 1137w
Nuclear submarines, Russia 950w
Nuclear weapons 332w
Nuclear weapons, Accidents 140–1w
Nuclear weapons, Emergencies 953–4w
Rapid deployment forces, EC countries 712–3w
Terrorism 962–4w
Trident 335w

Hope, Phil
Questions
National Lottery 5–6

Hopkins, Mr Kelvin
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 972
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 198–9wh
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 28–31wh
Questions
Doctors, Private sector 119w

Horam, Mr John
Debates etc.
Railways, Safety (20.07.01) 551–4
Sittings in Westminster Hall
London Underground (17.10.01) 262wh
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 33–4wh

Horticulture
395–6w

Hospices
Children 220w
Finance 1328w

Hospital beds
118–9w, 1036w, 1122w
East Sussex 1350w
Elderly 1042w
North Yorkshire 1349–50w
Oxfordshire 1257w
Worcestershire 732w, 1349w

Hospitals
Admissions 116–7w
Buckinghamshire 728–9w
Capital investment 1119w
Consultants 435–6w, 446–7w, 728–9w
East Sussex 232w
Greater London (20.07.01) 558–60
Infectious diseases 232w
Liskeard 221w
Manpower 113–4w
North West region 1240w
Purley 1031–2
Security 1028–9w
Transport 110w, 436w
Waiting lists 730w, 1043–5w, 1240w, 1327–8w

House of Commons
Electronic voting 148–9

House of Commons—continued
Information technology 149–50
Waste disposal 155w

House of Commons Modernisation Select Committee
see Modernisation of the House of Commons Select Committee

House sellers pack
894w

Housing
Armed forces 717w, 938–41w
Birmingham (17.07.01) 53–9wh
Capital investment 876w
Chorley 191w
Construction 191w, 554w, 869w
Coventry 18w
East Sussex 545w
Judges 1024w
Lancashire 192w
Planning permission 18w
Police 1194w, 1200w
Property transfer 876w, 879–80w, 1367w
Refugees 655w, 1324–5w, 1393–4w
Sales 893–4w
Standards 194–6w, 504w
VAT 558w
Wales 1152

Housing benefit
697w, 1303w, 1384w
Abuse 705w
Complaints 1173w
Greater London 696w
Islington 696–7w

Housing investment programmes
10–1w

Housing registers
Greater London 193–4w

Housing revenue accounts
10w

Housing stock
876–7w

Housing (Wales) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 307

Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 164–72, 174–6, 189, 191
Terrorism (15.10.01) 942–3
Questions
Balance of payments 852w
Illegal immigrants, Channel tunnel 350w
National income 861w
Terrorism 861w

Howarth, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 67
Questions
Employment, Wales 1158

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 820–1, (16.10.01) 1056
Questions
Committal proceedings, Young offenders 157w
Diabetes 221w
Disability living allowance 178–9w
Incapacity benefit 177–8w
Insurance 557–8w
Overseas trade, Human rights 256–7w
Pensioners, Income support 60–1w
Regional planning and development 580w
Young offenders 347w

Howarth, Mr George—continued
Young offenders, Probation orders 49w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
Military bases, Kenya (18.07.01) 395–6, 401
Terrorism (04.10.01) 720–2, 804, 808, (08.10.01) 826

Howells, Dr Kim, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept for Culture Media and Sport
Questions
Alcoholic drinks 749w
Arts, Finance 185–6w, 749w
Arts, Schools 1–2
BBC, Commercial activities 188w
BBC, Digital broadcasting 55–6w, 77w, 809–10w
BBC, Finance 188w
BBC, Public appointments 816–7w
BBC, Standards 77w
Buildings, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 814w, 1379w
Construction, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 809w
Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage 804–6w
"Culture Media and Sport Select Committee on Tourism and Foot and Mouth" 1224w
Digital broadcasting, Essex 808–9w
Digital broadcasting, Radio 57w, 79w
Digital broadcasting, Worcestershire 745–6w
English Heritage, Public appointments 1285w
European Capital of Culture 185w, 806–7w
Film 1287w
Film, Certification 747w
Film, EC countries 1143w
Film, EC grants and loans 1287w
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 6–8, 51w, 750–1w, 810–1w, 1290w
Hinduja, Srichand 56–7w
Independent Television News 748w
Licensing laws 51w, 1380w
Mass media, Ownership 50w
Millennium Exhibition 80w
Millennium Exhibition, National Lottery 52w
Millennium Exhibition, Property transfer 747w
Millennium Exhibition, Sponsorship 747–8w
Museums and galleries 50w, 1289–90w
Music 749–50w
National Lottery 185w
National Lottery, Libraries 57w
New Millennium Experience, Annual reports 752w
Office of Communications 13–5, 814w, 1377–8w
Osborne House 186w
Party political broadcasts 187w
Pay, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 813w
Pay, Dept for International Development 1287–8w
Premier Christian Radio 810w
Public statues 749w
Retirement, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 809w
Royal parks, Birds 807w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Employment tribunals 1285–6w
S4C 57w
Schools, Finance 185w

Howells, Dr Kim—continued
Sick leave, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 806–7w
Television, Fees and charges 740w
Television, Licensing 187w, 746w, 812–3w
Theatre, Finance 812w
Tourism 76w, 1289w
Tourism, Academic year 811–2w
Tourism, Finance 1288w
Tourism, Rural areas 1289w
Tourism incentive group 816w
Tourist boards 1289w
Towers Perrin 1377w
Welsh language, Broadcasting programmes 188–9w
Youth Hostels Association, Finance 1288w

Hoyle, Mr Lindsay
Questions
Athletics 1378w
Coal Authority, Annual reports 321w
Day care, Chorley 245w
Defence equipment, Procurement 716w
First North Western Trains 532w
Food, Labelling 224w, 232w
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 1265w
Foot and mouth disease, Government assistance 1113w
Foot and mouth disease, Lancashire 1102w, 1113w
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 7
Free school meals 134w
Gurkhas 1371w
Health authorities, Lancashire 1122w
Hospices, Children 220w
Housing, Construction 191w
Inland waterways, Lancashire 627w
Market town initiative, Chorley 635w
MMR vaccine 720w
Police, Recruitment 128w
Police, Vehicles 649–50w
Police authorities 649w, 926w
Pre-school education, Chorley 244w
Radio, Licensing 321w
Railway stations, Chorley 191–2w
Reserve forces 1305w
Rugby 1288w
Rugby, Australia 1288w
Sewers 1061–2w
Sewers, Lancashire 1061w
Speed limits, Fines 644w
Speed limits, Lancashire 280w
Students, Finance 1292w
Teachers, Training 760–1w
Tourism, Finance 1288w
Wembley Stadium 1380–1w

Hughes, Beverley, Parliamentary Secretary, Home Office
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Young offenders (19.07.01) 135–43wh, 159wh, 164–70wh
Questions
Category C prisoners, Prison accommodation 931–2w
Community service orders, Litter 682w
Feltham Young Offender Institution and Remand Centre 131w, 918–9w
Habitual offenders 659–60w
Habitual offenders, Community service orders 352–3w
HM Inspectorate of Prisons 920w
Holloway Prison, Body searches 928–9w
Home detention curfews 919w
Life imprisonment 903–5w
Long Lartin Prison 927w
Manchester Prison, Telephone services 681–2w
Mentally disturbed offenders 796w

Hughes, Beverley—continued
Mentally disturbed offenders, Drugs 932w
Miscarriages of justice 128w
Mother and baby units 1235w
National Probation Service for England and Wales, Manpower 670–2w
Norwich Prison, Overcrowding 285–6w
Prison accommodation 132w, 901w, 1195–7w
Prison governors 914–5w
Prison governors, Correspondence 682w
Prison governors, Manpower 912–4w
Prison Service, Environment protection 46w
Prison Service, Ethnic groups 665w
Prison Service, Manpower 915w
Prison Service, Sick leave 909–10w
Prison Service, Standards 342w
Prison Service, Vacancies 665–6w
Prisoners, Alternative medicine 921w
Prisoners, Contraceptives 902w
Prisoners, Death 899–900w
Prisoners, Females 917w
Prisoners, HIV infection 902w
Prisoners, Location 660w
Prisoners, Mentally ill 666w
Prisoners, Rehabilitation 358w, 931–2w
Prisons 665w
Prisons, Crimes of violence 914w
Prisons, Drugs 660–4w
Prisons, Education 660w, 900–1w, 930w
Prisons, Finance 909–12w
Prisons, Fire prevention 1235w
Prisons, Per capita costs 342w
Prisons, Private sector 906–8w, 1235w
Prisons, Probation and aftercare 665w
Prisons, Standards 665w
Prisons, Telephone services 660w
Prisons, Television 922–3w
Probation officers, Recruitment 353–4w
Sex Offences Review 344w
Swansea Prison 905–6w
Young offenders 347w
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 911w
Young offenders, Probation orders 49w
Young offenders, Redcar 668w
"Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Review, 2000/01" 46w, 927w
Youth offender referral orders 668w

Hughes, Mr Kevin Michael
Sittings in Westminster Hall
National Lottery (17.10.01) 292wh, 294wh
Questions
Early day motions 154w
Invalid care allowances 705w
National Lottery 10–1
Regional airports 363w
Social Fund, Annual reports 705–6w

Hughes, Simon
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 982–3, 985–6, 989, 991, 996–1000
Terrorism (04.10.01) 695, (15.10.01) 929–30
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Community relations, Urban areas (17.07.01) 1–7wh
Young offenders (19.07.01) 137wh, 141wh, 153–60wh, 165wh, 169–70wh
Questions
Court orders 351w
Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 350–1w
Fines, Defaulters 351–2w
Freedom of Information Act 2000 450w
Habitual offenders, Community service orders 352–3w

Hughes, Simon—continued
Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Standards 642–3w
Life imprisonment 903–5w
National Asylum Support Service 339–40w
National Probation Service for England and Wales, Manpower 670–2w
Oakington Detention Centre 48–9w, 343–4w
Police, Conditions of employment 796w
Police national computer, Standards 670w
Prisons, Education 900w
Prisons, Private sector 906–8w, 1235w
Probation officers, Recruitment 353–4w
Racial violence, Prosecutions 670w
Refugees, Appeals 130–1w, 287w, 901w
Refugees, Applications 340w
Refugees, Detainees 339w
Refugees, Prisons 655–6w
Refugees, Voucher schemes 339w
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 353w
Special constables, Public transport 640–1w
Swansea Prison 905–6w
Terrorism Act 2000 353w
Witnesses, Protection 643–4w

Human embryo experiments
1121w

Human experiments
Porton Down 142–3w, 653w, 934–7w

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority
440–1w

Human rights
493w
Annual reports 1298w
Burma 261w
Chechnya 485w, 823w, 970w
Cyprus 45w
Indonesia 968–9w
Jordan 1381w
Kashmir 966–7w
Local Government Act 1974 503–4w
Malaysia 495w
Northern Ireland 219w
Overseas trade 256–7w
Proceeds of Crime Bill 2001/02 153w
Turkey 8w

Human Rights Act 1998
Debates etc.
(15.10.01) 923–39
Questions
146–8, 153w, 503–4w, 806w, 874w, 1024w

Human Rights Joint Select Committee
(16.07.01) 90, (19.07.01) 520

Humble, Mrs Joan
Questions
Fisheries, Compensation 327w
Wind power, Cleveleys 716w, 1059w

Hume, Mr John
Debates etc.
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 613–4
Questions
Northern Ireland government 285–6

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Dental services, Fees and charges 228w
Television, Licensing 187w
Tobacco, Advertising 228w

Hunting
635w

Hunting Defence
Contracts 952w

Huntingdon
Bus services 1174w
Class sizes 1176–8w
Free school meals 1176w
Further education 1177w
General practitioners 1125w
New deal schemes 1210w
Secondary education 1176w

Huntingdon Life Sciences
1192w
Bank services 601–2w

Hutton, Rt Hon John, Minister of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Brett, Jean (15.10.01) 1027–30
Questions
Accident and emergency departments, Elderly 735–7w
Beta-interferon 1120w, 1240w
Chiropody 230w, 431w, 1356w
Cottage hospitals 1043–5
Doctors, Manpower 1348w
Doctors, Private sector 119w
Donors, Ethnic groups 114w
General practitioners 1042–4w, 1125w
General practitioners, Manpower 446–7w
General practitioners, Pay 737w
General practitioners, Recruitment 1045–6
Health authorities 116w
Health Select Committee 448w
Health services, Fees and charges 1133w
Health services, Greater London 1033–4
Health services, Students 438w
Health visitors 447w, 1355–6w
Health visitors, Manpower 734w
Heart diseases, Health services 1034–5
Heart diseases, Transplant surgery 1242w
Hospitals, Admissions 116–7w
Hospitals, Capital investment 1119w
Hospitals, Consultants 435–6w, 446–7w, 728–9w
Hospitals, Manpower 113–4w
Hospitals, Security 1028–9w
Hospitals, Transport 110w, 436w
Hospitals, Waiting lists 730w, 1043–5w, 1240w
Medical laboratory scientific officers, Manpower 737–8w
Medical profession, Manpower 1125w
Members, Correspondence 1239w
Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust, Waiting lists 118w, 1028w
National Institute for Clinical Excellence 112w
National service frameworks 436–7w
Neurology, Manpower 231w
NHS, Combined heat and power 1242w
NHS, Debts 1038w
NHS, Finance 429w, 737w, 1039w, 1242w
NHS, Fraud 113w
NHS, Land 1347–8w
NHS, Manpower 737w
NHS, Nurseries 1121–2w
NHS, Private finance initiative 1034w, 1038–40w
NHS, Public private partnerships 1120w
NHS, Retirement 1127w
NHS, Working conditions 237w
NHS Pensions Agency, Annual reports 427w
NHS trusts, Standards 1040w
NHS University 1124w
Nurses 227w
Nurses, Asians 223–4w
Nurses, Grants 228–9w
Nurses, Manpower 1030–2w
Nurses, Qualifications 226w
Nurses, Training 114–6w
Nurses, Vacancies 438–9w

Hutton, Rt Hon John*—*continued
Nursing and Midwifery Council 731w
Out-patients, Attendance 236–7w, 1038w
Plastic surgery, Breasts 427w
Primary care trusts 1124w
Private finance initiative 434w
Private finance initiative, Dept of Health 435w
Psychiatry 230–2w
Radiotherapy 1241–2w
Radiotherapy, Medical equipment 1241w
Repetitive strain injury 111w
St George's Hospital Tooting 430w
St George's Hospital Tooting, Acute beds 430w
St George's Hospital Tooting, Finance 430w
St George's Hospital Tooting, Manpower 729–30w
Strokes 119w
Strokes, Health services 72w
Transplant surgery 1126–7w
Whittington Hospital, Private finance initiative 1029w

Hyde Park
Freedom of expression 1143w

Hyperactivity
Children 1344–5w

Iddon, Dr Brian
Questions
Hepatitis, Disease control 1035–6
Homosexuality 128w
Homosexuality, Convictions 101–2w
Infant foods 1345w
Unemployment 915
"Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Review, 2000/01" 46w

Identity cards
Connexions Service 256w

Illegal broadcasting
Radio 40–3w

Illegal immigrants
Channel tunnel 350w, 677–9w
Employment 922w

Illsley, Mr Eric
Questions
Annuities 423–4

Imitation guns
668w

Immigrants
South Africa 929w

Immigration
925w
Administrative delays 653–4w
Forms 132–3w
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 174w

Immigration adjudicators
Annual reports 338w

Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
Questions
339w, 348w

Immigration and Nationality Directorate
Public appointments 273w
Standards 642–3w

Immigration officers
France 682w

Immigration rules
347–8w
Domestic service 1233–4w
Nurses 125–6w

Import controls
Birds 857w

Import controls*—*continued
Food 290–1w
Foot and mouth disease 1112–3w, 1118w

Imports
Drugs 283w
Forest products 984–5w
Natural gas 1158–9w

Incapacity benefit
62–3w, 74w, 175–8w, 298–300w, 417w, 684w, 831w, 1210–1w, 1301w, 1384–5w
Applications 177w
Females 683–4w
Medical examinations 416–7w

Incinerators
284, 620w, 1057–8w, 1068w, 1214w, 1364–5w
Dioxins 633–4w, 1057–8w, 1068–9w, 1087–8w
Edmonton 633–4w
Essex 1243–6w
Planning permission 359–60w, 1056–8w
Pollution control 1058w

Incitement
Racial violence 925–6w

Income support
287–8w
Institutional care 833w
Pensioners 60–1w, 65w, 302w, 700w, 829–30w, 916–8, 1209w

Income tax
570–1w, 868w
Foster care 853w
Internet 382w
Pensioners 422–3
Self-assessment 382w

Independent Case Examiner for the Child Support Agency
61w

Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland
314–5w

Independent Football Commission
Public appointments 751w

Independent Insurance
328w, 379–80w, 587w, 835w

Independent Television News
748w

India
549w
Armed forces 952w
Embassies 485–6w
Entry clearances 971w
Overseas aid 476–7w

Indian subcontinent
Entry clearances 496w, 682w

Individual learning accounts
404–5w

Individual savings accounts
836w

Indonesia
Armed conflict 968w
Arms trade 981–2w
Human rights 968–9w
Oil 492w

Industrial and Provident Societies Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 306–7

Industrial diseases
Compensation 33–4w, 181–2w, 268w, 327–8w, 591–2w, 1162–3w
Leeds 1162w

Industrial diseases—continued
Nottinghamshire 1162–3w
Wales 32–3w, 104–5w

Industrial disputes
602–3w
C2C (18.07.01) 119–26wh

Industrial health and safety
Police 1194–5w

Industry
Government assistance 603–4w

Infant foods
720w, 1345w

Infectious diseases
Hospitals 232w

Inflation
562w

Influenza
Vaccination 233–4w

Info 2000 Software
983w

Information officers
Dept for International Development 1282–3w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1312–3w
Dept of Health 1034–5w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 1021w

Information Select Committee
(16.07.01) 81

Information technology
38–9w
Cabinet Office 461w
Child Support Agency 302w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 80w
Dept for Education and Skills 134w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 398w
Dept for International Development 190w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 98w
Dept for Work and Pensions 179–80w, 689–90w
Dept of Trade and Industry 105–6w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 424w
Government departments 305–6w, 790w
Home Office 127–8w
House of Commons 149–50
Lord Chancellor's Dept 160–2w
Members 150
Ministry of Defence 149w
Northern Ireland Office 162–4w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 124–5w
President of the Council 156w
Public sector 22w
Scotland Office 153w
Solicitor-General 101–2w
Teachers 1178w

Infrastructure
Transport 518–22w, 896–8w

Ingram, Rt Hon Adam, Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Debates etc.
Military bases, Kenya (18.07.01) 398–401
Questions
Air force 942w
Air force, Manpower 1369–70w
Ammunition 331w
Apache AH-64 helicopter 146–7w
Armed forces, Canada 961–2w
Armed forces, Colombia 715w
Armed forces, Compensation 332w

Ingram, Rt Hon Adam—continued
Armed forces, Death 947–8w
Armed forces, Dependants 1308–9w
Armed forces, Disciplinary proceedings 937w
Armed forces, India 952w
Armed forces, Insurance 1305–6w, 1372w
Armed forces, Legal profession 960–1w
Armed forces, Maintenance 1372w
Armed forces, Manpower 713–4w
Armed forces, New deal schemes 1303–4w
Armed forces, Pensions 4w, 941w
Armed forces, Reviews 710–1w
Army 4w
Army, Manpower 957w, 1135–6w
Army Training and Recruiting Agency, Standards 137w
Bombs 1372w
Challenger tanks, Salisbury Plain 8w, 959w
Chinook helicopters 711–2w
Courts martial 937–8w
Defence 1304w
Defence, Expenditure 145–6w
Defence, Training 334–5w
Defence Aviation Repair Agency, Executives 707w
Defence Aviation Repair Agency, RAF St Athan 706–8w
Defence Diversification Agency, Standards 329–30w
Defence equipment 1370w
Defence Intelligence and Security Centre, Reviews 710w
Defence Vetting Agency, Standards 1223w
EH101 helicopters 5–6w, 331w
Gurkhas 1371w
Harrier aircraft, Training 148w
Helicopters, Northern Ireland 949–50w
Hercules aircraft 147w
HMS Cromer 333w
HMS Dryad 950w
HMS Ocean 147w
Military aircraft 948–9w
Military bases, Cyprus 7w
Military bases, Kenya 2–4w, 143–4w, 211w, 706w
Military exercises, USA 7w, 956w
Nuclear weapons 331–2w
Private finance initiative, Ministry of Defence 718w
Project Aquatrine 1w
Property, Ministry of Defence 5w
RAF Aston Down 1307–8w
RAF Feltwell 956w
RAF Fylingdales 941w, 956w
RAF Menwith Hill 6–7w
RAF Menwith Hill, Contracts 954w
RAF Menwith Hill, Ministry of Defence Police 954w
RAF Menwith Hill, Security 955w
RAF Menwith Hill, USA 955w
Security Forces Collusion with Loyalist Terrorists Inquiry 953w
Tomahawk missiles, Submarines 147–8w
Type 42 destroyers 938w
Warships 964–5w

Inland Revenue
Standards 849w

Inland waterways
627w, 1273w
Droitwich 627–8w
Freight 20w
Lancashire 627w

Innovation
Small businesses 39w

Insolvency Service
Pay 320w

Inspectorate of Scientific Prodedures on Living Animals
see Scientific Procedures Inspectorate

Institute of Export
261–2w, 272w

Institutional care
71w, (16.10.01) 192–213wh, 448w, 1037w, 1342–3w
Buckinghamshire 445–6w
Cumbria 446w
Fees and charges 113–4w, 442w, 1329–32w
Finance 71w, 700w
Income support 833w
Training 1342w
VAT 559w

Insurance
557–8w
Armed forces 1305–6w, 1372w
Floods 860w
Foot and mouth disease 1102w
Leasehold 192–3w, 205w
Motor vehicles 18–9w
Terrorism 860w, 1262–3w

Insurance companies
1262w

Insurance premium tax
20w

Integrated administration and control system
1084–5w

Integrated pollution control
620w

Integrated tax benefit system
847–8w

Intellectual property
475–6w, 1375–6w

Intellectual Property Advisory Committee
1160w

Intelligence and Security Committee
318w
Public appointments 1119w

Interest rates
376w

International Army Fair
970w

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
see World Bank

International cooperation
Health 378w
Terrorism 972–4w

International Development Select Committee
(16.07.01) 81, (19.07.01) 517

Internet
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1077w
Income tax 382w

Intervention Board
Annual reports 400w

Intimidation
Schools 410w, 765w, 1189–90w

Invalid care allowances
301w, 420w, 699w, 705w, 1255–6w

Invalid vehicles
Applications 833w

Inverness
Aviation 1368w

Investment trusts
1258w

Iraq
Ballistic missile defence 330w
Military aircraft 492–3w
Sanctions 493w

Iraq-Kuwait conflict
Exservicemen 208–10w

Irian Jaya
Prisoners 492w

Irish Sea
Oil 38w

Iron and steel
Wales 1255w

Isle of Wight
537w
Animal feed 1086–7w
Ferries 610w
Grazing land 1086–7w
Local government finance 1174–5w, 1313–4w
Official visits 1301w
Ports 20w
Roads 537w

Islington
Housing benefit 696–7w

Islington Borough Council
Assets 543–4w

Israel
Arms trade 39–40w
EC external trade 422w
Kidnapping 486–7w

Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Business questions 1319
Employment agencies, Regulation 35–6w
Employment agencies, Standards 36w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1305–6
House of Commons, Information technology 149–50
Lancashire Constabulary, Emergency calls 666w
Terrorism 933w
Weapons, Northern Ireland 217w

Jackson, Ms Glenda
Questions
Climate Change Convention, USA 284
National Lottery 10–2

Jackson, Helen
Debates etc.
Northern General Hospital Sheffield, Petitions (17.07.01) 262–3
Questions
Beta-interferon 1120w
Dental services, Mercury 222w
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 1290w
Heart diseases 1042–3
Higher education, Public private partnerships 135w
Petrol alternatives 538–9w
Petrol alternatives, Safety 358w
Petrol alternatives, Taxis 358w
Prescriptions, Fees and charges 222w
Select committees 154

Jackson, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1174–5, 1179, 1183, 1186, 1188, 1195, 1200–1, 1207, 1226–8

Jamieson, Mr David, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions
Debates etc.
Driving, Young people (19.10.01) 1411–6
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1361–6, 1367–9, 1377, 1382, 1400–5
Sittings in Westminster Hall
C2C, Industrial disputes (18.07.01) 122–6wh
London Underground (17.10.01) 278–80wh
Manchester Airport, Noise (17.07.01) 64–8wh
Questions
A3, Hindhead 1164–8w
A30 536w
A35 536–7w
A590, Bypasses 1315w
Abandoned vehicles 1173w, 1318–9w
Air routes, Auctions 534w
Air traffic control 885w
Air traffic control, Prestwick 884–5w
Airports, Security 1366w
Aviation 891w
Aviation, Compensation 1169w
Aviation, Health hazards 1365w
Aviation, Inverness 1368w
Aviation, Security 933w, 1368w
Bypasses 535w
Bypasses, Bexhill 17w
Bypasses, Construction 535w
Central Railway 97w, 886w
Channel tunnel railway line, Freight 97w
Cotswold and Malvern railway line 9w
Deep vein thrombosis 203w
District line, Repairs and maintenance 528–9w
Docklands light railway line, London City Airport 15w
Dredging 19–20w
Driving, Working hours 891w
Driving instruction, Standards 99w
Driving tests, Public service vehicles 1171w
Dunstable bypass 1172w
East coast railway line 502w
East coast railway line, Electrification 553–4w
East London river crossing 91w
Ferries 361–2w
First North Western Trains 532w
Fisheries, Accidents 16w
Fisheries, Safety 19w
Flood control, A21 96w
Fuels, Buses 549w
Fuels, Lorries 549w
Greater London Authority, Transport 1229–30w
Harbour authorities 538–42w, 893–4w
Heathrow Airport, Night flying 875–6w
Inland waterways, Freight 20w
Jet skis, Accidents 886–7w
Jubilee line 197–9w
Jubilee line, Standards 99–100w
London Transport, Finance 531w
London Underground 195–7w, 873w
London Underground, Administrative delays 370–2w
London Underground, Crimes of violence 368–9w
London Underground, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 86–7w
London Underground, Escalators 529–30w
London Underground, Finance 9–10w, 199–200w, 368w, 528w
London Underground, Manpower 364–7w, 530w

Jamieson, Mr David*—*continued
London Underground, Public private partnerships 528w, 1169–70w
London Underground, Railway signals 365–6w
London Underground, Sick leave 364w
London Underground, Standards 198w, 364–70w, 527–8w, 530–1w, 1169w
M5, Noise 544–5w
M5, Road works 533–4w
M11 536w
M25, Road works 98–9w
Members, Correspondence 889w
Motor vehicles, Insurance 18–9w
Motor vehicles, Licensing 870w
Motor vehicles, Registration 205–6w
National Air Traffic Services, Public private partnerships 86w, 886w, 1171w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Correspondence 1230–1w
Noise, EC law 544w
Petrol alternatives 16w, 512–3w, 538–9w
Petrol alternatives, Safety 358w
Planning permission, Birchwood Park 1320w
Ports, Isle of Wight 20w
Railtrack 1316w
Railtrack, British Rail Property Board 1315w
Railtrack, Finance 1170–1w, 1315–6w
Railtrack, Public appointments 1315–6w
Railway network 538w
Railway signals 508w
Railway track, Standards 505w
Railways 1363–4w
Railways, Accidents 91–2w
Railways, Chessington 9w
Railways, Construction 503w
Railways, Franchises 875w
Railways, Freight 88w
Railways, Lewes 9w
Railways, Ownership 1319–20w
Railways, Romford 552w
Railways, Safety 97w, 190w, 1172w
Railways, Standards 8–9w
Railways, Travel information 517–8w
Railways, Tufnell Park 882w
Regional airports, South East region 501w
River Wye, Bridges 553w
Road traffic 15–6w, 891w
Road traffic control, Greater London 8w
Road traffic control, Lorries 86w
Road works 89–90w, 499–500w
Roads 91w
Roads, Accidents 14w, 527w, 1225–6w
Roads, Construction 192w
Roads, Freight 1171w
Roads, Isle of Wight 537w
Roads, Milton Keynes 892–3w
Roads, Noise 1228–30w
Roads, Private finance initiative 203–4w
Roads, Safety 892w
Roads, Tolls 542w
Rolling stock 506–7w
Shipping, Certification 508–11w
Shipping, Work permits 509w
South Coast Corridor Multi-Modal Study 542w
Stansted Airport 535w
Swanwick Air Traffic Control Centre 888w
Train operating companies, Standards 504–5w
Trains, Overcrowding 505–8w
Transport 87–8w, 1172w
Transport, Infrastructure 518–22w, 896–8w
Transport, Investment 359w
Transport, Milton Keynes 892w
Transport, Northern Ireland 542w

***Jamieson, Mr David**—continued*
Transport, Nuclear fuels 191w
Transport, Pollution 17w
Transport, Regional planning and development 531w
Transport, Safety 1364w
Vehicle number plates 894w, 1366–7w
Waterloo Station 503w
West coast railway line 1364w
Working Time Regulations 1998, Driving 891w

Japan
(20.07.01) 554–8
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 1047w
Radioactive materials 605w

Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 661–4, (04.10.01) 798–802, (08.10.01) 837–40, (16.10.01) 1127–31, 1136

Jenkins, Mr Brian
Questions
Compulsory purchase 202w

Jet skis
Accidents 886–7w

Job creation
Future large aircraft 1141w

Jobcentre Plus
701w
Disabled 701–2w

Jobcentres
825–6w, 903–5
Computer terminals 702–3w
Sight impaired 702–3w

Jobseeker's allowance
178w, 699w

John Radcliffe Hospital
Surgery 73w

***Johnson, Alan**, Minister of State for Employment Relations and Regions, Dept of Trade and Industry*
Questions
Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, Annual reports 321w
Assisted areas 1280w
Assisted areas, Scotland 325–6w
EC grants and loans 373w, 608w
Employment agencies, Entertainers 983w
Employment agencies, Regulation 35–6w
Employment agencies, Standards 36w
Employment tribunals 603w, 981w
Employment tribunals, Higher education 271w
Employment Tribunals Service 1276w
Fisheries, Subsidies 320w
Industrial disputes 602–3w
Low Pay Commission 1160–1w
Manufacturing industries, Rural areas 1277w
Marconi, Redundancy 580w
Parental leave 1276w
Private sector, Conditions of employment 609w
Public holidays, Religion 263w
Regional development agencies 324–5w, 985w
Regional development agencies, Credit unions 607w
Regional development agencies, Manpower 608w
Regional enterprise grants 267w
Regional enterprise grants, Forest of Dean 107w
Regional enterprise grants, South West region 107w

***Johnson, Alan**—continued*
Select committees, Dept of Trade and Industry 986w
Small businesses, EC grants and loans 592w
Tourism, Finance 1280w

Johnson, Mr Boris
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1175
Questions
Apache AH-64 helicopter, Flight simulation 716w
Bed and breakfast accommodation, Homelessness 545w
Child Trust Fund 835–6w
Climate change levy, Manufacturing industries 606–7w
Consumers, Protection 606w
Crime, Victims 1199–200w
Education, Henley 765w
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 750–1w
Import controls, Birds 857w
Invalid care allowances 699w
Local government finance, Oxfordshire 546–7w
MMR vaccine, Oxfordshire 721w
Pensioners, Income support 700w
Police, Henley 1200w
Police, Housing 1200w
Post offices, Closures 606w
Regional assemblies, South East region 547w
Schools, Standards 769w
Sheep, Exports 1088w
Small businesses, Regulation 598w
Stamp duties, Property transfer 837w
Standards, Dept of Trade and Industry 606w
Thames Valley Police, Sick leave 1200w
Upholder class submarines, Canada 717–8w

***Johnson, Miss Melanie**, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept of Trade and Industry*
Debates etc.
Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries (19.07.01) 524–8
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Consumers, Credit (16.10.01) 233–6wh
Questions
Airlines, Competition 981w
Alcoholic drinks, Measurement 1376w
Audit, Annual reports 322w
Broadcasting, Competition 105w
Cars, Prices 590w
Companies, Complaints 1278w
Company law 982w
Construction, Equal opportunities 325w
Consumers, Credit 984w
Consumers, Protection 606w
EC grants and loans, Manchester 325w
Exports, North West region 325w
Farmers, Codes of practice 1275–6w
Ferries, Isle of Wight 610w
Financial services 582w
Foreign investment in UK, North West region 325w
Fuels 590w
Fuels, Temperature 590w
Garages and petrol stations 708w
Garages and petrol stations, Closures 590w
Homeworking 104w
Independent Insurance 587w
Info 2000 Software 983w
Insolvency Service, Pay 320w
Intellectual property 1375–6w
Intellectual Property Advisory Committee 1160w
Mirror Group Newspapers 602w

***Johnson, Miss Melanie**—continued*
National Institute of Agricultural Botany 596w
Patents, Dept of Trade and Industry 595w
Sakina Security Services 983w
Small businesses 986w
Supermarkets, Codes of practice 985w
Supermarkets, Farmers 1046w
Terrorism, Finance 983w

Joint Nature Conservation Committee
289w

Joint strike fighter aircraft
709w

Jones, Helen M
Questions
Army Training and Recruiting Agency, Standards 137w
Day care, Warrington 409w
Defence, Training 334–5w
Planning permission, Birchwood Park 1320w
Pre-school education, Warrington 408–9w
Social security benefits, Abuse 413w
Specialist schools 29w
Strokes, Health services 72w
Trident 335w
Voluntary organisations, Finance 341–2w
Yugoslavia, Sanctions 425w

Jones, Mr Jon Owen
Debates etc.
Legalisation of Cannabis Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 307
Select committees (16.07.01) 54
Terrorism (04.10.01) 698, (08.10.01) 827
Questions
Business questions 1322–3
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1304
Foot and mouth disease, Public footpaths 393–4w
NHS, Wales 1153
United Nations 1270w

Jones, Mr Kevan
Debates etc.
Rochester, Christopher (18.10.01) 1353–6

Jones, Dr Lynne
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 37–9
Terrorism (04.10.01) 690, 807, (08.10.01) 822, 832, 834, (16.10.01) 1057–8
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Housing, Birmingham (17.07.01) 53–8wh
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 819–20w
Council housing, Standards 287
Defence Diversification Agency, Manpower 330–1w
Graduates, Pay 758w
Hospitals, Capital investment 1119w
Incapacity benefit 175–7w, 417w, 684w
Jobcentre Plus 701w
Jobcentre Plus, Disabled 701–2w
Jobcentres, Computer terminals 702–3w
Mental health services, Finance 70w
Nuclear weapons 331–2w
Refugees, Children 281–2w
Sellafield, Mixed oxide fuel 1097w
Social security benefits, Interviews 64w
Wembley Stadium 1380–1w

Jones, Mr Martyn David
Questions
Aviation, Finance 1261w
Ballistic missile defence, Iraq 330w
Diseases, Research 722w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 617–8w
Foot and mouth disease, Gun sports 1105w

Jones, Mr Martyn David—continued
Greenhouse effect 1049–50w
Higher education, Wales 1253w
Prescriptions, Fees and charges 722–3w
Security Industry Authority 280w
Zimbabwe, Politics and government 257w

Jones, Mr Nigel
Questions
Air pollution, Gloucestershire 621–3w
Botswana 259w
Botswana, Foreign relations 259w
Botswana, Overseas aid 307w
General Agreement on Trade in Services 588–9w
Namibia 259w
Schools, Per capita costs 758w
Service industries 588w
Trade agreements 589–90w

Jordan
Human rights 1381w

Jowell, Rt Hon Ms Tessa, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport
Questions
Arts festivals 52w
Athletics 814–5w, 1144w
Athletics, Picketts Lock 15, 739w, 815w
Aviation, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 1144w
BBC, Digital broadcasting 55w, 739w
Bletchley Park Trust 740w
British Museum, Manpower 76–7w
Community centres, Farnham 740w
Correspondence, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 813w
Cultural heritage 316–7w
Culture, Finance 54–5w
Digital broadcasting 51w, 56w
English Heritage 1144–5w
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 189w
Freedom of expression, Hyde Park 1143w
Gambling Review Body 80–1w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 187w
Holiday play schemes 54w
Independent Football Commission, Public appointments 751w
Information technology, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 80w
London Underground, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 56w
Manpower, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 746w
Millennium Commission, Finance 52–3w
Millennium Exhibition 52w
Motor sports 79w
Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester 56w
Museums and galleries, Finance 75w
National Lottery 5–6, 10–3, 50w
National Lottery, Film 740w
National Lottery, Millennium capital projects 52w
National Lottery, Rugby 53w
Office of Communications, Public appointments 317w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741w
Public expenditure, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 1224w
Recess, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741–2w
Regional arts boards, West Midlands 188w
Royal Parks Agency 751w
Sportsgrounds 816w
Television, Disability aids 807w
Theatre, Finance 54w
Tourism 75w
Tourism, Finance 75–6w
Wembley Stadium 2–4, 815–6w

Joyce, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 795–7
Questions
European Convention on Human Rights, Planning 154w
Television, Licensing 153w
Transport, Investment 359w

Jubilee line
197–9w
Standards 99–100w

Judges
Housing 1024w

Judiciary
Ethnic groups 157–8w

Juries
Ethnic groups 787w

Karadzic, Radovan
123–4w

Kashmir
260w, 966w
Human rights 966–7w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses, Points of order (16.07.01) 21
Railtrack (15.10.01) 967
Select committees (16.07.01) 36–7
Terrorism (04.10.01) 691, 702–3, (15.10.01) 939
Questions
Members, Correspondence 383w, 693–4w

Keeble, Ms Sally, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions
Debates etc.
EC grants and loans, Southend (17.07.01) 267–70
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Housing, Birmingham (17.07.01) 57–9wh
Questions
Aerials 882–3w
Aerials, Planning permission 204w, 531–2w, 883w
Bed and breakfast accommodation, Homelessness 545w
Best value 883w
Birmingham Relief Road 1173w
Bus services 13w, 886w
Bus services, Fares 204–5w
Bus services, Huntingdon 1174w
Bus services, Rural areas 13–4w
Cemeteries, Muslims 503w
Community transport, Excise duties 14w
Compulsory purchase 202w, 549w
Conveyancing, Public records 532–3w
Council housing 1318w
Council housing, Greater London 888w
Development plans 889w
Driving, Disabled 1368–9w
Empty property 202–3w
English Partnerships Review 1175w
Fish, Conservation 870–1w
Flats 874w
Flood control 93–5w
Government Office for London 881–2w
Government offices for the regions, Standards 554w
Heathrow Airport, Public inquiries 1172w
Hedges and ditches 884w, 1046w, 1270w
Homelessness 1226–7w, 1365–6w
Homelessness, Greater London 877–8w
House sellers pack 894w
Housing, Capital investment 876w
Housing, Construction 191w, 554w
Housing, Coventry 18w

Keeble, Ms Sally—continued
Housing, East Sussex 545w
Housing, Lancashire 192w
Housing, Planning permission 18w
Housing, Property transfer 876w, 879–80w, 1367w
Housing, Sales 893–4w
Housing, Standards 194–6w
Housing investment programmes 10–1w
Housing registers, Greater London 193–4w
Housing revenue accounts 10w
Housing stock 876–7w
Incinerators 1364–5w
Incinerators, Essex 1243–6w
Incinerators, Planning permission 359–60w
Leasehold, Insurance 192–3w, 205w
Listed buildings, Colchester 553w
Local authorities, Debts 898–9w
Local government finance, Isle of Wight 1174–5w, 1313–4w
Members, Correspondence 889w
Millennium Exhibition 193w, 200w, 500w
Millennium Exhibition, Property transfer 500–1w
Mobile homes 893w
National homelessness strategy 890w
Ordnance Survey, Standards 543w
Park and ride schemes 89w
Petrol alternatives, Taxis 358w
Planning 1314w
Planning, Disclosure of information 533w
Planning, Inquiries 204w
Planning Inspectorate, Annual reports 362–3w
Planning permission 544w, 869w
Planning permission, Administrative delays 875w, 1226w
Planning permission, Appeals 874w
Planning permission, Applications 874w
Planning permission, Hampshire 874–5w
Planning permission, Stroud 882w
Planning permission, Tewkesbury 550–1w
Property development 554w
Public transport, Disabled 550w
Public transport, Nottingham 17w
Public transport, Standards 371w
Public transport, Urban areas 12–4w
Railway stations, Chorley 191–2w
Railway stations, Crime prevention 513–7w
Regional assistance 550w
Regional planning and development 1366w
Regional planning and development, Bradford 579–80w
Road traffic control 16–7w
Road works 12w
Road works, Utilities 1227–8w
Roads, Planning 883–4w
Rough Sleepers Unit, Manpower 1365w
St Leonard's Hospital Dorset 204w
Shared ownership schemes 193w
Sheltered housing 1367w, 1369w
Single regeneration budget 881w
Single regeneration budget, Finsbury Park 881w
Sleeping rough 98w, 371w
Starter home initiative 887–8w
Starter home initiative, NHS 1367–8w
Traffic Commissioners, Rural areas 1319w
Transport, Cambridgeshire 1174w
Transport, Disadvantaged 465w
Transport, Environmental impact assessment 869w
Transport, Planning 883w
Transport, Schools 513w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 1309–10w
Urban areas 536w
Urban Bus Challenge 13w
Walton Group 189–90w
Waste management 1246w

***Keeble, Ms Sally**—continued*
Wind power, Planning permission 1320–1w

Keen, Ann
Questions
India, Embassies 485–6w

Keetch, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1251, 1254
Terrorism (04.10.01) 750–2, (08.10.01) 842–5, 875, (16.10.01) 1114–7
Questions
Aircraft carriers 335w
Aircraft carriers, Portsmouth Harbour 144–5w
Alcoholic drinks, Measurement 1376w
Armed forces, Dependants 1308–9w
Armed forces, Insurance 1306w
Armed forces, Pensions 4w
BOWMAN combat radio system 337w, 449–50
Local government, Complaints 464w
Local Government Act 1974, Human rights 503–4w
Meat, Inspections 1101w

***Kelly, Ruth**, Economic Secretary, Treasury*
Debates etc.
Economic policy (16.07.01) 105–9, 126–7
European Communities (Finance) Bill, Programme motion and Com (19.07.01) 461, 466, 470–1, 480–3
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 3R (18.10.01) 1326–8, 1334, 1345–8
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Credit unions (18.07.01) 86–9wh
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 255–8wh
Questions
Annuities 423–4, 865w
Aviation, Treasury 866w
Balance of payments 852w
Balance of trade 845w
Bank services 377w
Bank services, Disadvantaged 862w
Buildings, Treasury 854w, 864–6w
Bureaux de change 862w
Business, Investment 851w
Census 23w
Census, Bromley 1213–4w
Child Trust Fund 374–5w, 835–6w
Cost effectiveness, Treasury 24w
Credit unions 375w
Death, Weather 843w
Deep vein thrombosis 839–40w
Dept for National Savings 383w
Domestic service 843–4w
EC budget 21w
Economic and monetary union 25w, 381w, 847–8w
Economic and monetary union, Exchange rates 561w
Economic situation, USA 377w
Elderly 574w
Electronic publishing, Treasury 572w
Endowment mortgages 23–4w
Equal opportunities 378w
Equitable Life Assurance Society 25w, 385w, 850–1w, 1261–2w
Equitable Life Independent Inquiry 850–1w
Financial institutions 572w
Financial institutions, Regulation 859–60w
Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 574–5w
Financial Services Authority 380–1w

***Kelly, Ruth**—continued*
Financial Services Authority, Directors 380w
Gold and foreign exchange reserves 569w
Health, International cooperation 378w
Independent Insurance 328w, 379–80w, 835w
Individual savings accounts 836w
Industrial diseases, Compensation 181–2w
Inflation 562w
Insurance 557–8w
Insurance, Floods 860w
Insurance, Terrorism 860w
Insurance companies 1262w
Interest rates 376w
Investment trusts 1258w
Life expectancy 385–6w
London Underground, Treasury 558w
Manpower, Treasury 868w
Manufacturing industries 183w
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 841–3w
Members, Personal records 561w
Migration 839–42w
New businesses, Females 852–3w
New deal schemes 375w
Office for National Statistics, Annual reports 383w
Pay, Treasury 846w, 1259w
Pensioners 1257–8w
Pensions 574w
Personal Investment Authority 23w
Personal pensions, Misrepresentation 557w
Personal savings 845w
Population, Females 866–7w
Proceeds of crime 385w, 844–5w
Proceeds of crime, Banks 385w
Prostate cancer 427–8w
Provident societies 24–6w
Public relations, Treasury 563–4w, 1259w
Registrar General, Departmental responsibilities 386–7w
Retirement, Treasury 848w
Select committees, Treasury 865w
Sick leave, Treasury 562–3w
Stakeholder pensions 867–8w
Stamp duties 837w
Stamp duties, Property transfer 837w
Statistics 558–9w
Statistics Commission, Annual reports 213w
Stocks and shares 212w
Strokes, Death rate 213w
Tax allowances, Film 214w
Teenage pregnancy 386w
Terrorism 861w
Terrorism, Finance 861w, 1212w
Treasury Select Committee 1264w
UK Debt Management Office, Annual reports 212w
Written questions, Treasury 561w

Kennedy, Rt Hon Charles
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 680–1, (08.10.01) 816–7
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 609–10
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 1164–5
London Underground, Public private partnerships 282–3
Low flying, Wind power 331w

***Kennedy, Jane**, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office*
Debates etc.
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 484–5, 498, 502–5
Questions
Adair, Johnny 482w

***Kennedy, Jane**—continued*
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 311–2w, 479–80w
Civil disorder, Belfast 163–5w
Construction, Northern Ireland Office 998–1000w
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 275–7
Drug seizures, Northern Ireland 482–3w
Firearms, Northern Ireland 481w
HM Inspectors of Explosives for Northern Ireland 998w
Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland 314–5w
Information technology, Northern Ireland Office 162–4w
Manpower, Northern Ireland Office 1360–1w
Northern Ireland government 479w
Northern Ireland Policing Board 481w, 1147–9w
Notarantonio, Francisco 480–1w
Oversight Commissioner 481–2w
Oversight Commissioner, Annual reports 1147w
Pay, Northern Ireland Office 1360w
Police, Northern Ireland 163w, 216w, 218–9w, 479w
Police custody, Northern Ireland 165w
Police Fund (Northern Ireland) 162w
Prisoners, Northern Ireland 311w
Probation Board for Northern Ireland, Annual reports 483–4w, 1147w
Prosecutions, Northern Ireland 311w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland Office 1360w
Retirement, Northern Ireland Office 997w
Riot control weapons, Northern Ireland 480w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Annual reports 311w
Terrorism, Belfast 483w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 218w, 997–8w

Kennedy Inquiry
see Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry

Kent
Sewers 1081w

Kenya
Military bases 2–4w, 143–4w, 211w, (18.07.01) 393–401, 706w

Key, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Terrorism (15.10.01) 933–4
Questions
Alternative energy 1152w
Antisocial behaviour orders, Wiltshire 1206w
Apache AH-64 helicopter 951w
Armed forces, Housing 938–41w
Army 4w
Boscombe Down, Roads 941w
Challenger tanks, Salisbury Plain 8w, 959w
Crime and disorder partnerships, Wiltshire 1206w
Dolphin Telecommunications, Wiltshire 984w
Future large aircraft 5w
Magistrates' courts, Wiltshire 1025w
Natural gas 1159w
Natural gas, Imports 1158–9w
Porton Down, Human experiments 935w
QINETIQ 6w
RAF Chilmark 951–2w

Khabra, Mr Piara S
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 719–20
Questions
Pakistan, Terrorism 1169–70

Kidderminster Hospital
Surgery 738–9w

Kidnapping
Children 637–8w
Israel 486–7w
Palestinians 122–3w

Kidney, Mr David
Questions
Alternative dispute resolution 1023w
Arbitration 1023–4w
Aviation, Health hazards 1365w
Business questions 1321
Cannabis, Medical treatments 1345–6w
Conveyancing, Public records 532–3w
Courts, Witnesses 157w
Crops, Advisory bodies 1268w
Deep vein thrombosis 839–40w
Egypt, Christianity 259–60w
Elderly, Accidents 1345w
Empty property 202–3w
Health education, Nutrition 721w
Hedges and ditches 884w
Holiday play schemes 54w
Institutional care, Fees and charges 113–4w
Planning, Disclosure of information 533w
Plant power 1273–4w
Pre-school education, Staffordshire 408w
Social security benefits, Australia 64w
West coast railway line 1364w

Kidney patients
Medical treatments 1045–6w

Kilfoyle, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 684, (16.10.01) 1102–4
Questions
Customs and Excise, Disciplinary proceedings 558w
Diabetes, Screening 222w

King, Andy
Questions
Care trusts 1120–1w
Laos 495w
Nadia, Naira 258w
Pakistan, Christianity 258w
Pakistan, Prisoners 258w

King, Ms Oona
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 791–3, 804, (16.10.01) 1061
Questions
Diabetes 1046w
Entry clearances 1298w
Jordan, Human rights 1381w
Refugees, HIV infection 1395–6w
Utilities, Direct selling 1278–9w
War graves, Wrecks 1309w

King Committee
see Intelligence and Security Committee

Kingston upon Hull
SMART awards 1279–80w

Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Debates etc.
Security, Points of order (16.10.01) 1052
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1058
Questions
MMR vaccine 720–1w
Motor vehicles, EC action 267–8w
Stakeholder pensions 829w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 219w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Questions
Economic situation, Borders region 564–6w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy—continued
Fish, Conservation 1083–4w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1306
House of Commons, Waste disposal 155w
Jobcentres 903–4
Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards 155w, 1285w
Unemployment, Borders region 565–6w

Knight, Rt Hon Greg
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1365, 1381–5, 1394, 1403
Rolls-Royce, Points of order (19.10.01) 1359
Questions
Road traffic control 16–7w
Roads, Construction 192w
Standard spending assessments, Elderly 547w

Knight, Jim
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 875–8

Knowledge network project
43w

Knowsley
Magistrates 453–4w

Kosovo
Agriculture 478w
Arms trade 1298–9w
Overseas aid 902w
Uranium 141w

Kumar, Dr Ashok
Debates etc.
Alcoholic drinks, Licensing (20.07.01) 566–8
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Cleveland Constabulary, Inquiries (18.07.01) 112–5wh, 118wh
Questions
Medicine, Education 784w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 448w
Race relations 643w

Labelling
Food 70w, 224w, 232w, 1074w

Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 234, (18.07.01) 361, 377–9
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1185, 1188, 1196, 1219, 1233–6, 1240
Questions
Ministerial policy advisors 467w
Pharmaceutical Industry Competitiveness Task Force 222w

Laing, Mrs Eleanor
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 970
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 324wh, 342–5wh
Questions
Fuels, Scotland 142

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Questions
Air traffic control, Prestwick 884–5w, 1295w
Athletics 1378w
Pensions 687w

Lamb, Norman
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Wright, Lauren (16.10.01) 225–6wh

Lamb, Norman—continued
Questions
Council tax, Second homes 899w
Dental services 1346–7w
Natural gas 1159–60w
Tyres, Waste disposal 635–6w, 1073w

Lammy, David
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 869–70

Lanarkshire
Derelict land 149w

Lancashire
Driving offences 644w
Foot and mouth disease 1102w, 1113w
Health authorities 1122w
Housing 192w
Inland waterways 627w
Police 128w
Sewers 1061w
Speed limits 280w

Lancashire Constabulary
Emergency calls 666w

Land
NHS 1347–8w

Land use
Departmental responsibilities 1047w

Landfill tax
1080–1w
Tax yields 1118w

Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
Questions
192–3w

Landlords
Rents 382w

Languages
Qualifications 987w

Lansley, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 971
Questions
Health services, Greater London 1034
Hinduja Group, Millennium Exhibition 468w

Laos
495w

Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses, Points of order (16.07.01) 21
Questions
Biotechnology, Teaching aids 249w
EC Finance Council 383–4w
Excise duties, Fraud 384w
Genetically modified organisms, Crops 1065–7w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 1252–3w
Pensions 574w
Property transfer, Ministry of Defence 716w
Statistics Commission, Annual reports 213w

Laws, Mr David
Debates etc.
Dental services, Somerset (17.10.01) 1275–7, 1281
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 455
Children, Poverty 694w
Class sizes 778–9w
Disability living allowance 59–60w
Economic and monetary union 25w
Education, Finance 776w
Government, Annual reports 206w

Laws, Mr David—continued
Incapacity benefit 62–3w, 176w
National Air Traffic Services, Public private partnerships 886w
NHS, Finance 737w
NHS, Manpower 737w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 701w
Police, Manpower 798w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Education and Skills 780–2w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1073–4w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 547–9w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Work and Pensions 693w
Private finance initiative, Dept of Trade and Industry 607–8w
Private finance initiative, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 495–6w
Private finance initiative, Home Office 903w
Private finance initiative, Ministry of Defence 718w
Private finance initiative, Treasury 560w
Public expenditure 574w
Select committees 469–70w
Students, Fees and charges 29w
Surveillance, Expenditure 20–1w
Teachers, Pay 768w, 775–6w
VAT, Food 852w

Laxton, Mr Bob
Questions
Stillman, Ian 121w

Lazarowicz, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Employee Share Schemes Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 306
Questions
Bank services, Competition 847w
Forest products, Imports 984–5w
Inland Revenue, Standards 849w
New businesses, Females 852–3w
Stakeholder pensions 829w

Leader of the House of Commons
London Underground 215w

Leader of the Opposition
1001w

Learning and Skills Council for England
774–5w

Learning disability
Sexual offences 1393w

Leasehold
Insurance 192–3w, 205w

Leeds
Industrial diseases 1162w

Legal profession
Armed forces 960–1w
Clothing 156–7w
Self-regulation 156w

Legal representation
Refugees 144–5

Legalisation of Cannabis Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 307

Leigh
Pensioners 302w
Working families tax credit 214w

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 830
Questions
Teachers, Recruitment 766w

Leigh on Sea
Fisheries 1299–300

Leisure facilities
Private finance initiative 96w

Lepper, Mr David
Questions
Medicines Commission, Annual reports 733–4w
Tipping of waste 1284

Leslie, Mr Christopher, Parliamentary Secretary Cabinet Office
Questions
Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission 456–7w
Aviation, Cabinet Office 1006–7w
Civil servants, Political activities 457w
Civil servants, Recruitment 1220w
Civil service 1359w
Construction, Cabinet Office 462w, 1003–4w
Correspondence, Cabinet Office 1005–6w
Departmental responsibilities, Cabinet Office 304w, 461w, 789–90w
Duchy of Lancaster, Farms 1005w
Electronic government 306w, 790w
Government departments, Codes of practice 455w
Government departments, Correspondence 174w
Government departments, Information technology 305–6w, 790w
Government departments, Opposition 458w
Government departments, Standards 454–6w, 461w
Green Ministers Committee, Cabinet Office 304–5w, 790w
Information technology, Cabinet Office 461w
Knowledge network project 43w
Local government, Complaints 464w
Magistrates 452–3w
Magistrates, Merseyside 452w
Magistrates, Political activities 452w
Magistrates, St Helens 453–4w
Manpower, Cabinet Office 1007–12w
Non-departmental public bodies 457w
Ombudsman 464–5w
Pay, Cabinet Office 1006w, 1359w
People's panel 462–4w
Public bodies 1359w
Public relations, Cabinet Office 458w
Regulatory impact assessments 457–8w
Regulatory impact assessments, Departmental coordination 465w
Retirement, Cabinet Office 1011–2w
Task forces 459–60w
Work permits, Trinidad and Tobago 304w, 789w

Letwin, Mr Oliver
Debates etc.
Economic policy (16.07.01) 109–19, 121–2, 126
Terrorism (15.10.01) 925–7

Levitt, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 694, (15.10.01) 935, (16.10.01) 1137
Questions
NHS Direct 731w
World War II, Prisoners of war 332w

Levy, Lord
486w

Lewes
Railways 9w

Lewis, Mr Ivan, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept for Education and Skills
Questions
Aviation, Dept for Education and Skills 989w
Connexions Service 769–70w
Connexions Service, Identity cards 256w
Connexions Service, Pay 770w
Construction, Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Correspondence, Dept for Education and Skills 1184–6w
Curriculum 989w
Education, Assessments 251–2w
Educational maintenance allowance 770w, 772w
Further education 762w
GCE AS level 1185–6w
General certificate of secondary education 1188–9w, 1291w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for Education and Skills 243w
Health education, Bedfordshire 248w
Languages, Qualifications 987w
London Underground, Dept for Education and Skills 239w
Neighbourhood Support Fund 1187–8w
Public relations, Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Queen Elizabeth II, Anniversaries 1190w
Recess, Dept for Education and Skills 758w
School leaving certificates 768w
Schools, Security 1232–3w
Schools, Standards 1392w
Schools, Transport 409w
Sick leave, Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Sixth form education 1231w
Sixth form education, Bedfordshire 248w
Sixth form education, Curriculum 1180w
Sixth form education, Finance 136w, 768–9w, 992w
Sixth form education, Hackney 1385w
Sixth form education, Student numbers 987w
Specialist schools, Standards 1385w
Standards and Effectiveness Unit 28w
Vocational education 770w
Vocational education, GCE A level 768w

Lewis, Dr Julian
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 159, 168
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1173, 1176, 1213
Terrorism (14.09.01) 637–9, (04.10.01) 700–1, (16.10.01) 1069, 1100–1
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 455–6
Business questions 443–4
Carers, Social security benefits 824w
Carers' allowance 914
Courts, Restraint equipment 157w
Foot and mouth disease 1214w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1216w
Foot and mouth disease, Scotland 135–6
Foot and mouth disease, Small businesses 1266w
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 51w, 810–1w
National Lottery 12–3

Lewis, Dr Julian—continued
Tax burden, Business 417–8
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 271–2
Tourism, Academic year 811–2w
Tourism, Departmental responsibilities 820w

Liability
Water companies 1062w

Libraries
National Lottery 57w

Licensing laws
51w, 1380w

Liddell, Rt Hon Mrs Helen, Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Air routes, Scotland 150w
Air traffic control, Prestwick 1295w
Construction, Scotland Office 1255–6w
Diplomatic service, Scotland 150w
Driving offences, Scotland 411w
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 137–40, 152w
Fish farming, Wastes 1271w
Foot and mouth disease, Scotland 152w, 411w
Fuels, Scotland 140–2
Information technology, Scotland Office 153w
London Underground, Scotland Office 411w
Members, Scotland 1296w
Oil, Scotland 149w
Public expenditure, Scotland 153w
Public relations, Scotland Office 465–6w
Recess, Scotland Office 412w
Retirement, Scotland Office 1256w
Sick leave, Scotland Office 466w

Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Patents Act 1977 (Amendment) Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 306

Lidington, Mr David
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Community relations, Urban areas (17.07.01) 16–9wh
Young offenders (19.07.01) 139wh, 143–9wh
Questions
Airport tax 856–7w
Cancer, Waiting lists 719w
Central Railway 886w
Civil disorder, Bradford 1200–1w
Criminal Records Bureau 671–3w
Customs and Excise, Terrorism 857–8w
Illegal immigrants, Channel tunnel 677–9w
Immigration officers, France 682w
NHS, Private finance initiative 1034w
Passports 356w, 645–6w
Passports, Administrative delays 354w, 357w
Passports, Applications 356–7w
Passports, Fraud 355w, 645–6w
Personal records, Databases 908–9w
RAF Halton 334–5w
Refugees 658w
Refugees, Employment 1324w
Social services, Standard spending assessments 1033–4w
Travelling people 926–7w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 1309–10w
Travelling people, Trespass 926w
United Kingdom Passport Agency 355w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Databases 354w, 357w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Finance 355–6w

Lidington, Mr David—continued
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Fraud 354–5w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Telephone services 354w
VAT, Climate change levy 849w

Life expectancy
385–6w

Life imprisonment
903–5w

Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Acquittals 1019–20w
Bellwin scheme, Hertfordshire 100–1w
Criminal proceedings, Administrative delays 1019w
Maternity services 1038–9
Trials 1020w

Lincolnshire
Local government 361w

Liskeard
Hospitals 221w

Listed buildings
Colchester 553w

Litter
Community service orders 682w
Prosecutions 1275w

Liverpool
Refugees 1394w
Wired up communities initiative 255w

Livestock
Diseases 1080w
Exports 1077w
Prices 1088w
Somerset 1219w
Transport 1085w, 1092w, 1219–20w, 1267w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 692, 726–8
Questions
Excellence in cities 778w
Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Annual reports 423–4w

Llwyd, Mr Elfyn
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 640–2, (08.10.01) 821
Questions
Housing, Wales 1152

Local authorities
Business 1376w
Debts 898–9w

Local exchange and trading schemes
Social security benefits 1302w

Local government
360w
Complaints 464w
Cornwall 361w
Cumbria 361w
Disclosure of information 555w
Hampshire 361w
Lincolnshire 361w
Reform 303–4w, 789w, 1319w
Swale 97–8w
Yorkshire and Humberside 360w

Local Government Act 1974
Questions
Human rights 503–4w

Local Government Act 1988
Questions
873w

Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Questions
10–1w

Local Government Commission for England
100w

Local government finance
(17.07.01) 261–2, 362w, 504w, 556w, 611–2w, 1165–6, 1173w
Havering 551–2w
Isle of Wight 1174–5w, 1313–4w
Oxfordshire 546–7w
Wiltshire 525–8w

Location
Prisoners 660w

London
see Greater London

London City Airport
Docklands light railway line 15w

London Rough Sleepers Unit
see Rough Sleepers Unit

London Transport
Finance 531w

London Underground
195–7w, (17.10.01) 259–80wh, (20.07.01) 529–32, 873w
Administrative delays 370–2w
Cabinet Office 457w
Crimes of violence 368–9w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 56w
Dept for Education and Skills 239w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1059w
Dept for International Development 189w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 86–7w
Dept for Work and Pensions 65w
Dept of Health 721–2w
Dept of Trade and Industry 107w
Escalators 529–30w
Finance 9–10w, 199–200w, 368w, 527–8w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 122w
Leader of the House of Commons 215w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 159w
Manpower 364–7w, 530w
Ministry of Defence 144w
Northern Ireland Office 313w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 124w
Prime Minister 102–3w
Public private partnerships 87w, 279, 282–3, 528w, 1169–70w
Railway signals 365–6w
Scotland Office 411w
Sick leave 364w
Standards 198w, 364–70w, 527–8w, 530–1w, 1169w
Treasury 558w

Long Lartin Prison
927w

Lorazepam
1356–7w

Lord Chancellor's Dept
Buildings 790–2w, 1012–6w
Construction 1021–3w
Correspondence 1026–7w
Information officers 1021w
Information technology 160–2w
London Underground 159w
Manpower 1018w
Ministerial policy advisors 1021w
Parliamentary questions 1026–7w
Pay 1015–7w
Public expenditure 1019w
Public relations 787w, 1020w

Lord Chancellor's Dept—continued
Recess 786–7w
Retirement 1025–6w

Lorries
Fuels 549w
Licensing 85–6w
Road traffic control 86w, 917w

Loughton, Tim
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Carers (16.10.01) 183–7wh
Questions
Antisocial behaviour orders, Sussex 795w, 1206–7w
Bus services 886w
Cancer, Waiting lists 1041w
Community investment tax credit 576w
Compulsory purchase 549w
Crime, Firearms 1323w
Doctors, Manpower 1348w
Excise duties, Motor vehicles 858w
Fuels, Buses 549w
Fuels, Lorries 549w
General practitioners 1042–4w
General practitioners, Recruitment 1045–6
Hospital beds 1122w
Hospitals, Waiting lists 1043–5w
India 549w
Institutional care 1037w, 1343w
Jet skis, Accidents 886–7w
Medical treatments, EC countries 1041–2w
Negligence 1039–40w
NHS, Catering 1040–1w
NHS, Combined heat and power 1242w
NHS, Debts 1038w
NHS, Energy 1349w
NHS, Finance 1039w
NHS, Land 1347–8w
NHS, Private finance initiative 1038–40w
NHS trusts, Standards 1040w
Out-patients, Attendance 1038w
Prisoners of war, Compensation 959w
Radiotherapy 1241–2w
Radiotherapy, Medical equipment 1241w
Regional assistance 550w
Regional development agencies 985w
Regional development agencies, Manpower 608w
Regional planning and development, Bradford 579–80w
Stamp duties 564w
Stamp duties, Property transfer 837w
Starter home initiative 887–8w
Starter home initiative, NHS 1367–8w
Tax burden, Trade competitiveness 371–2w

Love, Mr Andrew
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Credit unions (18.07.01) 77–80wh, 89wh
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 36wh
Questions
Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, Annual reports 321w
Burundi, War crimes 120w
Embassies, Pay 145w, 485w
Employment schemes 823w
Rwanda, War crimes 120–1w
Tipping of waste 1283–4

Low flying
138w
Wind power 40w, 331w

Low Pay Commission
1160–1w

Lucas, Ian
Questions
Conditional fee agreements, Personal injury 158w
Mozambique, English language 26–7w

Lucas, Ian—continued
Recycling 286, 1286–7
Young offenders, Wales 1253w

Luce Bay
Ammunition 956–7w
Fisheries 956–7w

Luff, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (16.10.01) 1039
Questions
Business Recovery Fund, Worcestershire 397–8w
Cotswold and Malvern railway line 9w
Digital broadcasting, Worcestershire 745–6w
Education, Worcestershire 1232w
Exports, Pakistan 981w
Flood control, Finance 170–1w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 388w, 1102–4w
Foot and mouth disease, Inquiries 1249w
Foot and mouth disease, Public footpaths 168–9w
Foot and mouth disease, Public inquiries 820w, 1249w
Foot and mouth disease, Throckmorton airfield 1214–5w
Foot and mouth disease, Worcestershire 1054w, 1115w
Health authorities 116w
Hospital beds, Worcestershire 732w, 1349w
Inland waterways, Droitwich 627–8w
Integrated administration and control system 1084–5w
Long Lartin Prison 927w
M5, Road works 533–4w
Market town initiative, Evesham 635w
Mongolia, Overseas aid 477–8w
Moore, Jo 1165
Performing arts, Student numbers 762w
Police custody 1207w
Railways, Freight 88w
Social services, Worcestershire 731–2w
Taxation, Pesticides 569w
Theatre, Finance 812w
Throckmorton airfield 142w
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust 229w

Luke, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1247, 1257–9
Questions
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 139

Luton
Abandoned vehicles 292w

Lyons, Mr John
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Carers (16.10.01) 180–1wh
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 456
Older workers 828w
Winter fuel payments, Scotland 150w

M5
Noise 544–5w
Road works 533–4w

M6
Road works 525w

M11
536w

M25
Road works 98–9w

McCabe, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 304
Terrorism (08.10.01) 824
Questions
Climate Change Convention 446
Heart diseases, Transplant surgery 1242w
Northern Ireland government 278

McCartney, Rt Hon Ian, Minister for Pensions, Department for Work and Pensions
Debates etc.
Pensions (16.10.01) 1145–50
Questions
Annuities 700–1w
Construction, Dept for Work and Pensions 703–4w
Information technology, Dept for Work and Pensions 179–80w, 689–90w
Institutional care, Income support 833w
Invalid care allowances 301w, 420w
Occupational pensions 414w
Pension credit 65–6w
Pension funds 1211w
Pension funds, Surpluses 833–4w
Pension rights, Widowed people 699w
Pensioners 1210w
Pensioners, Income support 60–1w, 65w, 302w, 700w, 829–30w, 1209w
Pensioners, Romford 699w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 65w, 701w, 826–7w, 912–3, 918–20
Pensions 414–5w, 578–9w, 687w, 697w
Press releases, Dept for Work and Pensions 698w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Work and Pensions 692–3w
Recess, Dept for Work and Pensions 302w
Sick leave, Dept for Work and Pensions 694–5w
Social security benefits 830w
Social security benefits, Australia 64w
Social security benefits, Automated credit transfer 825w
Social Security Contributions Agency, Computers 684–5w
Stakeholder pensions 63–4w, 829w, 1383w
Stakeholder pensions, Annuities 701w
State earnings related pension scheme 685w
State earnings related pension scheme, Eligibility 685w
State retirement pensions 180w, 301w, 703w
State retirement pensions, Administrative delays 420w
State retirement pensions, Patients 65w
State second pension 180–1w
Winter fuel payments 419–20w, 826–7w, 1301w

McDonagh, Ms Siobhain
Questions
New deal schemes 375w
Post offices, Greater London 267w
Railways, Safety 97w
Sports, Young people 315–6w

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1106–8
Questions
Dounreay, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 271–2w
Fuels, Scotland 140

McDonnell, John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 372–4
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 494–5
Race relations, Sikhs (16.07.01) 128–31, 133
Terrorism (08.10.01) 881–3
Questions
Air traffic control 885w
Air traffic control, Prestwick 885w
Business questions 438, 1318
Council housing, Greater London 888w
Football 1286–7w
Health services, Greater London 1034
Heathrow Airport, Detention centres 654w
National Air Traffic Services, Public private partnerships 86w, 1171w
Nurses, Grants 228–9w
Nurses, Training 115–6w
Road works 12w
Swanwick Air Traffic Control Centre 888w
Tipping of waste 291w

Macedonia
EC aid 121–2w

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 819, (15.10.01) 946
Questions
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 137
Income tax, Pensioners 423
Treasury Select Committee 1264w

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Questions
Northern Ireland government 1165
Sellafield, Mixed oxide fuel 291–2w

McGuire, Mrs Anne, Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 354

McIntosh, Miss Anne
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 966
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1066, 1139
Questions
Air routes, Auctions 534w
Bellwin scheme, North Yorkshire 289–90w
Business questions 444–5, 1322
Bypasses 535w
Bypasses, Construction 535w
Church Commissioners, Property 26w
Civil servants, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1093w
Clergy, Conditions of employment 16
Climate change levy 426–7
Crime, North Yorkshire 1207w
Development plans 889w
Electric cables 1220w
Electric cables, Health hazards 222–3w, 594–5w
Electric cables, North Yorkshire 593–4w
Employment 907
Energy 586–7w
European Convention on Human Rights, Road traffic offences 153–4w
Film 1287w
Film, EC countries 1143w
Film, EC grants and loans 1287w
Flood control, Vale of York 630–1w, 1297–8
Flood control, Yorkshire and Humberside 630w

McIntosh, Miss Anne—continued
Food, Health hazards 1093–4w
Foot and mouth disease 1104w
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 617w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 393w, 615–6w, 1099w, 1101w, 1103w, 1110w, 1248w, 1266w
Foot and mouth disease, Manpower 1115–6w
Foot and mouth disease, Pigs 617w
Foot and mouth disease, Public inquiries 1110w
Foot and mouth disease, Scotland 152w
Foot and mouth disease, Yorkshire and Humberside 1110–1w
Free trade 478w, 594w
Fybromyalgia 1034w
Hedgerows Regulations 1997 169w
Hospital beds, North Yorkshire 1349–50w
Nursing and Midwifery Council 731w
Police, North Yorkshire 666–7w
RAF Fylingdales 941w
Refugees, Arab states 1238w
Sports, Tax allowances 79w, 215w
State Veterinary Service, Manpower 172–3w
Terrorism 962w
Terrorism, International cooperation 972–4w
Trade agreements 477w, 596w
Trade agreements, Agriculture 595w
"Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Review, 2000/01" 927w

McIsaac, Shona
Questions
Antarctic Treaty 490w
Audit, Annual reports 322w
Crown Prosecution Service, Annual reports 315w
Serious Fraud Office, Annual reports 315w

MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 967
Terrorism (04.10.01) 710–1, (15.10.01) 946
Questions
Business questions 1316–7
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 274

McKechin, Ann
Questions
Defence Intelligence and Security Centre, Reviews 710w
General Agreement on Trade in Services 1279w

McKenna, Mrs Rosemary
Questions
Air routes, Scotland 150w

Mackinlay, Andrew
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (18.10.01) 1312
Select committees (16.07.01) 48
Terrorism (14.09.01) 651–2, 666
Questions
Argentina 821w
Armed forces, Pensions 941w
Bermuda Regiment 257w
Business questions 441–2
Dioxins 1075w
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 821w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 1099w
Group of Eight, Genoa Summit 820–1w
Incinerators, Dioxins 633–4w, 1057–8w
Members, Conditions of employment 155w
National Lottery, Thurrock 8

Mackinlay, Andrew—continued
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Correspondence 1230–1w
Parliament, Reform 288–9w
Peers 103–4w
Teachers, Codes of practice 407–8w
Waste disposal 1075–6w

Maclean, Rt Hon David
Questions
A11 524–5w
A69, Road works 525w
Agriculture, Census 173w
Contracts, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1055w, 1104w
Death, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 614w
Farms 1077–8w
Foot and mouth disease 389w, 615w, 998w, 1100–2w
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 167w, 390–2w, 616w, 1111w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 166–7w, 387–8w, 614–6w, 1098–9w, 1104w, 1109w, 1111–2w, 1217w
Foot and mouth disease, Deer 166w, 1105–6w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 166–8w, 388–92w, 612–4w, 1059w, 1103–4w, 1106–9w, 1111w, 1216w, 1248w
Foot and mouth disease, Northumberland 391w
Foot and mouth disease, Scotland 411w
Foot and mouth disease, Sheep 614w
Foot and mouth disease, Veterinary services 394–5w, 1109w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 389w, 392w, 613w, 1109–10w
Foot and mouth disease, Wild animals 390w
Helicopters, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1055w
Institutional care, Cumbria 446w
Internet, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1077w
Levy, Lord 486w
Livestock, Diseases 1080w
M6, Road works 525w
Meat, Smuggling 1080w
Military aid 333w
Multiple sclerosis, Cannabis 727w
North Wales Police 1195w
Nurses, Vacancies 438–9w
Pennine Way 1098w
Pig diseases 1056w
Planning, Cumbria 1248w
Post offices, Standards 35w
Public relations, Cabinet Office 458w
Public relations, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 742–6w
Public relations, Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Public relations, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1077w
Public relations, Dept for International Development 478–9w
Public relations, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 525w
Public relations, Dept for Work and Pensions 695w
Public relations, Dept of Health 727w
Public relations, Dept of Trade and Industry 591w
Public relations, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 486w
Public relations, Lord Chancellor's Dept 787w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 965w

Maclean, Rt Hon David*—*continued
Public relations, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 470w
Public relations, Scotland Office 465–6w
Public relations, Treasury 563–4w
Racial violence, Gloucester 667w
Recess, Cabinet Office 304w, 789w
Recess, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741–2w
Recess, Dept for Education and Skills 758w
Recess, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 297w
Recess, Dept for International Development 478w
Recess, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 205w
Recess, Dept for Work and Pensions 302w
Recess, Dept of Health 727w
Recess, Dept of Trade and Industry 271w
Recess, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 262w
Recess, Home Office 345w
Recess, Lord Chancellor's Dept 786–7w
Recess, Ministry of Defence 211–2w
Recess, Northern Ireland Office 315w
Recess, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 471w
Recess, Scotland Office 412w
Sick leave, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 806–7w
Sick leave, Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Sick leave, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1078–80w
Sick leave, Dept for International Development 474–5w
Sick leave, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 525w
Sick leave, Dept for Work and Pensions 694–5w
Sick leave, Dept of Health 439w
Sick leave, Dept of Trade and Industry 588w
Sick leave, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 491w
Sick leave, Ministry of Defence 708w
Sick leave, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 470–1w
Sick leave, Scotland Office 466w
Sick leave, Treasury 562–3w
Temple Sowerby bypass 524w
Train operating companies, Prosecutions 508w
VAT, Climate change levy 849w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Business questions (16.07.01) 91
Ministers, Points of order (16.10.01) 1052
Questions
Business questions 433–4
Members, Correspondence 889w, 1030w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 46, 55, 64
Questions
Adair, Johnny 482w
Administration of justice, Northern Ireland 314w
Armed forces, Death 947–8w
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 311–2w, 479–80w
Civil disorder, Belfast 163–5w
Defence equipment 1370w
Education action zones 245–7w
Firearms, Northern Ireland 481w
Fisheries, Compensation 599w
Further education, Pay 136w
Helicopters, Northern Ireland 949–50w
McNamara, Mr Kevin*—*continued
HM Inspectors of Explosives for Northern Ireland 998w
Holloway Prison, Body searches 928–9w
Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland 314–5w
Individual learning accounts 404–5w
Military aircraft 948–9w
Miscarriages of justice, Compensation 927–8w
Notarantonio, Francisco 480–1w
Ordnance Board, Disclosure of information 1141w
Oversight Commissioner 481–2w
Personal pensions, Misrepresentation 557w
Police custody, Northern Ireland 165w
Prosecutions, Northern Ireland 311w
Racially aggravated offences, Northern Ireland 314w
Refugees, Administrative delays 127w
Security Forces Collusion with Loyalist Terrorists Inquiry 953w
SMART awards, Kingston upon Hull 1279–80w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 273–4

McNulty, Mr Tony, Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (18.07.01) 282

MacShane, Mr Denis
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 226–30
Questions
Ashcroft, Lord 484w
BBC External Services 426w, 965w
Belize, Financial services 484w
Brazil 967w
Buildings, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1239w
China, Defence 44w
China, Falun Gong 426w
China, Foreign relations 424–6w, 491w
China, Furs 1382w
Colombia 494w
Colombia, Diplomatic service 494w
Construction, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 499w, 976–8w
Diplomatic immunity 425w
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 1149w
European Court of Human Rights 44–5w
Foreign investment in UK, Scotland 498w
Information technology, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 424w
Institute of Export 261–2w
Karadzic, Radovan 123–4w
Kosovo, Arms trade 1298–9w
Macedonia, EC aid 121–2w
Official visits 1300w
Official visits, Isle of Wight 1301w
Official visits, New Zealand 1300–1w
Private finance initiative, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 495–6w
Public expenditure, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1151w
Royal prerogative 967w
Tibet, Oil 492w
USA, Foreign trade 422w
Wilton Park, Standards 489–90w

Mactaggart, Fiona
Debates etc.
Race relations, Sikhs (16.07.01) 130, 133–4
Terrorism (15.10.01) 932
Mactaggart, Fiona*—*continued
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 453
Business questions 1312
Correspondence, Prime Minister 206w
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 496–7w
Entry clearances, Applications 487–9w
Entry clearances, Indian subcontinent 496w
Entry clearances, Ministerial powers 496w
Equal opportunities 378w
Health services, Disadvantaged 1123w
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission 217–8w
Overseas visitors 676–8w
Parliamentary scrutiny 152–3
Prison accommodation 132w
Public Trust Office, Annual reports 161w
Refugees, Appeals 145–6

McWalter, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Select committees (19.07.01) 516
Terrorism (15.10.01) 938
Questions
Business questions 432, 1323
Tipping of waste 1289–90

McWilliam, Mr John
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 35–40, 42
Questions
Intellectual Property Advisory Committee 1160w
Low Pay Commission 1160–1w

Magistrates
147, 452–3w, 1024–5w
Complaints 158w
Essex 1012w
Greater London 784w
Knowsley 453–4w
Merseyside 452w
Political activities 452w
Public appointments 159–60w
St Helens 453–4w

Magistrates' courts
146–7
Closures 147–8
Computers 161w
Wiltshire 1025w

Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 648–9
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 612
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Community relations, Urban areas (17.07.01) 12–4wh
Questions
Human rights, Northern Ireland 219w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 722–4, (15.10.01) 947
Questions
Business questions 434
Employment, Disadvantaged 827w

Maiden speeches
Baron, John (20.07.01) 538–41
Calton, Patsy (17.07.01) 183–6
Murrison, Andrew (17.07.01) 202–4
Picking, Anne (17.07.01) 200–2
Purnell, James (17.07.01) 180–3
Rosindell, Andrew (17.07.01) 177–80
Sheridan, Jim (19.07.01) 476–7
Simon, Sion (20.07.01) 536–8

Maintenance
Armed forces 1372w

Maintenance—continued
Children 1207–8w, 1302–3w, 1372w

Maize
Genetically modified organisms 319w, 1065w

Malaysia
Human rights 495w

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 772–3
Questions
M25, Road works 98–9w
Members, Correspondence 357w, 668w
Sports, Schools 9

Mallaber, Judy
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 328–31wh, 343wh
Questions
General practitioners, Recruitment 1046
Health, International cooperation 378w
Ombudsman 464–5w
Radioactive wastes 1292
Radioactive wastes, Derbyshire 1069–70w

Manchester
EC grants and loans 325w

Manchester Airport
Noise (17.07.01) 60–8wh

Manchester Prison
Telephone services 681–2w

Mandelson, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 626–8
Questions
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 276–7

Mann, John
Questions
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1267w
Sports, Schools 8–9

Manufacturing industries
183w
Caerphilly 1254w
Climate change levy 606–7w
Redundancy 841–3w
Regulation 32w
Rural areas 1277w
Wales 1159–60, 1252–3w

Maples, Mr John
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 688, 694

Marconi
Redundancy 262–3w, 580w

Marginal tax rates
571w

Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 305

Market town initiative
Chorley 635w
Evesham 635w

Marketing
Medical treatments 725–6w

Markets
Electricity generation 263–4w, 322w, 585–6w, 1157w
Farmers 869w
Foot and mouth disease 1250w

Marris, Rob
Debates etc.
Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries (19.07.01) 523–4

Marsden, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 660–1
Questions
Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage 804–6w

Marsden, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 823, (15.10.01) 935, (16.10.01) 1061, 1071
Terrorism, Points of order (08.10.01) 829
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 616
Questions
A40M, Road traffic control 1201w
Afghanistan, Heroin 1382w
Alternative energy 36–7w, 264–5w, 326–7w
Alternative energy, Standards 264w
Antisocial behaviour orders 650–2w
Customs and Excise, Shrewsbury 1259–60w
Kidney patients, Medical treatments 1045–6w
RAF Shawbury, Redundancy 1141w
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital 724w
Saunders, Stephen 258–9w
Shropshire Health Authority, Manpower 724w
Terrorism 962–4w

Marshall-Andrews, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 647, (08.10.01) 824, 834, (16.10.01) 1055, 1079, 1121–3

Martlew, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 969
Questions
Business questions 440
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1301–2
Low flying 138w

Mass media
Ownership 50w
Prime Minister 817w

Maternity services
1037–41
Midwives 1040

Mates, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 612

Maude, Rt Hon Francis
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1078–84

Mawhinney, Rt Hon Sir Brian
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 962
Select committees (16.07.01) 37
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 613
Questions
Members, Correspondence 399w, 669w, 1087w
Refugees, Peterborough 656–8w

May, Mrs Theresa
Questions
Buildings, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 1379w
Buildings, Dept for International Development 803w
Buildings, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1364w

May, Mrs Theresa—continued
Buildings, Dept of Trade and Industry 979w
Buildings, Government departments 850w
Buildings, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1014–6w
Buildings, Ministry of Defence 953w
Buildings, Regional assemblies 890w
Buildings, Solicitor-General 995w
Buildings, Treasury 864–6w
Connexions Service 769w
Connexions Service, Pay 770w
Homelessness 1226–7w
National homelessness strategy 890w
Public bodies 1359w
Schools 30w
Schools, Intimidation 410w
Sixth form education, Finance 768–9w
Sixth form education, Student numbers 769w
Standards and Effectiveness Unit 28w
Teachers, Training 410w
Teachers, Vacancies 775w

Meacher, Rt Hon Michael, Minister of State for the Environment, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
Questions
Abandoned vehicles, Stroud 1091–2w
Abandoned vehicles, Waste disposal 292w
Air pollution 621–2w
Air pollution, Gloucestershire 621–3w
Air pollution, Pollution control 620–1w
Alternative energy 623w
Alternative energy, Wastes 1068w
Areas of outstanding natural beauty, Motorcycles 1059w
Biosafety Protocol 629w
Birds, Conservation 1091–2w
British Nuclear Fuels 1059–60w
Butterflies 57–8w
Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, Annual reports 289w
Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, Standards 173w
Climate Change Convention 631w, 1060–2w, 1275–6w
Climate change levy 1048w
Combined heat and power 1081–2w, 1250w
Dioxins 1075w
Electronic equipment, Waste disposal 295w
Energy, Conservation 273w, 296–7w, 1250w
Environmental impact assessment 1083w
Food, Health hazards 1093–4w
Fuel poverty 619w
Genetically modified organisms 1063w
Genetically modified organisms, Antibiotics 629w
Genetically modified organisms, Crops 59w, 628–9w, 1064–7w
Genetically modified organisms, EC law 1067w
Genetically modified organisms, Fish 1067w
Genetically modified organisms, Maize 1065w
Genetically modified organisms, Soil 1063w
Green Ministers Committee 165w, 1082–4w
Greenhouse effect 1048–51w, 1062w
Greenhouse effect, Conferences 1047–8w
Ground water, Sheep dipping 611w
Hedges and ditches, Environment protection 1268w

Meacher, Rt Hon Michael—continued
Home energy efficiency scheme 631–4w, 1076w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Dorset 631–2w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Standards 1076–7w
Incinerators 620w, 1057–8w, 1068w, 1214w
Incinerators, Dioxins 633–4w, 1057–8w, 1068–9w, 1087–8w
Incinerators, Planning permission 1056–8w
Incinerators, Pollution control 1058w
Inland waterways 627w, 1273w
Inland waterways, Droitwich 627–8w
Inland waterways, Lancashire 627w
Integrated pollution control 620w
Joint Nature Conservation Committee 289w
Landfill tax 1080–1w
Litter, Prosecutions 1275w
Members, Correspondence 1087w
National Institute of Agricultural Botany 1064–5w
National parks 293w
Nuclear power 1097w
Packaging, Recycling 1268–9w
Peat, Environment protection 1217–8w
Plant power 1273–4w
Radioactive materials, Pollution control 291w
Radioactive wastes 1060w
Radioactive wastes, Derbyshire 293–5w, 1069–70w
Radioactive wastes, Pollution control 291w
Recycling 624–5w, 1053–4w, 1068w, 1286–8
Recycling, Motor vehicles 618–9w
Recycling, OECD countries 1051–2w
Reprotech 1090–1w
Sellafield, Mixed oxide fuel 291–2w, 1097w
Sewers 1061–2w
Sewers, Kent 1081w
Sewers, Lancashire 1061w
Sites of special scientific interest 620w
Sustainable development 58–9w
Tipping of waste 291w, 1089w, 1288–90
Tyres, Waste disposal 1073w
Waste and Resources Action programme, Finance 295–6w
Waste disposal 1075–6w
Waste disposal, Pitsea 292–3w, 624–6w
Waste management 58w, 1051w, 1068w
Waste management, Greater London 1070–3w
Waste management, Standards 619w
Water companies, Liability 1062w
Wetlands 1089–90w

Measurement
Alcoholic drinks 1376w

Meat
Inspections 1101w
Smuggling 1080w, 1096w

Meat Hygiene Service
Annual reports 238w

Meat products
Foot and mouth disease 1215w

Medical Devices Agency
Annual reports 427w

Medical equipment
Radiotherapy 1241w

Medical examinations
Incapacity benefit 416–7w
Police 641w

Medical laboratory scientific officers
Manpower 737–8w

Medical profession
Manpower 1125w
Recruitment 755w

Medical treatments
Cannabis 1345–6w
EC countries 1041–2w, 1240–1w
Kidney patients 1045–6w
Marketing 725–6w

Medicine
Education 784w
Research 235–6w

Medicines Commission
Annual reports 733–4w

Members
Conditions of employment 155w
Correspondence 357w, 383w, 399w, 451w, 668–9w, 693–4w, 889w, 1030w, 1087w, 1239w, 1362w
Information technology 150
Oaths and affirmations (14.09.01) 603
Personal records 561w
Scotland 1296w

Members' interests
Rulings and statements (19.07.01) 460

Membership
Biotechnology and Genetic Modification Ministerial Group 74w

Mental health
1027–8w, 1354w

Mental health services
Advocacy 220–1w
Finance 70w, 221w
Standards 221w

Mentally disturbed offenders
796w
Drugs 932w

Mentally ill
Drugs 442–5w, 1035–6w
Police custody 667w
Prisoners 666w

Mercenaries
422w

Mercer, Patrick
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 159, 174
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 501
Terrorism (04.10.01) 685, 756–7, (16.10.01) 1091, 1123–5
Questions
Social security benefits, Abuse 823w

Merchant Navy Day
Cabinet Office 458w

Mercury
Dental services 222w

Merron, Ms Gillian
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 971
Questions
Cancer, Health services 1124w
Immigration rules, Domestic service 1233–4w

Merseyside
Committal proceedings 157w
Magistrates 452w

Merton Sutton and Wandsworth Health Authority
Finance 430w

Meteor missiles
715w

Meteorology
956w

Metropolitan Police
Firearms 915–6w
Racial discrimination 652–3w
Surveillance 347w
Termination of employment 641–2w
Training 285

MI5
Equal opportunities 47–8w
Prosecutions 47w

Michael, Rt Hon Alun, Minister of State, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Hill farming, Northern region (18.07.01) 96wh, 103wh, 105–11wh
Questions
Agriculture, Environment protection 1265w
Business Recovery Fund, Worcestershire 397–8w
Farms, Diversification 1097w
Field sports 1098w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 387–8w, 1104w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 617–8w, 1104w, 1267w
Foot and mouth disease, Forest of Dean 1116w
Foot and mouth disease, Gloucestershire 1116–7w
Foot and mouth disease, Government assistance 1116–7w
Foot and mouth disease, Gun sports 1105w
Foot and mouth disease, Public footpaths 393–4w, 618w, 1266–7w
Foot and mouth disease, Small businesses 1266w
Foot and mouth disease, South West region 1116w
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 1265w
Foot and mouth disease, Worcestershire 1115w
Foot and Mouth Task Force 1271w
Hedgerows Regulations 1997 169w
Hunting 635w
Market town initiative, Chorley 635w
Market town initiative, Evesham 635w
Pennine Way 1098w
Regional planning and development 1267w
Rural areas, Bedfordshire 1267w
Rural areas, Cambridgeshire 1218w
Rural areas, Departmental responsibilities 1047w
Small businesses, Rural areas 1096w

Michelin Tyres
Standing Order no 24 applications (16.10.01) 1051

Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust
Waiting lists 118w, 1028w

Middle East
1297w
Peace negotiations 260–1w, 1160–1

Midwives
Maternity services 1040

Migration
839–42w

Milburn, Rt Hon Alan, Secretary of State for Health
Debates etc.
Adoption and Children Bill, 1R (19.10.01) 1360
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry, Ministerial statements (18.07.01) 289–304

Milburn, Rt Hon Alan—continued
Questions
Emergency services, Anthrax 1048–50
Emergency services, Warwick 1048
General Medical Council 1036
General Medical Council, Alternative medicine 1036–7
Heart diseases 1042–3
Heart diseases, Health services 1041–2
Medical treatments, EC countries 1041–2w, 1240–1w
NHS, Public private partnerships 1119w
North Staffordshire Hospital, Consent to medical treatment 1037

Miliband, Mr David
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1254–6

Military aid
333w
Foot and mouth disease 168w

Military aircraft
see also Low flying
708w, 948–9w
Iraq 492–3w
Repairs and maintenance 1308w

Military bases
Cyprus 7w
Kenya 2–4w, 143–4w, 211w, (18.07.01) 393–401, 706w

Military exercises
USA 7w, 956w

Milk
1090w

Milk Task Force
1217w

Millennium capital projects
National Lottery 52w

Millennium Commission
Finance 52–3w

Millennium Exhibition
52w, 80w, 193w, 200w, 500w
Hinduja Group 468w
National Lottery 52w
Property transfer 500–1w, 747w
Sponsorship 747–8w
VAT 56–7w

Millennium Experience
see New Millennium Experience

Miller, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Driving, Young people (19.10.01) 1408
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 169
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1212–6, 1223
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1364, 1368–9, 1371, 1388–92
Terrorism (08.10.01) 872–3, (15.10.01) 937
Questions
Aviation 359w
Employment, Disabled 908–9
Magistrates 147
Members, Information technology 150
Office of Communications 14
Parliamentary scrutiny 155w

Milton Keynes
Alcoholism 231–2w
Psychiatry 439–40w
Roads 892–3w
Transport 892w

Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 2001
Debates etc.
(18.10.01) 1349–52

Ministerial changes
287–8, 818w

Ministerial Group on Biotechnology and Genetic Modification
see Biotechnology and Genetic Modification Ministerial Group

Ministerial Group on Children and Young People's Services
see Children and Young People's Services Ministerial Group

Ministerial policy advisors
467w
Dept for International Development 1282–3w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 500w, 1312–3w
Dept of Health 1034–5w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 1021w
Prime Minister 818–9w, 1361–2w

Ministerial powers
Entry clearances 496w
Prime ministers 818w

Ministerial statements
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 289–304
Railtrack (15.10.01) 954–73
Terrorism (14.09.01) 604–16, (04.10.01) 671–88, (08.10.01) 811–29, (15.10.01) 923–39, 940–53

Ministers
Travel 467w
Visits abroad 467w

Ministry of Defence
Aviation 1139w
Buildings 953w, 960w
Construction 718w, 942w
Contracts 211w
Early retirement 708w
Green Ministers Committee 209–10w
Information technology 149w
London Underground 144w
Manpower 964w
Pay 959w
Private finance initiative 718w
Property 5w
Property transfer 716w
Public expenditure 959–60w
Public relations 965w
Recess 211–2w
Retirement 942–6w
Sick leave 708w

Ministry of Defence Police
RAF Menwith Hill 954w

Mirror Group Newspapers
602w

Miscarriages of justice
128w
Compensation 927–8w

Misrepresentation
Personal pensions 557w

Misuse
Alcoholic drinks 1355w
Drugs 349w, 568w, 916w, 1321–2w, 1341w, 1355w, 1397–8w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Questions
Private finance initiative, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Education and Skills 405–6w

Mitchell, Mr Austin—continued
Private finance initiative, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1073w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 96w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Work and Pensions 692–3w
Private finance initiative, Dept of Trade and Industry 268w
Private finance initiative, Home Office 349–50w
Treaty of Rome 423–4w

Mixed oxide fuel
Research 327w
Sellafield 291–2w, 469w, 1097w

Mladic, Ratko
123–4w

MMR vaccine
720–1w
Oxfordshire 721w

Mobile homes
893w

Mobile phones
see Cellular phones

Modernisation of the House of Commons Select Committee
(16.07.01) 88–9, (19.07.01) 520

Moffatt, Laura
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 806
Questions
Cancer 279–80
Electronic conveyancing 73w
NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency, Annual reports 427w
Regional airports, South East region 501w

Moles
Pest control 1056w

Mongolia
Overseas aid 477–8w

Moonie, Dr Lewis, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Ministry of Defence
Questions
Aerospace industry 1142w
Aircraft carriers, Portsmouth Harbour 144–5w
Aircraft carriers, Procurement 1140w
Ammunition, Luce Bay 956–7w
Ammunition, River Tamar 142w
Antitank missiles 148w, 946–7w
Apache AH-64 helicopter 6w, 146–7w, 951w
Apache AH-64 helicopter, Flight simulation 716w
Armed forces, Health services 5w, 1223–4w
Armed forces, Housing 717w, 938–41w
Armed forces, Motor vehicles 947w
Armed forces, Pensions 715–6w
Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency, Standards 711w
Armoured fighting vehicles, New Zealand 952w
Armoured fighting vehicles, Poland 952–3w
Arms trade 210w
Arms trade, Firearms 1138w
Army, Helicopters 1140w
Astute class submarines 149w
Aviation, Ministry of Defence 1139w
Boscombe Down, Roads 941w
Buildings, Ministry of Defence 953w, 960w

Moonie, Dr Lewis—continued
Chemicals, Waste disposal 708–9w
Construction, Ministry of Defence 718w, 942w
Contracts, Ministry of Defence 211w
Defence, Animal experiments 209w
Defence, Research 955–6w
Defence Diversification Agency 714–5w
Defence Diversification Agency, Manpower 330–1w
Defence equipment 144w
Defence equipment, Procurement 147–8w, 716–7w, 953w
Defence Estates 709w
Defence Evaluation and Research Agency, Apprentices 210–2w
Defence Export Services Organisation 144w
Disposal Services Agency, Standards 328–9w
Duke of York's Royal Military School, Standards 138–9w
Early warning systems, Warships 1142w
EC defence policy 333w
EH101 helicopters 708w
Embassies, Pay 145w
Firing ranges, Dundrennan 957w
Future large aircraft 5w
Future large aircraft, Job creation 1141w
Future offensive aircraft 1142w
General service medal, Suez Canal 942w
Green Ministers Committee, Ministry of Defence 209–10w
Guided weapons 714w, 1138–9w
Guided weapons, Procurement 1139w
Guided weapons, Research 1137–8w
Hunting Defence, Contracts 952w
Information technology, Ministry of Defence 149w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Exservicemen 208–10w
Joint strike fighter aircraft 709w
London Underground, Ministry of Defence 144w
Low flying 138w
Low flying, Wind power 331w
Manpower, Ministry of Defence 964w
Meteor missiles 715w
Meteorology 956w
Military aircraft 708w
Nancekuke 334w
Nuclear weapons, Radiation exposure 145w
Ordnance Board, Disclosure of information 1141w
Pay, Ministry of Defence 959w
Porton Down, Human experiments 142–3w, 934–7w
Porton Down, War pensions 936–7w
Prisoners of war, Compensation 959w
Property transfer, Ministry of Defence 716w
Public expenditure, Ministry of Defence 959–60w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 965w
QINETIQ 6w
QINETIQ, Apprentices 143w
QINETIQ, Optical equipment 951w
QINETIQ, Research 950–1w
RAF Chilmark 951–2w
RAF Halton 334–5w
RAF Shawbury, Redundancy 1141w
Recess, Ministry of Defence 211–2w
Reserve forces 1305w
Retirement, Ministry of Defence 942–6w
Royal Naval Reserve, Manpower 958w
SA80 rifle 1140–1w
Service Children's Education, Standards 207–8w
Sick leave, Ministry of Defence 708w

Moonie, Dr Lewis—continued
Spearfish 146w
Territorial Army 959w
Territorial Army, Buildings 958w
Territorial Army, Manpower 958w
Territorial Army, Officers 957–8w
Throckmorton airfield 142w
Trafalgar class submarines 709–10w
Type 45 destroyers 1–2w, 1136–7w
Upholder class submarines, Canada 717–8w
Uranium 141–2w
Uranium, Dundrennan 1139–40w
Uranium, Kosovo 141w
War graves, Wrecks 1309w
Wind power, Cleveleys 716w
Wind tunnels, Finance 706w
World War I, Capital punishment 146w
World War II, Prisoners of war 332w

Moore, Jo
1165

Moore, Mr Michael
Questions
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 138–9

Moran, Margaret
Questions
Abandoned vehicles, Waste disposal 292w
Children, Homicide 277w
Contact orders 158–9w
Forced Marriages Working Group 126w
Meat Hygiene Service, Annual reports 238w
Motor vehicles, Recycling 618–9w
Police, Northern Ireland 216w
Theft, Garages and petrol stations 918w, 996w, 1164w

Morgan, Julie
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 304
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Young offenders (19.07.01) 138wh
Questions
NHS, Wales 1160

Morley, Mr Elliot, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept of Environment Food and Rural Affairs
Questions
Agriculture 1292–5
Agriculture, Census 173w
Agriculture, Subsidies 1085w
Agriculture, Sustainable development 387w
Animal feed, Fish products 612w
Animal feed, Isle of Wight 1086–7w
Animal welfare 169w, 1063w, 1269w
Animal welfare, Cumbria 1269w
Animal welfare, Pheasants 1093w
Animal welfare, Prosecutions 1062w
Animals, Diseases 1097w
Animals, Genetic engineering 172w
Bass 399w
Birds, Conservation 1088–9w
Birds of prey, Conservation 170w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Japan 1047w
Bovine tuberculosis 1272–3w
Bovine tuberculosis, Disease control 1095w
Cattle, Disease control 1059w
Cereals, Subsidies 1217w
Civil servants, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1087w, 1093w
Common agricultural policy, Reform 171–2w
Common Fisheries Policy, Reform 1270w

Morley, Mr Elliot—continued
Computers, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1248w
Construction, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1090w, 1093w
Contracts, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1055w, 1104w
Death, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 614w
Departmental reorganisation, Costs 612w, 1047w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 171w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 171w
Emergencies 396–7w
European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals 169w
Factortame 399w
Farmers, Bureaucracy 1078w
Farmers, Tenants 1220w
Farms 1077–8w
Fish, Conservation 399w, 1083–4w, 1269–70w
Fisheries 626w
Fisheries, Leigh on Sea 1299–300
Fishing catches 1094–5w
Fishing vessels 626w
Flood control 1095–6w, 1272w
Flood control, Bewdley 1285–6
Flood control, Coastal areas 626–8w
Flood control, Finance 170–1w
Flood control, Robertsbridge 170w, 396w
Flood control, Severn estuary 1272w
Flood control, Vale of York 630–1w, 1297–8
Flood control, Yorkshire and Humberside 630w
Food, Labelling 1074w
Foot and mouth disease 389w, 615w, 1054w, 1100–2w, 1104w, 1214w, 1249w
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 165w, 167w, 390–2w, 616–7w, 1099w, 1111w, 1114w, 1249w, 1265w, 1270w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 166–7w, 614–6w, 1098–9w, 1109w, 1111–2w, 1217w
Foot and mouth disease, Deer 166w, 1105–6w
Foot and mouth disease, Devon 1112w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 166–8w, 388–93w, 612–6w, 1055w, 1059w, 1086w, 1099w, 1101–11w, 1114–5w, 1216w, 1248–50w
Foot and mouth disease, Government assistance 1113w
Foot and mouth disease, Import controls 1112–3w, 1118w
Foot and mouth disease, Inquiries 1249w
Foot and mouth disease, Insurance 1102w
Foot and mouth disease, Lancashire 1102w, 1113w
Foot and mouth disease, Manpower 1115–6w
Foot and mouth disease, Markets 1250w
Foot and mouth disease, Meat products 1215w
Foot and mouth disease, Military aid 168w
Foot and mouth disease, Northumberland 391w
Foot and mouth disease, Pigs 617w
Foot and mouth disease, Public footpaths 168–9w
Foot and mouth disease, Public inquiries 1110w, 1249w
Foot and mouth disease, Ribble Valley 169w
Foot and mouth disease, Sheep 614w

Morley, Mr Elliot—continued
Foot and mouth disease, Slaughterhouses 1114w
Foot and mouth disease, Somerset 1250w
Foot and mouth disease, Throckmorton airfield 1214–5w
Foot and mouth disease, Veterinary services 394–5w, 1109w
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 614–5w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 389w, 392w, 613w, 617w, 1085–6w, 1099w, 1102w, 1104w, 1109–10w, 1267w
Foot and mouth disease, Wild animals 390w
Foot and mouth disease, Worcestershire 1054w
Foot and mouth disease, World Organisation for Animal Health 1099w
Foot and mouth disease, Yorkshire and Humberside 1110–1w
Forestry Commission, Departmental expenditure limits 173–4w
Future of Farming and Food Policy Commission 169w, 1078w, 1218w
Genetically modified organisms, Research 396w
Genetically modified organisms, Seeds 1063–4w
Helicopters, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1055w
Hills Task Force 1104w
Horticulture 395–6w
Information technology, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 398w
Integrated administration and control system 1084–5w
Internet, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1077w
Livestock, Diseases 1080w
Livestock, Exports 1077w
Livestock, Prices 1088w
Livestock, Somerset 1219w
Livestock, Transport 1085w, 1092w, 1219–20w, 1267w
Meat, Inspections 1101w
Meat, Smuggling 1080w, 1096w
Members, Correspondence 399w, 1087w
Milk 1090w
Milk Task Force 1217w
Moles, Pest control 1056w
New Forest 634–5w
Organic food 399–400w, 1090w
Pesticides, Taxation 1074–5w
Pig diseases 1056w
Planning, Cumbria 1248w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1073–4w
Public relations, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1077w
Recess, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 297w
Retirement, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1218–9w
Set-aside schemes 1087w
Sheep, Exports 1088w
Sheep premiums 1118w
Sick leave, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1078–80w
Standards, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1051w
State Veterinary Service, Manpower 172–3w
Training, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1096–7w
Tree planting 1273w
TT Smith (Mink) 618w
Wheat 1056w

Morley, Mr Elliot—continued
Wind power, Cleveleys 1059w
Work permits, Seasonal workers 628w

Morris, Rt Hon Ms Estelle, Secretary of State for Education and Skills
Questions
Education, Finance 776w
Education, Reform 30w
Office for Standards in Education, Public appointments 411w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1369–72

Mother and baby units
1235w

Motor sports
79w

Motor vehicles
Armed forces 947w
EC action 267–8w
Excise duties 858w
Insurance 18–9w
Licensing 870w
Recycling 618–9w
Registration 205–6w

Motorcycles
Areas of outstanding natural beauty 1059w

Mountford, Kali
Questions
Falconio, Peter 283–4
Poverty, International assistance 412–3

Mozambique
English language 26–7w

Mudie, Mr George
Debates etc.
Overseas visitors, Appeals (20.07.01) 597–600
Questions
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 1149w

Mullin, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 692, 694, 708–10, (15.10.01) 928
Questions
House of Commons, Waste disposal 155w

Multiple sclerosis
285
Cannabis 727w

Munn, Meg
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 376–7
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1261–2
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 318–20wh
Questions
Duke of York's Royal Military School, Standards 138–9w
Poverty, Children 827–8w
Theatre, Finance 54w

Murphy, Mr Denis
Questions
Child Support Agency, Standards 691–2w
Disability living allowance 704–5w
Educational maintenance allowance 770w
National Lottery 748w
Sport action zones 808w

Murphy, Mr Jim
Questions
Weapons, Northern Ireland 217w

Murphy, Rt Hon Paul, Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Aviation, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1146w
Correspondence, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1001–2w
Employment, Wales 1158–9
Environment protection, Wales 1253w
Floods, Wales 124w
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 1251w, 1254–5w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 43w, 1254w
Housing, Wales 1152
Information technology, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 124–5w
Iron and steel, Wales 1255w
London Underground, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 124w
Manpower, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1146w
Manufacturing industries, Caerphilly 1254w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 1159–60, 1252–3w
National Assembly for Wales, Finance 1155–6
Non-domestic rates, Wales 1147w
Pay, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1146w
Public expenditure, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1145w
Public relations, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 470w, 1145–6w
Recess, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 471w
Sick leave, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 470–1w
Tourism, Wales 1002w
Transport, Wales 1252w
Unemployment, Blaenau Gwent 1254w
Visits abroad, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1002–4w
Welsh language 1253–4w

Murrison, Andrew
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 202–4
Maiden speech (17.07.01) 202–4
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 199–200wh
Questions
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 388w, 1086w
General practitioners, Manpower 447w
Hospitals, Consultants 435–6w
Local government finance, Wiltshire 525–8w
London Underground, Standards 198w
Medical profession, Recruitment 755w
NATO enlargement 211w
NHS, Fraud 113w
Schools, Governing bodies 247w, 1177w

Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester
56w

Museums and galleries
50w, 1289–90w
Finance 75w

Music
749–50w
Schools 1290–1w

Muslims
Cemeteries 503w

Nadia, Naira
258w

Namibia
259w
Foreign relations 259w
Overseas aid 307w

Nancekuke
334w

National Air Traffic Services
Public private partnerships 86w, 886w, 1171w

National Assembly for Wales
Finance 1155–6

National asset register
25w, 384–5w

National Asylum Support Service
339–40w, 926w

National Black Police Association
345–6w, 651–2w

National Bus Company
Pension funds 845–6w

National childcare strategy
Disadvantaged 241–2w

National homelessness strategy
890w

National income
861w

National Institute for Clinical Excellence
112w

National Institute of Agricultural Botany
596w, 1064–5w

National Insurance Contributions Unit
see Social Security Contributions Agency

National Lottery
5–6, 10–3, 50–2w, 54w, 185w, (17.10.01) 290–6wh, 748w, 1144w, 1224w
Film 740w
Libraries 57w
Millennium capital projects 52w
Millennium Exhibition 52w
Rugby 53w
Thurrock 8

National Meat Hygiene Service
see Meat Hygiene Service

National Minimum Wage Regulations 1999 (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 2001
Debates etc.
(17.07.01) 261–2

National Organisation for the Widowed and their Children
see CRUSE

National parks
293w

National Probation Service for England and Wales
Manpower 670–2w

National Savings Dept
see Dept for National Savings

National service frameworks
436–7w
Elderly 437w

National Statistics
see Office for National Statistics

National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers
Correspondence 1230–1w

National Weights and Measures Laboratory
Standards 270w

NATO enlargement
211w, 1137w

Natural gas
1159–60w
Imports 1158–9w
Prices 39w

Naysmith, Dr Douglas
Questions
Antidepressants 69–70w, 110–1w
Arts, Schools 1–2
Children Act 1989 113w
Mental health services, Advocacy 220–1w
Prison Service, Standards 342w

Negligence
735w, 1039–40w

Neighbourhood Support Fund
1187–8w

Neurology
Consultants 1032–3
Greater London 231w
Manpower 231w

New businesses
Females 852–3w

New deal for disabled people
64w

New deal for lone parents
375–6w

New deal for young people
Drugs 915–6

New deal schemes
375w
Armed forces 1303–4w
Costs 908
Greater London 300w
Huntingdon 1210w

New Forest
634–5w

New Millennium Experience
Annual reports 752w

New Opportunities Fund
186–7w

New Roads and Street Works Act 1991
Questions
1227w

New Scotland Yard
see Metropolitan Police

New Zealand
Armoured fighting vehicles 952w
Official visits 1300–1w

NHS
Catering 1040–1w
Combined heat and power 1242w
Complaints 735w
Debts 1038w
Employment agencies 441–2w
Energy 1349w
Equal opportunities 70–1w
Finance 429w, 737w, 1039w, 1212w, 1242w
Fraud 113w
Land 1347–8w
Manpower 737w
Nurseries 1121–2w
Pilot schemes 738w
Private finance initiative 1034w, 1038–40w
Public participation 110w
Public private partnerships 1119–20w
Retirement 1127w
Scotland 151w
Starter home initiative 1367–8w
Wales 1152–4, 1160, 1251–2w

NHS—continued
Working conditions 237w

NHS Appointments Commission
728w

NHS Direct
731w

NHS Pensions Agency
Annual reports 427w

NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency
Annual reports 427w

NHS trusts
Public appointments 448w
Standards 1040w

NHS University
1124w

Nigeria
Administration of justice 307w

Night flying
Heathrow Airport 875–6w

Noise
EC law 544w
M5 544–5w
Manchester Airport (17.07.01) 60–8wh
Roads 1228–30w

Non-departmental public bodies
457w
Reviews 323–4w

Non-domestic rates
1316–8w
Small businesses 362w
Sports 836w
Wales 1147w

Non-governmental organisations
Africa 804w

Non-teaching staff
Primary education 992–3w

North East region
Agriculture 564w

North Staffordshire Hospital
Consent to medical treatment 1037

North Wales Police
1195w

North West region
Exports 325w
Foreign investment in UK 325w
Hospitals 1240w

North Western Trains
see First North Western Trains

North Yorkshire
Bellwin scheme 289–90w
Crime 1207w
Dental services 1123w
Electric cables 593–4w
Hospital beds 1349–50w
Police 666–7w

Northern General Hospital Sheffield
Petitions (17.07.01) 262–3

Northern Ireland
Administration of justice 314w
Armed forces 947–8w
Baton rounds 311–2w, 479–80w
Church schools 998w
Demonstrations 275–7
Drug seizures 482–3w
Education 993w
Elections 310–2w, 1147w
Firearms 481w
Helicopters 949–50w
Human rights 219w
Police 163w, 216w, 218–9w, 479w
Police custody 165w

Northern Ireland—continued
Polling stations 313–4w
Prisoners 311w
Prosecutions 311w
Racially aggravated offences 314w
Refugees 127w
Riot control weapons 480w
Road works 217w
Roads 312w
Terrorism 218–9w, 271–4, 997–8w
Transport 542w
Victim support schemes 274–5
Weapons 217w

Northern Ireland Act 1998
Questions
313w

Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee
(19.07.01) 520

Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 2001
Debates etc.
(16.07.01) 92–104

Northern Ireland Executive Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
see Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (NIE)

Northern Ireland government
215–6w, 218–20w, 277–9, 285–6, 312–3w, 479w, 483w, 1165, 1170

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
217–8w, 313w
Public appointments 313w

Northern Ireland Office
Construction 998–1000w
Information technology 162–4w
London Underground 313w
Manpower 1360–1w
Pay 1360w
Public expenditure 1360w
Recess 315w
Retirement 997w

Northern Ireland Oversight Commissioner
see Oversight Commissioner

Northern Ireland Police Fund
see Police Fund (Northern Ireland)

Northern Ireland Policing Board
481w, 1147–9w

Northern region
Hill farming (18.07.01) 90–111wh

Northumberland
Foot and mouth disease 391w

Norwich Prison
Overcrowding 285–6w

Notarantonio, Francisco
480–1w

Nottingham
Breast cancer 225w
Public transport 17w

Nottinghamshire
Industrial diseases 1162–3w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
1163–4w
Dounreay 271–2w
Sellafield 103w

Nuclear fuels
Transport 191w

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive
see United Kingdom NIREX

Nuclear power
107–8w, 611w, 1097w

Nuclear power stations
1153–4w

Nuclear reactors
605w

Nuclear submarines
Russia 587–8w, 950w

Nuclear weapons
331–2w
Accidents 140–1w
Emergencies 953–4w
Radiation exposure 145w

Nurseries
NHS 1121–2w

Nurses
227w
Asians 223–4w
Foreign workers 441w
Grants 228–9w
Immigration rules 125–6w
Manpower 1030–2w
Overseas students 228–9w
Qualifications 226w
Staffordshire 68w
Training 114–6w
Vacancies 438–9w

Nursing and Midwifery Council
731w

Nutrition
Health education 721w

Oakington Detention Centre
48–9w, 343–4w

Oaten, Mr Mark
Questions
Civil service 1359w
Community health services, Disability aids 72w
Delivery Unit 1363w
Departmental responsibilities, Cabinet Office 304w, 461w, 789–90w
Emergencies 396–7w
Government departments, Standards 456w, 461w
HMS Dryad 950w
Homelessness 1365–6w
Knowledge network project 43w
People's panel 462–4w
Regulatory impact assessments, Departmental coordination 465w
Rough Sleepers Unit, Manpower 1365w
Task forces 459–60w
Truancy 461–2w

Oaths and affirmations
Members (14.09.01) 603

O'Brien, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 715–7, (08.10.01) 839

O'Brien, Mr Stephen
Questions
Environment protection, Wales 1253w
Incinerators 284
Recycling 1287

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 963
Questions
Business questions 1318–9
Jobcentres 904
Tipping of waste 1285

Occupational pensions
414w

Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority
Publications 66w

Occupied territories
121w

OECD countries
Recycling 1051–2w

Office for National Statistics
Annual reports 383w

Office for Standards in Education
Public appointments 411w, 765w

Office International des Epizooties
see World Organisation for Animal Health

Office of Communications
13–5, 814w, 981w, 1377–8w
Public appointments 317w

Office of Communications Bill (HL) 2001/02
Questions
1377–8w

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (NIE)
216–7w

Office of the Secretary of State for Wales
Aviation 1146w
Correspondence 1001–2w
Early retirement 470–1w
Information technology 124–5w
London Underground 124w
Manpower 1146w
Parliamentary questions 1001–2w
Pay 1146w
Public expenditure 1145w
Public relations 470w, 1145–6w
Recess 471w
Sick leave 470–1w
Visits abroad 1002–4w

Officers
Territorial Army 957–8w

Official residences
Taxation 20w

Official visits
1300w
Isle of Wight 1301w
New Zealand 1300–1w

O'Hara, Mr Edward
Questions
Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage 1300w
Pathfinder projects 363–4w

Oil
Indonesia 492w
Irish Sea 38w
Scotland 149w
Tibet 492w

Oldbury power station
34–5w

Older workers
828w

Oldham
Regional planning and development 579–80w

Olympic Games
1379w

Ombudsman
464–5w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 852–4

Oneword
BBC (20.07.01) 580–2

Open government
573–4w

Ophthalmic services
VAT 576w

Opik, Lembit
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order (16.07.01) 95–6
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1383–4, 1390, 1395–6, 1399, 1403
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 487–8, 492–3, 503
Terrorism (04.10.01) 753, (15.10.01) 952
Questions
Agriculture, Sustainable development 387w
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 277
Education, Wales 1157–8
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1103w
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 614–5w
Medical profession, Manpower 1125w
Students, Fees and charges 755w
Terrorism 1358w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 997–8w

Opposition
Government departments 458w

Optical equipment
QINETIQ 951w

Ordnance Board
Disclosure of information 1141w

Ordnance Survey
Standards 543w

Organ, Diana
Questions
Connexions Service, Identity cards 256w
Drugs, Prices 1357w
Foot and mouth disease, Forest of Dean 1116w
Foot and mouth disease, Gloucestershire 1116–7w
Foot and mouth disease, Government assistance 1116w
Foot and mouth disease, South West region 1116w
Further education, Per capita costs 771–3w
Further education, Student numbers 772w
National Lottery, Libraries 57w
Regional enterprise grants 267w
Regional enterprise grants, Forest of Dean 107w
Regional enterprise grants, South West region 107w

Organic food
399–400w, 1090w

Osborne, Mr George
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 652–4, (08.10.01) 873–5, 879
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Manchester Airport, Noise (17.07.01) 60–2wh, 66–7wh
Questions
Tax burden, Trade competitiveness 371–2w

Osborne, Sandra
Questions
Air traffic control 885w
Air traffic control, Prestwick 885w
Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency, Standards 711w

Osborne Estates Act 1902
Questions
186w

Osborne House
186w

Osteopathy
1125w

Osteoporosis
1121w

Ottaway, Richard
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 858–60
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 237–42wh, 244wh, 258wh
Questions
Annuities 865w
Equitable Life Assurance Society 25w
Hospitals, Purley 1031–2
Income tax, Pensioners 423
Road traffic control, Greater London 8w

Out-patients
Attendance 236–7w, 1038w, 1047–8

Overcrowding
Norwich Prison 285–6w
Trains 505–8w

Overseas aid
Afghanistan 1284w
Botswana 307w
India 476–7w
Kosovo 902w
Mongolia 477–8w
Namibia 307w
Pakistan 801–2w
Palestinians 120w, 478w

Overseas investment
Commonwealth Development Corporation 308–10w

Overseas residence
Social security benefits 413w

Overseas students
Nurses 228–9w

Overseas trade
Human rights 256–7w

Overseas visitors
676–8w
Appeals (20.07.01) 597–602
Entry clearances 658–9w

Oversight Commissioner
481–2w
Annual reports 1147w

Owen, Albert
Questions
Ynys Mon 1256w

Oxfordshire
Crime 796w
Homelessness 545w
Hospital beds 1257w
Local government finance 546–7w
MMR vaccine 721w
Specialist schools 761w
Teachers 761w
Tourism 750–1w

Packaging
Recycling 1268–9w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Brett, Jean (15.10.01) 1025–7

Paice, Mr James
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 1019–21
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Hill farming, Northern region (18.07.01) 100–5wh, 107wh

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1231–3
Terrorism (14.09.01) 630–2

Pakistan
Blasphemy 966w
Christianity 258w
Entry clearances 971w
Exports 981w
Overseas aid 801–2w
Prisoners 258w
Terrorism 1169–70

Palestinians
Kidnapping 122–3w
Overseas aid 120w, 478w

Palmer, Dr Nick
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1203
Terrorism (08.10.01) 835
Questions
Animal experiments 131w
Animal welfare 1269w
Defence, Animal experiments 209w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Exservicemen 208–10w
Office of Communications, Public appointments 317w
Prisoners, Rehabilitation 358w
Service Children's Education, Standards 207–8w

Paramilitary forces
972w

Parental leave
1276w

Parental responsibility
EC law 451w

Park and ride schemes
89w

Parkside NHS Trust
1031–3w

Parliament
Reform 288–9w

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration
Complaints 464w

Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards
155w, 1285w

Parliamentary procedure
Rulings and statements (16.07.01) 24, (14.09.01) 604, 628

Parliamentary questions
Cabinet Office 1005–6w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 813w
Dept for Education and Skills 1184–6w
Dept for International Development 1283w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1312w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 974–5w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 1026–7w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1001–2w
Prime Minister 821–2w

Parliamentary questions—continued
Treasury 858–9w

Parliamentary scrutiny
150–4, 155w
Legislation 999–1001w
Recess 1001w

Partnerships UK
863–4w

Party political broadcasts
187w

Passport Agency
see United Kingdom Passport Agency

Passports
356w, 645–6w
Administrative delays 354w, 357w
Applications 49w, 356–7w
Forgery 1197w
Fraud 355w, 645–6w

Patents
Dept of Trade and Industry 595w

Patents Act 1977 (Amendment) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 306

Paterson, Mr Owen
Questions
Business questions 436–7
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1265w
Fuels, Scotland 140
Magistrates' courts 146–7
Redundant churches, Property transfer 25–6w

Pathfinder projects
363–4w

Patients
State retirement pensions 65w
Surveys 234w

Patten Commission
see Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland

Peace negotiations
Middle East 260–1w, 1160–1

Peat
Environment protection 1217–8w

Peers
103–4w, 469w, 818w

Pendle
Dental services 1122w

Pennine Way
1098w

Penrose Inquiry
see Equitable Life Independent Inquiry

Pension Annuities (Amendment) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 306

Pension credit
65–6w

Pension funds
1211w
National Bus Company 845–6w
Scottish Transport Group 845–6w
Surpluses 833–4w

Pension rights
Widowed people 699w

Pensioners
(20.07.01) 575–8, 1210w, 1257–8w
Dartford 916
Henley 700w

Pensioners—continued
Income support 60–1w, 65w, 302w, 700w, 829–30w, 916–8, 1209w
Income tax 422–3
Leigh 302w
Romford 699–700w
Scotland 153w
Social security benefits 65w, 701w, 826–7w, 912–3, 918–20

Pensions
414–5w, 574w, 578–9w, 687w, 697w, (16.10.01) 1142–50
Armed forces 4w, 715–6w, 941w
Police 659w

Pensions Act 1995
Questions
414w

People's panel
462–4w

Performance and Innovation Unit
317–8w

Performing arts
Schools 764–5w
Student numbers 762w

Perham, Linda
Debates etc.
Greenbelt, Planning permission (20.07.01) 541–4
Pensions (16.10.01) 1142–5
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1076–8
Questions
Animal experiments, Genetic engineering 905w
Animals, Genetic engineering 172w
Breast cancer, Screening 229–30w
Hospitals, Admissions 116–7w
Medicine, Research 235–6w
Prescription drugs, Advertising 223w
Pupil exclusions 756–7w
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre 890–1w
Schools, Administration 777–8w
Scientific Procedures Inspectorate, Manpower 793–4w
Strokes 235w
Strokes, Death rate 213w
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 777w
Working families tax credit, Greater London 374w

Personal and social education
Curriculum 1187w

Personal injury
Conditional fee agreements 158w
Damages 784–5w

Personal Investment Authority
23w

Personal pensions
Misrepresentation 557w

Personal records
Databases 908–9w
Members 561w

Personal savings
845w

Pest control
Moles 1056w
Royal parks 752–3w

Pesticides
Taxation 569w, 1074–5w

Pesticides Safety Directorate
Annual reports 289w

Peterborough
Refugees 656–8w

Petitions
Bypasses (17.10.01) 1274
Northern General Hospital Sheffield (17.07.01) 262–3
Refugees (18.07.01) 392

Petrol
1161w
Exploration 609–10w
Retail trade 557w
Smuggling 855w

Petrol alternatives
16w, 182w, 377–8w, 512–3w, 538–9w, (19.10.01) 1361–405
Safety 358w
Taxis 358w

Pharmaceutical Industry Competitiveness Task Force
222w

Pheasants
Animal welfare 1093w
Taxation 851–2w

Phillips Inquiry
see Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Creutzfeld Jakob Disease Inquiry

Phobias
Disability living allowance 1302w

Phoenix Fund
986w

Picketts Lock
Athletics 15, 739w, 815–6w, 1378w

Picking, Anne
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 200–2
Maiden speech (17.07.01) 200–2

Pickles, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Food Labelling Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 307
Railtrack (15.10.01) 956–8
Sittings in Westminster Hall
London Underground (17.10.01) 263wh, 275–7wh, 279wh
Questions
Airport tax 857w
Aviation 891w
Aviation, Finance 1213w
Driving, Working hours 891w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1265w
Fuels, Shortages 1161w
Heathrow Airport, Public inquiries 1172w
Incapacity benefit, Females 683–4w
London Underground, Standards 1169w
Petrol 1161w
Public expenditure, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1171–2w
Railways, Safety 1172w
Road traffic 891w
Roads, Freight 1171w
Smuggling, Petrol 855w
Transport 1172w
Transport, Safety 1364w
Working Time Regulations 1998, Driving 891w

Pickthall, Mr Colin
Questions
Civil service agencies, Annual reports 413w
Disposal Services Agency, Standards 328–9w
Home energy efficiency scheme 632w
Leasehold, Insurance 205w
Prisons, Per capita costs 342w

Pickthall, Mr Colin—continued
Wind power, Planning permission 1320–1w

Pig diseases
1056w

Pigs
Foot-and mouth disease 617w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 980
Michelin Tyres, Standing Order No 24 applications (16.10.01) 1051
Railtrack (15.10.01) 962
Questions
Absent voting 11w
Refugees, Appeals 342–3w
Research and development tax credit 422
Wembley Stadium 2–3

Pilgrim Hospital
Waiting lists 71–2w

Pilot schemes
NHS 738w

Pitsea
Waste disposal 292–3w, 624–6w

Plain English
Education 407w

Planning
1314w
Cumbria 1248w
Disclosure of information 533w
European Convention on Human Rights 154w
Inquiries 204w
Roads 883–4w
Scotland 154w
Transport 521–4w, 883w
Treasury 559–60w

Planning and Compensation Act 1991
Questions
874w

Planning Inspectorate
Annual reports 362–3w

Planning permission
544w, 869w
Administrative delays 875w, 1226w
Aerials 204w, 531–2w, 883w
Appeals 874w
Applications 874w
Birchwood Park 1320w
Fareham 875w, 1226w
Greenbelt (20.07.01) 541–4
Hampshire 874–5w
Housing 18w
Incinerators 359–60w, 1056–8w
Stroud 882w
Tewkesbury 550–1w
Wind power 1320–1w

Plant power
1273–4w

Plaskitt, Mr James
Questions
Emergency services, Warwick 1048
Petrol alternatives 377–8w
Prison Service, Environment protection 46w

Plastic surgery
Breasts 427w
Tattooing 66w

Playing fields
Schools 1291w

Plutonium
602w

Poland
Armoured fighting vehicles 952–3w

Police
798w
Cheshire 638–40w
City of Westminster 653w
Civilians 916w
Conditions of employment 796w, 1323–4w
Data protection 921w
Early retirement 132w, 638w
Ethnic groups 646–7w, 1202–3w
Firearms 680–1w
Football 1197–8w
Henley 1200w
Hertfordshire (17.07.01) 45–52wh
Homosexuality 642w
Housing 1194w, 1200w
Industrial health and safety 1194–5w
Lancashire 128w
Manpower 282–4w, 642w, 653w, 673–4w, 798w, 1323–4w, 1402w
Medical examinations 641w
North Yorkshire 666–7w
Northern Ireland 163w, 216w, 218–9w, 479w
Pay 1198w
Pensions 659w
Public appointments 795w
Racial discrimination 652w
Radio 675w
Recruitment 128w
Retirement 638w
Sick leave 915w
Vehicles 649–50w
Wandsworth 667–8w, 673–4w

Police authorities
649w, 926w
Public appointments 669w

Police Complaints Authority
Public appointments 1190–2w

Police custody
1207w
Cornwall 274–5w
Devon 274–5w
Mentally ill 667w
Northern Ireland 165w

Police Fund (Northern Ireland)
162w

Police national computer
Standards 670w

Police (Northern Ireland) Order 2001
Debates etc.
(19.07.01) 484–505

Police stations
Essex 1401–2w

Policing Board for Northern Ireland
see Northern Ireland Policing Board

Policing for Northern Ireland Independent Commission
see Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland

Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food
see Future of Farming and Food Policy Commission

Political activities
Civil servants 457w
Magistrates 452w

Political refugees
see Refugees

Politics and government
Zimbabwe 257w, 1296–7w

Pollard, Mr Kerry
Debates etc.
Pensions (16.10.01) 1143–4
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 335–6wh
Questions
Roads, Safety 892w
Water companies, Liability 1062w

Polling stations
Disabled 313–4w, 1173–4w
Northern Ireland 313–4w

Pollution
Transport 17w

Pollution control
Air pollution 620–1w
Coal 595–6w
Incinerators 1058w
Radioactive materials 291w
Radioactive wastes 291w

Pond, Mr Chris
Questions
Gambling Review Body 316w

Pope, Mr Greg
Questions
Animal Procedures Committee, Annual reports 341w
Housing, Lancashire 192w
Kashmir 260w
Pre-school education 244w
Schools, Admissions 136w

Population estimates
817w

Pornography
Prosecutions 285–6w

Portillo, Mr Michael
Questions
Poverty, International assistance 414–7

Porton Down
Human experiments 142–3w, 653w, 934–7w
War pensions 936–7w

Ports
Isle of Wight 20w

Portsmouth Harbour
Aircraft carriers 144–5w

Post offices
596–7w, 601w
Bank services 1303w
Closures 35w, 106w, 606w, 986w, 1157w, 1375w
Greater London 267w
Standards 35w

Postal services
Elections 267w

Pound, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
BBC, Oneword (20.07.01) 580–2
Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order (16.07.01) 95
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 533, 537–8, 543, 563, 587–8
Terrorism (08.10.01) 828, 878–80
Questions
Planning Inspectorate, Annual reports 362–3w
Primary care trusts 1124w

Poverty
415–6w
Children 694w, 827–8w, 852w
Departmental responsibilities 319w
International assistance 412–7

Premier Christian Radio
810w

Prentice, Ms Bridget
Debates etc.
Terrorism (15.10.01) 933
Questions
Alcoholic drinks 749w
Alcoholic drinks, Young people 1201–2w
Animal experiments 341w
Climate Change Convention 1060–2w
General Election 2001, Ballot papers 1172w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 912
Railway stations, Crime prevention 517w
Social security benefits, Overseas residence 413w

Prentice, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses, Points of order (16.07.01) 21–2
Business motions (16.07.01) 25–6
Select committees (16.07.01) 49
Questions
Bank services 377w
Business questions 442–3, 1319
Census 23w
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 275–6
Dental services, Pendle 1122w
Donors, Ethnic groups 114w
Foot and mouth disease, Military aid 168w
Hills Task Force 1104w
Nurses, Asians 223–4w
Passports 645w
Plastic surgery, Tattooing 66w
Police, Ethnic groups 646–7w

Pre-school education
244w, (18.10.01) 307–48wh, 410w, 1294w
Bedfordshire 248w
Chorley 244w
Staffordshire 408w
Warrington 408–9w

Prescott, Rt Hon John, Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State
Questions
Government, Annual reports 1220–2w
London Underground, Cabinet Office 457w
Merchant Navy Day, Cabinet Office 458w
Recess, Cabinet Office 304w, 789w
Regional government 1004–5w
Sellafield 458w
Truancy 461–2w

Prescription drugs
Advertising 223w
Alzheimer's disease 68–9w
Arthritis 1354w
Children 1133–5w

Prescriptions
Fees and charges 222w, 228w, 722–3w
Wales 722–3w

President of the Council
Information technology 156w

Press releases
Dept for Work and Pensions 698w

Prestwick
Air traffic control 884–5w, 1295w

Price, Adam
Questions
Alternative energy, Wales 600–1w
Bank services, Rural areas 601w
EC grants and loans 577w, 608w
Employment, Wales 1158–9
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 1114w
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 1254–5w

Price, Adam—continued
Higher education, Wales 778w
Iraq, Sanctions 493w
Livestock, Prices 1088w
Medical laboratory scientific officers, Manpower 737–8w
National Lottery 13
Public transport, Disabled 550w

Price controls
Transco 263w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn, Paymaster General
Debates etc.
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 3R (18.10.01) 1331, 1335–7
Questions
Business, Corruption 21–2w
Capital allowances 858w
Capital gains tax 22–3w
Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials 21w
Disabled person's tax credit 569–70w
Excise duties, Fraud 384w
Foot and mouth disease 848–9w
Income tax 570–1w, 868w
Income tax, Foster care 853w
Income tax, Pensioners 422–3
Income tax, Self-assessment 382w
Inland Revenue, Standards 849w
Integrated tax benefit system 847–8w
Landlords, Rents 382w
Marginal tax rates 571w
Poverty, Children 852w
Research and development tax credit 846w
Sports, Non-domestic rates 836w
Standard of living, Single people 561w
Tax allowances, Health insurance 560–1w
"Tax Benefit Reference Manual 2001–02 Edition" 574w
Tax burden, Trade competitiveness 372w
Tax evasion 184w
Taxation, Official residences 20w
Thalidomide Trust Fund 1211w
Working families tax credit 374w, 563w, 1296w
Working families tax credit, Administrative delays 214w
Working families tax credit, Greater London 374w
Working families tax credit, Leigh 214w
Working tax credit 571w, 1258–9w

Primary care trusts
1124w

Primary education
Bedfordshire 406w
Class sizes 987–8w
Non-teaching staff 992–3w
Standards 137w, 756w, 1186–7w

Primates
Animal experiments 675–6w

Prime Minister
Aviation 822–3w
Correspondence 206w, 821–2w
Gifts and endowments 74w
London Underground 102–3w
Mass media 817w
Ministerial policy advisors 818–9w, 1361–2w
Parliamentary questions 821–2w
Select committees 1257w
Visits abroad 821–3w

Prime ministers
Ministerial powers 818w

Prime Minister's questions
281–2

Prisk, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Terrorism (15.10.01) 938
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Police, Hertfordshire (17.07.01) 48wh
Questions
M11 536w
Stansted Airport 535w
Transport, Public inquiries 521–4w
Urban areas 536w

Prison accommodation
132w, 901w, 1195–7w
Category C prisoners 931–2w

Prison governors
914–5w
Correspondence 682w
Manpower 912–4w

Prison Service
Environment protection 46w
Ethnic groups 665w
Manpower 915w
Sick leave 909–10w
Standards 342w
Vacancies 665–6w

Prisoners
1239w
Alternative medicine 921w
Contraceptives 902w
Death 899–900w
Females 917w
Hepatitis 902w
HIV infection 902w
Irian Jaya 492w
Location 660w
Mentally ill 666w
Northern Ireland 311w
Pakistan 258w
Rehabilitation 358w, 931–2w
Turkmenistan 122w

Prisoners of war
Compensation 959w
World War II 332w

Prisons
665w
Crimes of violence 914w
Drugs 660–4w
Education 660w, 900–1w, 930w
Finance 909–12w
Fire prevention 1235w
Per capita costs 342w
Private sector 906–8w, 1235w
Probation and aftercare 665w
Refugees 654–6w
Standards 665w
Telephone services 660w
Television 922–3w

Prisons Inspectorate
see HM Inspectorate of Prisons

Private bills
154w

Private finance initiative
19w, (17.07.01) 22–44wh, 434w, 781–2w, 861–2w, 1158w
Contracts 560w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741w
Dept for Education and Skills 405–6w, 780–2w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1073–4w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 96w, 547–9w
Dept for Work and Pensions 692–3w
Dept of Health 435w
Dept of Trade and Industry 268w, 607–8w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 495–6w

Private finance initiative*—*continued
Home Office 349–50w, 903–4w
Leisure facilities 96w
Ministry of Defence 718w
NHS 1034w, 1038–40w
Roads 203–4w
Schools 1182w
Treasury 560w
Whittington Hospital 1029w

Private Members' bills
(16.07.01) 127, (17.07.01) 262, (18.07.01) 392, (20.07.01) 596, (15.10.01) 1024

Private sector
Conditions of employment 609w
Doctors 119w
Prisons 906–8w, 1235w
Public sector 285

Private Security Industry Act 2001
Questions
280w

Probation and aftercare
Prisons 665w

Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Annual reports 483–4w, 1147w

Probation officers
Recruitment 353–4w

Probation orders
Young offenders 49w

Procedure Select Committee
(16.07.01) 89, (19.07.01) 520

Proceeds of crime
277–8w, 385w, 844–5w, 1398w
Banks 385w
Drugs 150w

Proceeds of Crime Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.10.01) 1325
Questions
Human rights 153w

Procurement
Aircraft carriers 1140w
Defence equipment 147–8w, 716–7w, 953w
Guided weapons 1139w

Productivity
Public sector 22w

Project Aquatrine
1w

Proof of identity
Social security benefits 1383w

Property
Church Commissioners 26w
Ministry of Defence 5w

Property development
554w

Property rights
Cohabitation 788w

Prosecutions
Animal welfare 1062w
Litter 1275w
MI5 47w
Northern Ireland 311w
Pornography 285–6w
Racial violence 670w
Train operating companies 508w

Prosser, Mr Gwyn
Questions
Business questions 446–7, 1315–6
Child Trust Fund 374–5w
Environmental health 734w
Livestock, Transport 1267w
Refugees, Dover 282

Prosser, Mr Gwyn*—*continued
Shipping, Certification 508–11w
Shipping, Work permits 509w

Prostate cancer
225–6w, 427–8w, 732–3w

Prosthetics
431–4w, 1353w

Protection of Animals Act 1911
Questions
1093w

Protection of Property (Static Devices) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (17.10.01) 1171

Provident societies
24–6w

Prozac
722w

Psychiatry
230–2w
Milton Keynes 439–40w

Public Accounts Committee
(16.07.01) 90, (19.07.01) 520

Public Administration Select Committee
(16.07.01) 90

Public appointments
BBC 816–7w
Dept of Trade and Industry 268w
EC Committee of the Regions 555w
English Heritage 1285w
Immigration and Nationality Directorate 273w
Independent Football Commission 751w
Intelligence and Security Committee 1119w
Magistrates 159–60w
NHS trusts 448w
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission 313w
Office for Standards in Education 411w, 765w
Office of Communications 317w
Police 795w
Police authorities 669w
Police Complaints Authority 1190–2w
Railtrack 1315–6w

Public bodies
1359w

Public expenditure
376w, 378w, 381–2w, 425–6, 574w, 837–8w, 853–4w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 1224w
Dept for Education and Skills 1182–3w
Dept for International Development 1282w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1171–2w, 1312w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1151w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 1019w
Ministry of Defence 959–60w
Northern Ireland Office 1360w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1145w
Scotland 21w, 153w, 838w, 1260–1w
Treasury 854–6w

Public footpaths
Cycleways 543w
Foot and mouth disease 168–9w, 393–4w, 618w, 1266–7w

Public holidays
Religion 263w

Public inquiries
Foot and mouth disease 281, 820w, 1110w, 1249w
Heathrow Airport 1172w

Public inquiries*—*continued
Transport 521–4w

Public order
Cricket 51w

Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987
Questions
314w

Public participation
NHS 110w

Public private partnerships
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741w
Dept for Education and Skills 405–6w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1073w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 96w
Dept for Work and Pensions 692–3w
Dept of Trade and Industry 268w
Higher education 135w
Home Office 349–50w
London Underground 87w, 279, 282–3, 528w, 1169–70w
National Air Traffic Services 86w, 886w, 1171w
NHS 1119–20w

Public records
Conveyancing 532–3w

Public Records Act 1958
Questions
452w

Public relations
Cabinet Office 458w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 742–6w
Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1077w
Dept for International Development 478–9w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 525w, 1311–2w
Dept for Work and Pensions 695w
Dept of Health 727w
Dept of Trade and Industry 591w, 1225w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 486w
Home Office 1323w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 787w, 1020w
Ministry of Defence 965w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 470w, 1145–6w
Scotland Office 465–6w
Treasury 563–4w, 1259w

Public Right of Planning Appeal Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 308

Public safety radio communications project
Aerials 274w

Public sector net cash requirement
848w

Public service vehicles
Driving tests 1171w

Public statues
749w

Public transport
Disabled 550w
Nottingham 17w
Special constables 640–1w
Standards 371w
Urban areas 12–4w

Public Trust Office
Annual reports 161w

Pugh, Dr John
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 972
Questions
Recycling 1288

Pupil exclusions
408w, 461–2w, 756–7w
Appeals 27–8w
Drugs 759–60w, 1187w

Pupils
Contraceptives 1188w

Purchase, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries (19.07.01) 523
Questions
Cancer, Health services 1124w

Purley
Hospitals 1031–2

Purnell, James
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 180–3
Maiden speech (17.07.01) 180–3
Questions
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Creutzfeld Jakob Disease Inquiry 400–1w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 919

QINETIQ
6w
Apprentices 143w
Optical equipment 951w
Research 950–1w

Queen Elizabeth II
Anniversaries 1190w

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre
890–1w

Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 352
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1203–6
Questions
Public expenditure 425, 838w

Quinn, Lawrie
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 970
Questions
Cottage hospitals 1043–4
Dental services, North Yorkshire 1123w
English Partnerships Review 1175w
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1306
Intelligence and Security Committee 318w
Railtrack, Finance 1230w
Social security benefits, Automated credit transfer 825w
Transport, Planning 521–4w

Race relations
643w
Sikhs (16.07.01) 128–34

Racial discrimination
Conferences 423w
Metropolitan Police 652–3w
Police 652w

Racial violence
Gloucester 667w
Incitement 925–6w
Prosecutions 670w

Racially aggravated offences
Northern Ireland 314w

Radiation exposure
Nuclear weapons 145w

Radio
Digital broadcasting 57w, 79w
Illegal broadcasting 40–3w
Licensing 321w
Police 675w

Radioactive materials
Commonwealth of Independent States 270w
Japan 605w
Pollution control 291w

Radioactive wastes
1060w, 1290–2
Derbyshire 293–5w, 1069–70w
Germany 637w
Pollution control 291w

Radiotherapy
1124w, 1241–2w
Medical equipment 1241w

RAF Aston Down
1307–8w

RAF Chilmark
951–2w

RAF Feltwell
956w

RAF Fylingdales
941w, 956w

RAF Halton
334–5w

RAF Menwith Hill
6–7w, 941w
Bye laws 995w
Contracts 954w
Ministry of Defence Police 954w
Security 955w
USA 955w

RAF Shawbury
Redundancy 1141w

RAF St Athan
Defence Aviation Repair Agency 706–8w

Railtrack
1316w
British Rail Property Board 1315w
Finance 1170–1w, 1230w, 1315–6w
Ministerial statements (15.10.01) 954–73
Public appointments 1315–6w

Railway network
538w

Railway signals
508w
London Underground 365–6w

Railway stations
Chorley 191–2w
Crime prevention 513–7w
Greater London 517w

Railway track
Standards 93w, 505w

Railways
1363–4w
Accidents 91–2w
Chessington 9w
Construction 503w
Franchises 875w
Freight 88w
Greater London 501–2w
Lewes 9w
Ownership 1319–20w
Public sector 1166
Romford 552w
Safety 97w, 190w, (20.07.01) 551–4, 1172w

Railways—continued
Speed limits 92–3w, 200–1w
Standards 8–9w
Travel information 517–8w
Tufnell Park 882w
Wales 1156–7

Rammell, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 775–7
Questions
Bombs, Epping Forest 206w

Randall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 305
Questions
Macedonia, EC aid 121–2w
Northern Ireland government 218w
Winter fuel payments 826w

Rapid deployment forces
EC countries 712–3w

Rapson, Syd
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1137
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 458–9
Defence Vetting Agency, Standards 1223w
Recycling 1287–8

Rating (Former Agricultural Premises and Rural Shops) Act 2001
Questions
362w

Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick, Minister for Local Government, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions
Questions
Bellwin scheme, Hertfordshire 100–1w
Bombs, Epping Forest 206w
Council tax 555–6w
EC Committee of the Regions, Public appointments 555w
Local government, Disclosure of information 555w
Local government, Reform 303–4w, 789w
Local Government Act 1988 873w
Local Government Commission for England 100w
Local government finance 556w
Non-domestic rates, Small businesses 362w
Pathfinder projects 363–4w
Regional assemblies 100w
Regional government 788–9w

Recess
Cabinet Office 304w, 789w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 741–2w
Dept for Education and Skills 758w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 297w
Dept for International Development 478w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 205w
Dept for Work and Pensions 302w
Dept of Health 727w
Dept of Trade and Industry 271w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 262w
Home Office 345w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 786–7w
Ministry of Defence 211–2w
Northern Ireland Office 315w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 471w
Parliamentary scrutiny 1001w
Scotland Office 412w

Recess motions
(20.07.01) 529–95, (04.10.01) 688, (08.10.01) 829

Reciprocal arrangements
Health services 1328–30w

Recognition of states
Afghanistan 1382w

Recruitment
Civil servants 1220w
General practitioners 1045–6
Medical profession 755w
Police 128w
Probation officers 353–4w
Teachers (20.07.01) 563–6, 766w, 1386w, 1391–2w

Recycling
286, 624–5w, 1053–4w, 1068w, 1286–8
Motor vehicles 618–9w
OECD countries 1051–2w
Packaging 1268–9w

Redcar
Young offenders 668w

Redundancy
Dorset 580w
Manufacturing industries 841–3w
Marconi 262–3w, 580w
RAF Shawbury 1141w
Royal Mail 604w

Redundant churches
Property transfer 25–6w

Redwood, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 159, 163–5, 175
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1240
Railtrack (15.10.01) 968
Terrorism (15.10.01) 947
Questions
Balance of payments 852w
Balance of trade 845w
Business, Investment 851w
Business questions 1315
Capital gains tax 853w
London Underground, Finance 527w
National income 861w
Road traffic 499–500w

Reed, Mr Andy
Questions
Athletics 1379w
Athletics, Picketts Lock 1378w
Debts, Developing countries 420–1
Rugby 1381w

Referendums
Devolution 181w
Sri Lanka 498–9w

Refugees
48w, 275–7w, 280–1w, 658w
Administrative delays 127w, 1394–5w
Afghanistan 799–801w
Appeals 48w, 130–1w, 145–6, 287w, 338–9w, 342–3w, 901w
Applications 340w
Arab states 1238w
Children 126–7w, 281–2w
Deportation 923w, 1192–3w
Detainees 338–9w, 901w, 924–5w, 1194w
Dover 282
EC grants and loans 337–8w
Employment 1324w, 1326w
Essex 1193–4w
HIV infection 1395–6w
Housing 655w, 1324–5w, 1393–4w
Legal representation 144–5
Liverpool 1394w

Refugees—continued
Northern Ireland 127w
Peterborough 656–8w
Petitions (18.07.01) 392
Prisons 654–6w
Social security benefits 302–3w
Southend 340–1w
Sri Lanka 130w
Suffolk 338w
Trafford 923w
Voucher schemes 226w, 339w, 658w, 924w, 1235w
Wales 1394–5w

Regional airports
363w
South East region 501w

Regional arts boards
West Midlands 188w

Regional assemblies
100w, 1314w
Buildings 890w
South East region 547w

Regional assistance
550w, 561–2w

Regional development agencies
324–5w, 985w
Credit unions 607w
Manpower 608w

Regional enterprise grants
267w
Forest of Dean 107w
South West region 107w

Regional government
788–9w, 1004–5w

Regional planning and development
73w, 580w, 1267w, 1366w
Bradford 579–80w
Oldham 579–80w
Transport 531w

Registrar General
Departmental responsibilities 386–7w

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
Questions
353w

Regulatory impact assessments
457–8w
Departmental coordination 465w

Rehabilitation
1353w
Prisoners 358w, 931–2w

Reid, Rt Hon Dr John, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Church schools, Northern Ireland 998w
Foot and mouth disease 998w
London Underground, Northern Ireland Office 313w
Northern Ireland government 215–6w, 318–20w, 277–9, 312–3w, 483w
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (NIE) 216–7w
Police, Northern Ireland 219w
Recess, Northern Ireland Office 315w
Road works, EC grants and loans 217w
Roads, Northern Ireland 312w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 219w, 271–4
Weapons, Northern Ireland 217w

Religion
Curriculum 1185w
Discrimination 1400w
Public holidays 263w

Religious buildings
VAT 215w

Religious freedom
Christianity 1299–300w

"Removing the Barriers"
1042w

Remploy
Standards 1256w

Rendel, Mr David
Questions
Students, Fees and charges 754w

Rents
Landlords 382w

Repetitive strain injury
111w

Representation of the People (Form of Canvass) (England and Wales) Regulations 2001
Debates etc.
(17.07.01) 261–2

Representation of the People (Form of Canvass) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2001
Debates etc.
(17.07.01) 261–2

Representation of the People (Form of Canvass) (Scotland) Regulations 2001
Debates etc.
(17.07.01) 261–2

Reprotech
1090–1w

Republic of Ireland
Smuggling 855w

Research and development tax credit
421–2, 846w

Reserve forces
1305w

Resignations
Teachers 29w, 760w

Restraint equipment
Courts 157w

Retail trade
Petrol 557w

Retirement
Cabinet Office 1011–2w
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 809w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1218–9w
Dept for International Development 802w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 871–3w
Dept of Health 1028w
Dept of Trade and Industry 1154w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 967–8w
Home Office 1203–4w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 1025–6w
Ministry of Defence 942–6w
NHS 1127w
Northern Ireland Office 997w
Police 638w
Scotland Office 1256w
Teachers 403–4w
Treasury 848w

Reviews
1223–4w
Armed forces 710–1w
Defence Intelligence and Security Centre 710w
English Sports Council 752w
Non-departmental public bodies 323–4w
Tribunals 788w

Ribble Valley
Foot and mouth disease 169w

Riot control weapons
Northern Ireland 480w

River Tamar
Ammunition 142w

River Wye
Bridges 553w

Road traffic
15–6w, 499–500w, 891w

Road traffic control
16–7w
A40M 1201w
Greater London 8w
Lorries 86w, 917w

Road traffic offences
European Convention on Human Rights 153–4w
Scotland 153–4w

Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001
Questions
205–6w

Road works
12w, 89–90w, 499–500w
A46 533–4w
A69 525w
EC grants and loans 217w
M5 533–4w
M6 525w
M25 98–9w
Northern Ireland 217w
Utilities 1227–8w

Roads
91w
Accidents 14w, 527w, 1225–6w
Boscombe Down 941w
Construction 192w
Freight 1171w
Isle of Wight 537w
Milton Keynes 892–3w
Noise 1228–30w
Northern Ireland 312w
Planning 883–4w
Private finance initiative 203–4w
Safety 15w, 892w
Tolls 542w
Wandsworth 527w

Robathan, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 656–7
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Alternative energy (17.10.01) 297–300wh, 302wh
Questions
Agriculture, Environment protection 1265w
Cricket, Public order 51w
Foot and mouth disease, Tourism 151w
Northern Ireland government 216w

Robertsbridge
Flood control 170w, 396w

Robertson, Angus
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 250–1, (18.07.01) 312, 318, 330–1, 380
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1210, 1213, 1247–50, 1258–9
European Communities (Finance) Bill, Programme motion and Com (19.07.01) 479

Robertson, Angus—continued
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 3R (18.10.01) 1343
Terrorism (15.10.01) 949–50
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 1372w
Afghanistan, Overseas aid 1284w
Air force 942w
Air force, Manpower 1369–70w
Apache AH-64 helicopter 6w
Armed forces, Manpower 713–4w
Army, Manpower 1135–6w
Aviation, Dept for International Development 1283w
Aviation, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1151w
Aviation, Inverness 1368w
Aviation, Ministry of Defence 1139w
Buildings, Dept for International Development 1282w
Buildings, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1239w
Buildings, Ministry of Defence 960w
Correspondence, Dept for International Development 1283w
Correspondence, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 974–5w
Defence equipment, Procurement 717w, 953w
Driving offences, Scotland 411w
European Communities, Scotland 497–8w
Excise duties, Whisky 576w
Fisheries, Compensation 37–8w, 327w, 598–9w
Foreign investment in UK, Scotland 498w, 609w
Manpower, Dept for International Development 1280–1w
Manpower, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1150–1w, 1297w
Manpower, Ministry of Defence 964w
Manpower, Northern Ireland Office 1360–1w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept for International Development 1282–3w
Pay, Dept for International Development 1281–2w
Pay, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 974w
Pay, Ministry of Defence 959w
Pay, Northern Ireland Office 1360w
Public expenditure, Dept for International Development 1282w
Public expenditure, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1151w
Public expenditure, Ministry of Defence 959–60w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland Office 1360w
Rapid deployment forces, EC countries 712–3w
Select committees, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1297–8w
Warships 964–5w

Robertson, Hugh
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 825, (16.10.01) 1119–21
Questions
Birds, Conservation 1088–9w
Chiropody 1356w
Food, Labelling 1074w
Future of Farming and Food Policy Commission 1078w
Hedges and ditches 1270w
Horticulture 395–6w
Pesticides, Taxation 1074–5w
Work permits, Seasonal workers 628w

Robertson, John
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 973
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Carers (16.10.01) 171–5wh
Questions
Business questions 1314
Carers' allowance 913–4
Drugs, Scotland 150–1w

Robertson, Mr Laurence
Questions
Aviation, Security 1368w
Bombs 1372w
China, Furs 1382w
Driving, Disabled 1368–9w
Education of children at home 133w
Food, Labelling 70w
Foot and mouth disease, Small businesses 266–7w, 286–7
Gambling 1381w
Genetically modified organisms, Crops 59w
Hearing aids 1377w
Human embryo experiments 1121w
Incapacity benefit 1384–5w
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (NIE) 216–7w
Planning permission, Tewkesbury 550–1w
Standards Fund 1392–3w
Teachers, Recruitment 1386w
Wheat 1056w

Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 856–8

Robinson, Mr Peter D
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order (16.07.01) 97–102
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 495–7
Questions
Business questions 435–6
Police, Northern Ireland 218–9w

Roche, Mrs Barbara, Minister of State, Cabinet Office
Questions
Select committees, Cabinet Office 1003–4w

Rochester, Christopher
(18.10.01) 1353–8

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Neurology, Consultants 1033
Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards 1285w

Rolling stock
506–7w

Romford
Pensioners 699–700w
Railways 552w

Rooney, Mr Terry
Questions
Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 348w

Rosindell, Andrew
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 177–80
Maiden speech (17.07.01) 177–80
Questions
Chemical and biological warfare 1306–7w
Defence 1304w
District line, Repairs and maintenance 528–9w
Employment tribunals 603w

Rosindell, Andrew—continued
General Teaching Council, Codes of practice 766w
Local government finance, Havering 551–2w
Office for Standards in Education, Public appointments 765w
Pensioners, Income support 700w
Pensioners, Romford 699w
Private sector, Conditions of employment 609w
Public expenditure 381–2w
Railways, Romford 552w
Refugees, Essex 1193–4w
Refugees, Voucher schemes 1235w
Road traffic control, Lorries 917w
School leaving certificates 768w
Telecommunications, Licensing 599w
Tipping of waste 1089w

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 682, 747–9
Questions
Employment schemes 911–2
New deal for lone parents 375–6w

Rosyth
Ferries 149w

Rough Sleepers Unit
Manpower 1365w

Roy, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 888–9
Questions
Derelict land, Lanarkshire 149w
Incapacity benefit 300w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 913
State retirement pensions, Administrative delays 420w

Royal charters
Urban areas 687–8w, 933–4w, 1025w

Royal Mail
Redundancy 604w

Royal Naval Reserve
Manpower 958w

Royal parks
Birds 807w
Pest control 752–3w

Royal Parks Agency
751w

Royal Parks Constabulary
Employment tribunals 1285–6w

Royal prerogative
967w

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital
724w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Annual reports 311w

Ruane, Chris
Questions
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 1251w
Further education, Per capita costs 238–9w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 1159–60
Oil, Irish Sea 38w
Teachers, Retirement 403–4w

Ruddock, Joan
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1372–5, 1387, 1402
Terrorism (04.10.01) 783–5
Questions
Afghanistan, Females 1168
Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission 456–7w
Ruddock, Joan—continued
Biosafety Protocol 629w
Business questions 439
Climate change levy, Combined heat and power 568w
Combined heat and power 592w, 1082w, 1250w
Electricity, Licensing 264w
Electricity generation, Carbon dioxide 264w
Electricity generation, Markets 322w
Genetically modified organisms, Antibiotics 629w
Genetically modified organisms, Crops 628–9w
Genetically modified organisms, EC law 1067w
Genetically modified organisms, Seeds 1063–4w
Genetically modified organisms, Soil 1063w
India, Overseas aid 476–7w

Rugby
1288w, 1381w
Australia 1288w
National Lottery 53w
Television 53w

Rural areas
Bank services 601w
Bedfordshire 1267w
Bus services 13–4w
Cambridgeshire 1218w
Departmental responsibilities 1047w
Manufacturing industries 1277w
Small businesses 1096w
Telecommunications 600w
Tourism 1289w
Traffic Commissioners 1319w

Rural development plans
Wales 422w

Rural Payments Agency
Standards 1247w

Rural Task Force
see Foot and Mouth Task Force

Russell, Bob
Questions
Armed forces, Housing 717w
Crimestoppers, Finance 1326w
Digital broadcasting, Essex 808–9w
Incinerators 1214w
Listed buildings, Colchester 553w
London Underground, Cabinet Office 457w
London Underground, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 56w
London Underground, Dept for Education and Skills 239w
London Underground, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1059w
London Underground, Dept for International Development 189w
London Underground, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 86–7w
London Underground, Dept for Work and Pensions 65w
London Underground, Dept of Health 721–2w
London Underground, Dept of Trade and Industry 107w
London Underground, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 122w
London Underground, Leader of the House of Commons 215w
London Underground, Lord Chancellor's Dept 159w
Russell, Bob—continued
London Underground, Ministry of Defence 144w
London Underground, Northern Ireland Office 313w
London Underground, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 124w
London Underground, Prime Minister 102–3w
London Underground, Scotland Office 411w
London Underground, Treasury 558w
Magistrates, Essex 1012w
Neurology, Consultants 1032
Schools, Colchester 766w
Specialist schools, Essex 767–8w
Students, Finance 239–40w
Teachers, Essex 766–7w
Tipping of waste 1269w
Urban areas, Royal charters 933–4w
Voluntary work 1257w

Russell, Ms Christine
Questions
Debts, Developing countries 373–4w

Russia
Nuclear submarines 587–8w, 950w

Rwanda
War crimes 120–1w

Ryan, Ms Joan
Questions
Parliamentary scrutiny 155w

S4C
57w

SA80 rifle
1140–1w

St George's Hospital Tooting
430w
Acute beds 430w
Finance 430w
Manpower 729–30w

St Helens
Magistrates 453–4w

St Leonard's Hospital Dorset
204w, 237–8w

Sakina Security Services
983w, 1238w

Salisbury Plain
Challenger tanks 8w, 959w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 30
Business questions (16.07.01) 91
Select committees (16.07.01) 35, 38–9, 47, 51, 63–5
Terrorism (04.10.01) 686, 691, (08.10.01) 831–2, 850–2, 882, 896, (16.10.01) 1054, 1082, 1090, 1098–102, 1133, 1139
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 614
Questions
Aviation, Cabinet Office 1006–7w
Aviation, Prime Minister 822–3w
Aviation, Treasury 866w
Buildings, Treasury 854w
Correspondence, Cabinet Office 1005–6w
Correspondence, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1026–7w
Correspondence, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1001–2w
Correspondence, Prime Minister 821–2w
Correspondence, Treasury 858–9w
"Defeating International Terrorism" 1362w
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 137–8
Fisheries, Compensation 1161–2w

Salmond, Mr Alex—continued
Fisheries, Safety 19w
Manpower, Treasury 868w
Ministerial changes 287–8
Pay, Treasury 846w, 1259w
Public expenditure 837–8w
Public expenditure, Scotland 21w, 838w
Public expenditure, Treasury 854–6w
Public relations, Treasury 1259w
Select committees, Cabinet Office 1003–4w
Select committees, Prime Minister 1257w
Select committees, Treasury 865w
Tax allowances, Film 214w
Tax yields, Holyrood Parliament building 569w

Salter, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 966
Questions
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 297w
Hospital beds 1122w
Medical Devices Agency, Annual reports 427w
Weapons, Northern Ireland 217w

Sanctions
Angola 969w
Iraq 493w
Yugoslavia 425w

Sanders, Mr Adrian
Debates etc.
Children with Disabilities (Play Areas) Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 307–8
Questions
Housing investment programmes 10–1w
Information technology 38–9w
USA, Foreign trade 317w, 422w

Sarwar, Mr Mohammad
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 633–4, (04.10.01) 685, (08.10.01) 848–50

Saunders, Stephen
258–9w

Savidge, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 761–3
Questions
Police, Northern Ireland 219w

Sawford, Phil
Questions
Nuclear weapons, Accidents 140–1w
Scottish Homes 411–2w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Speeches, Points of order (08.10.01) 830
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 615
Questions
Alternative energy 1271w
Animals, Diseases 1097w
Bovine tuberculosis, Disease control 1095w
Economic situation 288
Fire services, Training 511–2w
Flood control 1095–6w, 1272w
Foot and mouth disease, Import controls 1118w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 1267w
Future of Farming and Food Policy Commission 1218w
Greenhouse effect 1062w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Standards 1076–7w
Incapacity benefit 831w
Incinerators 1364–5w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan—continued
Incinerators, Planning permission 1058w
Incinerators, Pollution control 1058w
Livestock, Transport 1219–20w
Meat, Smuggling 1096w
Nuclear power 1097w
Peat, Environment protection 1217–8w
Police, Manpower 653w
Recycling 1054w
Small businesses, Rural areas 1096w
Tipping of waste 1284–5
Training, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1096–7w

School leaving certificates
768w

Schools
30w, (20.07.01) 560–3, 991–2w
Administration 777–8w
Admissions 136w, 765w, 775w, 991w
Arts 1–2
Bedfordshire 136–7w
Buildings 759w, 1295w
Cambridgeshire 1175–6w
Closures 1293–4w
Colchester 766w
Computer networks 1180w
Coventry 242–4w
Finance 27w, 136–7w, 185w, 404w, 989–91w, 994w, 1392w
Governing bodies 247w, 1177w
Intimidation 410w, 765w, 1189–90w
Music 1290–1w
Per capita costs 758w
Performing arts 764–5w
Playing fields 1291w
Private finance initiative 1182w
Repairs and maintenance 990w
Security 1232–3w
Somerset 759w
Sports 8–10
Standards 409–10w, 769w, 1392w
Surrey 401–2w
Transport 409w, 513w, 988w
Upminster 1295w
Vandalism 405w

"Schools Building on Success"
753–4w

Science
Females 262w

Scientific Procedures Inspectorate
Manpower 793–4w

Scotland
Air routes 150w
Assisted areas 325–6w
Delegated legislation 143
Diplomatic service 150w
Driving offences 411w
Drugs 150–1w
Economic and monetary union 137–40, 152w
Electricity generation 152w
Energy (16.10.01) 214–20wh
European Communities 497–8w
European Convention on Human Rights 152w
Euthanasia 143–4
Foot and mouth disease 135–7, 151–2w, 411w
Foreign investment in UK 498w, 609w
Fuels 140–2
Members 1296w
NHS 151w
Oil 149w
Pensioners 153w
Planning 154w
Public expenditure 21w, 153w, 838w, 1260–1w
Road traffic offences 153–4w

Scotland—continued
Social security benefits 831w, 1209w
Tourism 151w
Winter fuel payments 150w

Scotland Act 1998
Questions
143

Scotland Act 1998 (Transfer of Functions to Scottish Ministers Etc) (No 2) Order 2001
Debates etc.
(17.07.01) 261–2

Scotland Office
Construction 1255–6w
Early retirement 466w
Information technology 153w
London Underground 411w
Public relations 465–6w
Recess 412w
Retirement 1256w
Sick leave 466w

Scotland Yard
see Metropolitan Police

Scottish Affairs Select Committee
(16.07.01) 81, (19.07.01) 520

Scottish Homes
411–2w

Scottish Parliament
Committees 156w

Scottish Transport Group
Pension funds 845–6w

Seasonal workers
Work permits 628w

Second homes
Council tax 95–6w, 502w, 899w

Secondary education
Curriculum 239w
Huntingdon 1176w
Teachers 239w
Wandsworth 249–50w

Security
Airports 1366w
Aviation 933w, 1368w
Hospitals 1028–9w
RAF Menwith Hill 955w
Rulings and statements (04.10.01) 671, (19.10.01) 1359
Schools 1232–3w
Sellafield 1152w

Security Forces Collusion with Loyalist Terrorists Inquiry
953w

Security Industry Authority
280w

Security Service
see MI5

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Questions
Sixth form education, Hackney 1385w

Seeboard
Energy supply 271w

Seeds
Genetically modified organisms 1063–4w

Select Committee on Public Administration
see Public Administration Select Committee

Select committees
(16.07.01) 35–80, 154, 281, 469–70w, (19.07.01) 508–17, 1001w
Cabinet Office 1003–4w

Select committees—continued
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1310w
Dept of Trade and Industry 986w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1297–8w
Home Office 1325–6w
Prime Minister 1257w
Rulings and statements (17.07.01) 155
Treasury 865w

Self-assessment
Income tax 382w

Self-determination of states
Western Sahara 969–70w

Self-regulation
Legal profession 156w

Sellafield
458w, 605w
Mixed oxide fuel 291–2w, 469w, 1097w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 103w
Security 1152w

Selous, Andrew
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 765–6, (08.10.01) 878
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 336–7wh
Questions
Class sizes, Bedfordshire 406–7w
Dunstable bypass 1172w
Education, Plain English 407w
Free school meals, Bedfordshire 406w
Further education, Bedfordshire 248w
Further education, Finance 773w
Further education, Per capita costs 773–4w
Health education, Bedfordshire 248w
Hepatitis, Disease control 1036
Pre-school education, Bedfordshire 248w
Primary education, Bedfordshire 406w
Schools, Finance 136–7w
Teachers, Bedfordshire 249w
Teachers, Information technology 1178w
Teachers, Pay 1178w
Teachers, Training 30w

SEMA Group
419w

Serbia
Uranium 141w

Serious Fraud Office
Annual reports 315w

Service Children's Education
Standards 207–8w

Service industries
588w

Set-aside schemes
1087w

Settle
Foot and mouth disease 1098w

Severe disablement allowance
Wandsworth 698w

Severn estuary
Flood control 1272w

Sewers
1061–2w
Kent 1081w
Lancashire 1061w

Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (17.10.01) 1171

Sex Offences Review
344w, 666w

Sexual offences
Learning disability 1393w

Sexual Offences Act 1956
Questions
128w

Shared ownership schemes
193w

Shaw, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Firearms (Amendment) Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 309
Railtrack (15.10.01) 969
Terrorism (08.10.01) 865–6, 897
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 310wh, 324–7wh, 337wh
Questions
Flood control 94–5w
Immigrants, South Africa 929w
Members, Correspondence 889w
Natural gas, Prices 39w
Waste and Resources Action programme, Finance 295–6w

Sheep
Exports 1088w
Foot and mouth disease 614w

Sheep dipping
Ground water 611w

Sheep premiums
1118w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 307–13wh, 326wh
Questions
Advisory services, Finance 786w
Arbitration, Finance 786w
Areas of outstanding natural beauty, Motorcycles 1059w
Out-patients, Attendance 1048
Prosthetics 431–4w

Sheltered housing
1367w, 1369w

Sheltered housing wardens
VAT 181w

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Wright, Lauren (16.10.01) 221–5wh, 228wh

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 29
Select committees (16.07.01) 39
Terrorism (15.10.01) 935
Questions
Fire services, West Midlands 132w

Sheridan, Jim
Debates etc.
European Communities (Finance) Bill, Programme motion and Com (19.07.01) 476–7
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 986
Maiden speech (19.07.01) 476–7

Shipley, Ms Debra
Questions
BBC, Digital broadcasting 77w
BBC, Standards 77w
Performance and Innovation Unit 317–8w

Shipping
Certification 508–11w
Work permits 509w

Short, Rt Hon Clare, Secretary of State for International Development
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 851, 893–901
Questions
Afghanistan, EC aid 1284w
Afghanistan, Refugees 799–801w
Africa, Non-governmental organisations 804w
Angola 802–3w
Arms control 803w
Buildings, Dept for International Development 803w
Commonwealth Development Corporation, Overseas investment 308–10w
Economic and Social Research Overseas Advisory Committee 471–2w
Free trade 478w
Genetically modified organisms, Research 472–4w
India, Overseas aid 476–7w
Information technology, Dept for International Development 190w
Intellectual property 475–6w
Kosovo, Agriculture 478w
London Underground, Dept for International Development 189w
Mongolia, Overseas aid 477–8w
Nigeria, Administration of justice 307w
Pakistan, Overseas aid 801–2w
Palestinians, Overseas aid 120w, 478w
Public relations, Dept for International Development 478–9w
Recess, Dept for International Development 478w
Retirement, Dept for International Development 802w
Sick leave, Dept for International Development 474–5w
Trade agreements 477w

Shrewsbury
Customs and Excise 1259–60w

Shropshire Health Authority
Manpower 724w

Sick leave
Dept for Culture Media and Sport 806–7w
Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1078–80w
Dept for International Development 474–5w
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 525w
Dept for Work and Pensions 694–5w
Dept of Health 439w
Dept of Trade and Industry 588w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 491w
London Underground 364w
Ministry of Defence 708w
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 470–1w
Police 915w
Prison Service 909–10w
Scotland Office 466w
Thames Valley Police 1200w
Treasury 562–3w

Sight impaired
Jobcentres 702–3w

Sikhs
Race relations (16.07.01) 128–34

Simon, Sion
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (20.07.01) 536–8
Voting behaviour (20.07.01) 536–8

Simpson, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 359–66
Terrorism (04.10.01) 789–91, (08.10.01) 831
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 1163–4
Electricity generation, Markets 263–4w, 585–6w
Further education, Finance 1181–2w
Further education, Pay 1180–1w, 1292w
Further education, Teachers 1181w
Genetically modified organisms, Animal feed 732w
Genetically modified organisms, Crops 1064w
Genetically modified organisms, Fish 1067w
Genetically modified organisms, Maize 319w, 1065w
National Institute of Agricultural Botany 596w, 1064–5w
Utilities, Direct selling 583–4w

Simpson, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 736–7, (08.10.01) 819

Singh, Mr Marsha
Debates etc.
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1072

Single people
Standard of living 561w

Single regeneration budget
881w
Finsbury Park 881w

Sites of special scientific interest
620w

Sixth form colleges
Transport (20.07.01) 578–80

Sixth form education
1231w
Bedfordshire 248w
Curriculum 1180w
Finance 136w, 768–9w, 992w
Hackney 1385w
Student numbers 769w, 987w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses, Points of order (16.07.01) 22
Oral question time intervention (17.07.01) 151, (18.10.01) 1317
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 614
Questions
Business questions 1309
House of Commons, Electronic voting 149
Interest rates 376w
Poverty, International assistance 414

Slaughterhouses
Foot and mouth disease 1114w

Sleaford
Health services (20.07.01) 544–8

Sleeping rough
98w, 371w

Slums
Elderly 415w

Small Business Council
320–1w
Annual reports 1277w

Small businesses
986w
EC grants and loans 592w

Small businesses—continued
Foot and mouth disease 266–7w, 286–7, 1266w
Innovation 39w
Non-domestic rates 362w
Regulation 597–8w, 982w
Rural areas 1096w
Tax burden (20.07.01) 538–41

SMART awards
Kingston upon Hull 1279–80w

Smith, Rt Hon Andrew, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Economic policy (16.07.01) 110
Questions
Agriculture, North East region 564w
Alternative energy 862w
Aviation, Finance 1212–3w
Bank services, Competition 847w
Capital gains tax 853w
Devolution, Referendums 181w
EC grants and loans 372–3w
Electronic government 579w
Foot and mouth disease 848w
Foot and mouth disease, Costs 1260w
Government departments, Buildings 850w
Government departments, Standards 834–5w
Insurance, Terrorism 1262–3w
National asset register 25w, 384–5w
National income 861w
NHS, Finance 1212w
Open government 573–4w
Partnerships UK 863–4w
Private finance initiative 861–2w
Private finance initiative, Contracts 560w
Private finance initiative, Treasury 560w
Public expenditure 376w, 381–2w, 425–6, 574w, 837–8w, 853–4w
Public expenditure, Scotland 21w, 838w, 1260–1w
Public expenditure, Treasury 854–6w
Public sector, Assets 381w
Public sector, Information technology 22w
Public sector, Productivity 22w
Public sector net cash requirement 848w
Scottish Transport Group, Pension funds 845–6w
State retirement pensions 376w
Surveillance, Expenditure 20–1w
Tax burden 377w
Tax burden, Business 417–9
Tax burden, Trade competitiveness 371–2w
Tax yields 560–1w
Tax yields, Holyrood Parliament building 569w
World Bank 379w

Smith, Angela, An Assistant Whip
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 670

Smith, Rt Hon Chris
Questions
National Lottery 6

Smith, Geraldine
Questions
Business questions 1310

Smith, Jacqui, Minister of State, Dept of Health
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 209–13wh
Questions
Alzheimer's disease 119w
Alzheimer's disease, Prescription drugs 68–9w
Antidepressants 69–70w

Smith, Jacqui—continued
Arthritis, Prescription drugs 1354w
Breast feeding 1326–7w
Cancer, Waiting lists 1041w
Cannabis, Medical treatments 1345–6w
Care trusts 1120–1w
Child protection registers 438w
Child protection registers, Greater London 437–8w
Children, Abuse 1340w
Children Act 1989 113w
Children in care 69w, 1128–32w
Children in care, Education 407w
Chiropody 430–1w
Community care 445w
Community health services, Disability aids 72w
Dental services, North Yorkshire 1123w
Dental services, Pendle 1122w
Diabetes 221w, 1046w
Diabetes, Screening 222w
Disability aids 118w, 428–9w
Drugs, Misuse 1355w
Eating disorders 1029–30w
Elderly 1036–7w, 1332–6w
Elderly, Accidents 1345w
Endometriosis 1046–7
Fybromyalgia 1034w
Health and Social Care Act 2001 1120w
Health authorities, Lancashire 1122w
Health authorities, Standards 117w
Health services, Elderly 108–9w, 233w, 1036w
Hearing aids 1327w, 1377w
Home care services 109–10w
Hospital beds 118–9w, 1036w, 1122w
Hospital beds, Elderly 1042w
Hospital beds, North Yorkshire 1349–50w
Hospital beds, Worcestershire 1349w
Hyperactivity, Children 1344–5w
Institutional care 71w, 448w, 1037w, 1342–3w
Institutional care, Buckinghamshire 445–6w
Institutional care, Cumbria 446w
Institutional care, Fees and charges 113–4w, 442w, 1329–32w
Institutional care, Finance 71w
Institutional care, Training 1342w
Kidney patients, Medical treatments 1045–6w
Maternity services 1037–41
Maternity services, Midwives 1040
Members, Correspondence 1030w
Mental health 1027–8w, 1354w
Mental health services, Advocacy 220–1w
Mental health services, Finance 70w, 221w
Mental health services, Standards 221w
Mentally ill, Drugs 442–5w, 1035–6w
National service frameworks, Elderly 437w
Neurology, Consultants 1032–3
NHS, Employment agencies 441–2w
Nurses, Foreign workers 441w
Osteoporosis 1121w
Prosthetics 431–4w, 1353w
Psychiatry, Milton Keynes 439–40w
Rehabilitation 1353w
Social security benefits, Departmental coordination 1042w
Social services, Standard spending assessments 1033–4w
Spinal injuries 1029w
Strokes 235w
Vaccination, Children 1126w

Smith, Mr John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1177, 1182, 1197, 1211, 1213–4, 1219, 1250–3
Terrorism (04.10.01) 757, 770–2

Smith, Mr John*—*continued
Questions
Business questions 445
Deep vein thrombosis 203w
Defence Aviation Repair Agency, Executives 707w
Defence Aviation Repair Agency, RAF St Athan 706–8w
Employment, Wales 1159
Northern Ireland government 219w

Smith, Llew
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 29wh, 37–9wh
Questions
Alternative energy 584–5w
British Nuclear Fuels 1059–60w
Cattle, Disease control 1059w
Energy Policy Review 103w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 617w
Foot and mouth disease, World Organisation for Animal Health 1099w
Mixed oxide fuel, Research 327w
New Opportunities Fund 186–7w
Nuclear power 107–8w
Nuclear weapons, Radiation exposure 145w
Poverty, Departmental responsibilities 319w
Radioactive materials, Pollution control 291w
Radioactive wastes, Germany 637w
Radioactive wastes, Pollution control 291w
Regional planning and development 73w
S4C 57w
Sellafield 458w
Sellafield, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 103w
Small businesses, Innovation 39w
Sustainable development, Departmental responsibilities 103w
Transport, Nuclear fuels 191w
Unemployment, Blaenau Gwent 1254w
Uranium 141–2w
Uranium, Kosovo 141w
Welsh language, Broadcasting programmes 188–9w

Smith, Sir Robert
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 970–1
Questions
Animal feed, Fish products 612w
Business questions 443

Smoking
730w

Smuggling
378–9w
Cannabis 383w
Meat 1080w, 1096w
Petrol 855w
Republic of Ireland 855w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 732–4
Questions
Business questions 1312
Diagnosis 1121w
NHS, Wales 1153

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 707–8, 713–5, (08.10.01) 818–9, 835
Questions
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 272–3

Social clubs
Gaming machines 812w

Social Exclusion Unit
1363w

Social Fund
Annual reports 705–6w

Social security benefits
697–8w, 830w, 1208–10w
Abuse 298w, 413w, 418w, 823–4w, 1256w, 1384w
Australia 64w
Automated credit transfer 825w
Basic education 685–6w, 784w
Brent 298w
Carers 824w
Departmental coordination 1042w
Disabled 301–2w, 417–8w, 689w, 824w, 832–3w
Ethnic groups 831w
Interviews 64w
Local exchange and trading schemes 1302w
Overseas residence 413w
Pensioners 65w, 701w, 826–7w, 912–3, 918–20
Proof of identity 1383w
Refugees 302–3w
Scotland 831w, 1209w
Students 694w
Take-up 831w
Working mothers 824–5w
Young people 302–3w

Social Security Contributions Agency
Computers 684–5w

Social Security Fraud Act 2001
Questions
413w

Social Security (Incapacity Benefit) Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 2000
Questions
176w, 1210–1w

Social Security (Literacy etc Skills Training Pilot) Regulations 2001
Debates etc.
(17.07.01) 262, (18.07.01) 405–10

Social services
Standard spending assessments 1033–4w
Worcestershire 731–2w

Soil
Genetically modified organisms 1063w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 737–9
Terrorism, Points of order (18.10.01) 1324
Questions
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Annual reports 273w

Solicitor-General
Buildings 995w
Construction 996w
Green Ministers Committee 207w
Information technology 101–2w

Somerset
Dental services (17.10.01) 1275–82
Education 760w
Foot and mouth disease 1250w
Livestock 1219w
Schools 759w

South Africa
Immigrants 929w

South Coast Corridor Multi-Modal Study
542w

South East region
Regional airports 501w
Regional assemblies 547w

South West region
Foot and mouth disease 1116w
Regional enterprise grants 107w

Southend
EC grants and loans (17.07.01) 264–70
Refugees 340–1w
Unemployment 830w

Southworth, Ms Helen
Questions
Non-departmental public bodies, Reviews 323–4w
Regional development agencies 324w

Sovereignty
Falkland Islands 821w

Speaker and deputies
Debates etc.
Amendments and new clauses (16.07.01) 24
Cann, Jamie, Death (16.10.01) 1031
Conduct of proceedings (16.07.01) 5, 11, 26, 28, 35, 55, 101–2, 127, (17.07.01) 139, 146, 153, 262, (18.07.01) 278, 285, (19.07.01) 433, 452, 458, 505, 508, 510, 515–6, (20.07.01) 554, (14.09.01) 624, 637, 640, 651, (04.10.01) 710, 715, 720, 734, 736, 749, 772, 779, 782, 787, 789, 791, 793, 797, (08.10.01) 822, 829, 834, 850, 860, 876, 884, (15.10.01) 930, 957, 963–4, 973, 975–6, (16.10.01) 1044, (17.10.01) 1167, 1224, 1261, (18.10.01) 1291, 1301, 1303, 1323, 1337, 1340, (19.10.01) 1394
Deferred divisions (18.07.01) 335
Disallowed questions (15.10.01) 976–7, (17.10.01) 1166, (18.10.01) 1304
Orders and regulations motions (17.07.01) 261
Points of order (16.07.01) 21–3, (17.07.01) 155, (18.07.01) 305, (04.10.01) 744, (08.10.01) 829–30, (16.10.01) 1052, 1084, (18.10.01) 1324–5, (19.10.01) 1359–60
Royal assent (19.07.01) 460
Rulings and statements, Amendments and new clauses (16.07.01) 21
Rulings and statements, Correspondence (18.10.01) 1324
Rulings and statements, Eight minutes rule (14.09.01) 617, (04.10.01) 702, (08.10.01) 830
Rulings and statements, Members' interests (19.07.01) 460
Rulings and statements, Parliamentary procedure (16.07.01) 24, (14.09.01) 604, 628
Rulings and statements, Security (04.10.01) 671, (19.10.01) 1359
Rulings and statements, Select committees (17.07.01) 155
Rulings and statements, Unparliamentary expressions (19.10.01) 1395
Select committee motions (19.07.01) 516, 520
Standing Order no 24 applications, Michelin Tyres (16.10.01) 1051
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Conduct of proceedings (17.07.01) 12wh, 27wh, (18.07.01) 111wh, (19.07.01) 152wh, (16.10.01) 185wh, 197wh, 199wh, 213wh, 221wh, 225–6wh, (17.10.01) 245–6wh, 258wh, 270wh, 281wh, 296wh, (18.10.01) 313wh, 318wh, 327–8wh

Speaker's Advisory Panel
317w

Spearfish
146w

Special constables
Conditions of employment 639–40w
Public transport 640–1w
Thames Valley Police 902–3w
West Midlands Police 903–4w

Special education
256w, 402–3w, 779w, 989–90w, 1292–3w
Cerebral palsy 987w
Closures 1386–9w, 1391w
Finance 779w
Qualifications 1386w
Standard assessment tasks 1185–6w
Vacancies 1389–91w

Special Educational Needs Tribunal
403w

Specialist schools
29w, 991–2w, 1231–2w, 1293w
Essex 767–8w
Oxfordshire 761w
Standards 1385w

Speed limits
Cameras 644w, 1399–400w
Fines 644w
Lancashire 280w
Railways 92–3w, 200–1w

Spellar, Rt Hon John, Minister for Transport, Department for Transport Local Government and the Regions
Questions
A11 524–5w
A69, Road works 525w
Aviation 359w
Cycleways, Greater London 879–82w
Highways Agency 499w
Lorries, Licensing 85–6w
M6, Road works 525w
Public footpaths, Cycleways 543w
Railway track, Standards 93w
Railways, Greater London 501–2w
Railways, Speed limits 92–3w, 200–1w
Regional airports 363w
Roads, Safety 15w
Swanwick Air Traffic Control Centre 201–2w
Temple Sowerby bypass 524w
Traffic areas, Computer networks 11w

Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 889–92
Questions
Chiropody 230w, 430–1w
Hearing, Babies 738w
NHS, Pilot schemes 738w

Spicer, Sir Michael
Questions
Public sector, Private sector 285

Spinal injuries
1029w

Spink, Bob
Debates etc.
Bypasses, Petitions (17.10.01) 1274
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 221
Health services (20.07.01) 568–72
Ministerial statement intervention (15.10.01) 937
Summer adjournment debate intervention (20.07.01) 529, 545–6, 554–5, 561
Terrorism (14.09.01) 638, (08.10.01) 861–2
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 318wh
Questions
Beta-interferon 1120w
Confiscation orders 575–6w

Spink, Bob—continued
Crime prevention, Castle Point 278w
Driving instruction, Standards 99w
European Convention on Human Rights, Scotland 152w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 1254w
Inland waterways 1273w
Landfill tax, Tax yields 1118w
Lorazepam 1356–7w
Religion, Discrimination 1400w
Repetitive strain injury 111w
Speed limits, Cameras 1399–400w
State retirement pensions 376w
Waste disposal, Pitsea 292–3w, 624–6w
Wetlands 1089–90w

Sponsorship
Millennium Exhibition 747–8w

Sport action zones
808w

Sport England
see English Sports Council

Sports
53w, 748w
Drugs 77–9w
Finance 750w
Non-domestic rates 836w
Schools 8–10
Tax allowances 79w, 215w
Training 4–5
Young people 315–6w

Sports competitors
Dietary supplements 224w

Sportsgrounds
816w
Football 1143w

Spring, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 192–3, 219–20, 222–7, 229, 234, 236–7, 249–51, 253–7, (18.07.01) 310–5, 320–1, 336–7, 341–3, 350–4, 358, 382, 386–7
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1197, 1202, 1205, 1214, 1218, 1220, 1262–6
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Reform 975w

Squire, Ms Rachel
Debates etc.
Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 308
Terrorism (04.10.01) 730–2
Questions
Ferries, Rosyth 149w
Jobseeker's allowance 178w
Standard of living, Single people 561w

Sri Lanka
Referendums 498–9w
Refugees 130w

Staffordshire
206w
Education 250w
General practitioners 68w
Nurses 68w
Pre-school education 408w

Stakeholder pensions
63–4w, 297–8w, 829w, 867–8w, 1383w
Annuities 701w

Stamp duties
564w, 837w
Property transfer 837w

Standard assessment tasks
Special education 1185–6w

Standard of living
Single people 561w

Standard spending assessments
Elderly 547w
Social services 1033–4w

Standards and Effectiveness Unit
28w

Standards and Privileges Select Committee
(16.07.01) 89

Standards Fund
1392–3w

Standing committees
156w

Standing Order no 24 applications
Michelin Tyres (16.10.01) 1051

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 58–60
Terrorism (04.10.01) 682
Questions
Members, Correspondence 451w
Parental responsibility, EC law 451w

Stansted Airport
535w

Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Questions
Alcoholism, Milton Keynes 231–2w
Animal experiments, Disclosure of information 1396–7w
Arms trade, Israel 39–40w
EU-Israel Association Committee 257w
Israel, EC external trade 422w
Kosovo, Agriculture 478w
Maternity services 1038
Office for Standards in Education, Public appointments 411w
Overseas aid, Kosovo 902w
Psychiatry, Milton Keynes 439–40w
Roads, Milton Keynes 892–3w
Tipping of waste 1288–9
Transport, Milton Keynes 892w

Starter home initiative
887–8w
Greater London 1257w
NHS 1367–8w

State earnings related pension scheme
685w
Eligibility 685w

State retirement pensions
180w, 301w, 376w, 703w
Administrative delays 420w
Patients 65w

State second pension
180–1w

State Veterinary Service
Manpower 172–3w

Statistics
558–9w

Statistics Commission
Annual reports 213w

Stevens Inquiry
see Security Forces Collusion with Loyalist Terrorists Inquiry

Stevenson, Mr George
Questions
General practitioners, Staffordshire 68w
Legal profession, Self-regulation 156w

Stewart, Mr David
Questions
Oil, Scotland 149w

Stillman, Ian
121w, 288, 421w

Stinchcombe, Mr Paul
Questions
Children, Protection 909w
Habitual offenders 659–60w
Jobcentres 903
Prison accommodation 901w, 1195–7w
Prisoners, Death 899–900w
Prisoners, Location 660w
Prisons, Drugs 660–4w
Prisons, Education 660w
Prisons, Standards 665w
Prisons, Telephone services 660w

Stoate, Dr Howard
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 303
Questions
Hedges and ditches 884w
Maintenance, Children 1208w
Pensioners, Income support 916
Prostate cancer 732–3w
Transport, Disadvantaged 465w

Stocks and shares
212w

Stop and search
46–7w, 919–20w

Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin,
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 964–5
Terrorism (08.10.01) 860–1

Straw, Rt Hon Jack, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc.
Terrorism (14.09.01) 617–20, (04.10.01) 689–95, (16.10.01) 1053–63, 1065, 1067–8
Questions
Aviation, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1151w
Correspondence, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 974–5w
London Underground, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 122w
Public relations, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 486w
Recess, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 262w
Select committees, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1297–8w
Terrorism, International cooperation 973w

Streeter, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 717–9

Strokes
119w, 235w
Death rate 213w
Health services 72w

Stroud
Abandoned vehicles 1091–2w
Planning permission 882w

Stuart, Ms Gisela
Debates etc.
Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (18.07.01) 302–3
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 170
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1190, 1201, 1224–6, 1263–4
Terrorism (04.10.01) 686, (08.10.01) 840–2, (16.10.01) 1140

Stuart, Ms Gisela—continued
Questions
Leasehold, Insurance 192–3w
Sports, Schools 10

Student numbers
Further education 403w, 772w
Performing arts 762w
Sixth form education 769w, 987w
Veterinary medicine 1179–80w

Students
Fees and charges 29w, 754–5w
Females 758w
Finance 239–40w, 1292w
Health services 438w
Social security benefits 694w

Stunell, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Ministerial and Other Salaries Order (18.10.01) 1350–1
Select committees (16.07.01) 39, 49–53, (19.07.01) 514

Submarines
Tomahawk missiles 147–8w

Sudan
Arms trade 975w

Suez Canal
General service medal 942w

Suffolk
Education 135–6w
Refugees 338w

Supermarkets
Codes of practice 985w
Farmers 1046w

Supply of New Cars Order 2000
Questions
590w

Supply teachers
778w

Surgery
East Sussex 117w
John Radcliffe Hospital 73w
Kidderminster Hospital 738–9w

Surrey
Schools 401–2w
Teachers 1190w
Waiting lists 1327–8w

Surveillance
Expenditure 20–1w
Metropolitan Police 347w

Surveys
Patients 234w

Sussex
Antisocial behaviour orders 795w, 1206–7w

Sussex Police
274w

Sustainable development
58–9w
Agriculture 387w
Departmental responsibilities 103w

Swale
Local government 97–8w

Swansea Prison
905–6w

Swanwick Air Traffic Control Centre
201–2w, 888w

Swayne, Mr Desmond
Debates etc.
Economic policy (16.07.01) 105, 107, 118, 123–6
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1115

Swayne, Mr Desmond—continued
Questions
Armed forces, Insurance 1372w
Bishops, Pay 16–7
Boating 50w
Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU) 123w
Economic and monetary union, Scotland 152w
Gaming machines, Social clubs 812w
Mobile homes 893w
New Forest 634–5w
Northern Ireland government 216w
Pension funds, Surpluses 833–4w
Stillman, Ian 421w

Sweeting, Christian
996–7w

Swire, Mr Hugo
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1219, 1243–5
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1070
Questions
A30 536w
A35 536–7w
Agriculture, Subsidies 1085w
Foot and mouth disease, Devon 1112w
Public statues 749w

Syms, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1366–7, 1387–9, 1399
Questions
Bus services 13w
Bus services, Rural areas 13–4w
Community transport, Excise duties 14w
Docklands light railway line, London City Airport 15w
East coast railway line 502w
East London river crossing 91w
Park and ride schemes 89w
Petrol alternatives 16w
Public transport, Urban areas 12–4w
Railways, Freight 88w
Railways, Greater London 501–2w
Railways, Safety 190w
Road traffic 15–6w
Road traffic control, Lorries 86w
Road works 89–90w, 499–500w
Roads 91w
Roads, Accidents 14w
Roads, Safety 15w
Transport 87–8w
Urban Bus Challenge 13w

Tami, Mark
Questions
Floods, Wales 124w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 1252–3w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (17.07.01) 169
Terrorism (04.10.01) 692

Task forces
459–60w

Tattooing
Plastic surgery 66w

Tax allowances
Film 214w
Former prime ministers 318w
Health insurance 560–1w
Sports 79w, 215w
Urban regeneration companies 856w

"Tax Benefit Reference Manual 2001–02 Edition"
574w

Tax burden
377w
Business 417–9
Small businesses (20.07.01) 538–41
Trade competitiveness 371–2w

Tax evasion
184w

Tax yields
560–1w
Holyrood Parliament building 569w
Landfill tax 1118w

Taxation
Official residences 20w
Pesticides 569w, 1074–5w
Pheasants 851–2w

Taxis
Petrol alternatives 358w

Taylor, Ms Dari
Questions
New deal for young people, Drugs 915–6
NHS University 1124w

Taylor, Mr David
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Credit unions (18.07.01) 81–3wh, 85wh
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 22–7wh, 33wh
Questions
Business questions 1313
EC institutions 976w
Electronic government 306w, 790w
Nigeria, Administration of justice 307w
Sudan, Arms trade 975w
Tax burden, Business 418
Weapons, Northern Ireland 217w

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 854–6
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 454
NHS, Public private partnerships 1119w

Taylor, Mr John
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order (16.07.01) 93–5, 101–2
Police (Northern Ireland) Order (19.07.01) 485–7, 489, 504
Terrorism (16.10.01) 1053
Questions
Census, Disclosure of information 288w, 452w
John Radcliffe Hospital, Surgery 73w
Northern Ireland government 278–9
Registrar General, Departmental responsibilities 386–7w

Taylor, Matthew
Debates etc.
Terrorism (15.10.01) 944–5
Questions
Ashcroft, Lord 263w, 308w, 484w, 976w
Belize, Financial services 26w, 308w, 484w
Business, Corruption 21–2w
Capital gains tax 22–3w
Community investment tax credit 183w
Corruption 131w
Cost effectiveness, Treasury 24w
Economic and monetary union 381w
Economic and monetary union, Exchange rates 561w
Electronic publishing, Treasury 572w
Exclusion orders 930w
Financial institutions 572w
Gold and foreign exchange reserves 569w
Government departments, Opposition 458w

Taylor, Matthew—continued
Government departments, Standards 834–5w
Heavily indebted poor countries initiative 568w
Income tax, Self-assessment 382w
Landlords, Rents 382w
London Transport, Finance 531w
Magistrates' courts, Computers 161w
Marginal tax rates 571w
Members, Personal records 561w
Mercenaries 422w
National asset register 25w
Nuclear weapons, Emergencies 953–4w
Porton Down, Human experiments 143w, 934–7w
Porton Down, War pensions 936–7w
Poverty, International assistance 413–4
Private finance initiative 19w
Private finance initiative, Dept of Health 435w
Proceeds of crime 1398w
Public expenditure 853–4w
Public sector, Assets 381w
Public sector, Information technology 22w
Public sector, Productivity 22w
Research and development tax credit 846w
Roads, Private finance initiative 203–4w
Stamp duties, Property transfer 837w
Statistics 558–9w
Tax allowances, Urban regeneration companies 856w
VAT, Housing 558w
VAT, Institutional care 559w
Working families tax credit 374w
World Bank 379w
Written questions, Treasury 561w

Taylor, Dr Richard
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 30–1wh
Questions
Flood control, Bewdley 1285–6
Incinerators, Planning permission 359–60w
Kidderminster Hospital, Surgery 738–9w
Worcestershire Health Authority, Pay 733w

Taylor, Sir Teddy
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (18.07.01) 356, 369, 374–7
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1207
Select committees (16.07.01) 41, 72–4
Terrorism (08.10.01) 820, 846–8, (15.10.01) 933
Sittings in Westminster Hall
C2C, Industrial disputes (18.07.01) 119–22wh
Questions
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 45w
Food, Waste disposal 1268w
Passports, Forgery 1197w
Refugees 48w, 280–1w
Refugees, Southend 340–1w
Unemployment, Southend 830w

Teachers
Bedfordshire 249w
Codes of practice 407–8w
Early retirement 756w, 763–4w
Essex 766–7w
Further education 1177w, 1181w
Gloucestershire 1386w
Harrow 29w
Information technology 1178w
Manpower 763–5w
Oxfordshire 761w

Teachers—continued
Pay 135w, 768w, 774–6w, 1178w
Recruitment (20.07.01) 563–6, 766w, 1386w, 1391–2w
Resignations 29w, 760w
Retirement 403–4w
Secondary education 239w
Surrey 1190w
Training 28w, 30w, 410w, 760–1w, 988–9w, 1177–8w
Vacancies 401w, 404w, 775w, 1190w

Teaching aids
Biotechnology 249w

Teenage pregnancy
386w, 567w

Telecommunications
599–600w, 1277–8w
Data protection 30–1w
Licensing 326w, 599w
Rural areas 600w

Telecommunications masts
see Aerials

Telephone services
Manchester Prison 681–2w
Prisons 660w
United Kingdom Passport Agency 354w

Television
Disability aids 807w
Fees and charges 740w
Licensing 153w, 187w, 746w, 812–3w
Prisons 922–3w
Rugby 53w

Temperature
Fuels 590w

Temple Sowerby bypass
524w

Tenants
Farmers 1220w

Tennis
1380w

Termination of employment
Metropolitan Police 641–2w

Territorial Army
959w
Buildings 958w
Manpower 958w
Officers 957–8w

Terrorism
(14.09.01) 617–70, (04.10.01) 689–810, 818w, (08.10.01) 830–902, 861w, 933w, 962–4w, 966w, (16.10.01) 1053–141, 1236–7w, 1358w, 1363w
Belfast 483w
Customs and Excise 857–8w
Finance 861w, 983w, 1212w
Insurance 860w, 1262–3w
International cooperation 972–4w
Ministerial statements (14.09.01) 604–16, (04.10.01) 671–88, (08.10.01) 811–29, (15.10.01) 923–39, 940–53
Northern Ireland 218–9w, 271–4, 997–8w
Pakistan 1169–70
Training 1237w
UN resolutions 1150w
USA (14.09.01) 604–16, (04.10.01) 671–88, (08.10.01) 811–29

Terrorism Act 2000
Questions
353w, 1237w

Testicular cancer
225–6w, 427–8w

Tewkesbury
Planning permission 550–1w

Textiles
Trade agreements 595w

Thalidomide Trust Fund
1211w

Thames Valley Police
Manpower 1321w
Sick leave 1200w
Special constables 902–3w

Theatre
Finance 54w, 812w

Theft
Garages and petrol stations 918w, 996w, 1164w

Thomas, Mr Gareth R
Debates etc.
Industrial and Provident Societies Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 306–7
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Credit unions (18.07.01) 69–75wh
Questions
Airports, Security 1366w
Cemeteries, Muslims 503w
Creatine 719–20w
Credit unions 375w
Dietary supplements, Sports competitors 224w
Electricity, Licensing 583w
Electricity generation, Carbon dioxide 40w
Feltham Young Offender Institution and Remand Centre 131w
Government offices for the regions, Standards 554w
Greater London Authority, Transport 1229–30w
Litter, Prosecutions 1275w
Maternity services 1037–8
Middle East, Peace negotiations 260–1w
Neurology, Manpower 231w
NHS Pensions Agency, Annual reports 427w
Palestinians, Overseas aid 120w, 478w
Provident societies 24–6w
Psychiatry 230–2w
Public holidays, Religion 263w
Regional development agencies, Credit unions 607w
Roads, Noise 1228–30w
Sports, Drugs 77–9w
Teachers, Harrow 29w

Thomas, Simon
Debates etc.
Housing (Wales) Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 307
Terrorism (04.10.01) 728–30, (15.10.01) 936–7, (16.10.01) 1094
Questions
Afghanistan, Armed conflict 1168–9
Defence Evaluation and Research Agency, Apprentices 210–2w
Digital broadcasting 51w
EC defence policy 333w
Foot and mouth disease 1266w
House of Commons, Electronic voting 148–9
Public expenditure 376w, 425
QINETIQ, Apprentices 143w
UN Register of Conventional Arms 426w

Throckmorton airfield
142w
Foot and mouth disease 1214–5w

Thurrock
National Lottery 8

Thurso, John
Questions
Alternative energy 600–1w
BOWMAN combat radio system 458
Motor vehicles, Registration 205–6w

Thurso, John*—*continued
Tourism 1289w
Tourism, Scotland 151w
Wind power, Low flying 40w

Tibet
Oil 492w

Timetabling of bills
(19.07.01) 461–83

Timms, Mr Stephen, Minister of State for Schools, Dept for Education and Skills
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 345–8wh
Questions
Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth 1232w
Biotechnology, Teaching aids 249w
Cerebral palsy, Special education 987w
Children, Day care 757–8w
Class sizes 778–9w
Class sizes, Bedfordshire 406–7w
Class sizes, Huntingdon 1176–8w
Curriculum, Personal and social education 1187w
Curriculum, Religion 1185w
Day care, Chorley 245w
Day care, Warrington 409w
Dyslexia 1183–4w
Early years development and childcare partnerships, Coventry 135w, 240–1w
Education, Bureaucracy 1392w
Education, Fees and charges 1294w
Education, Finance 1385w
Education, Henley 765w
Education, Northern Ireland 993w
Education, Plain English 407w
Education, Somerset 760w
Education, Staffordshire 250w
Education, Suffolk 135–6w
Education, Worcestershire 1232w
Education action zones 245–7w
Education Funding Strategy Group 251w
Education of children at home 133w
Excellence in cities 778w
Free school meals 133–4w
Free school meals, Bedfordshire 406w
Free school meals, Huntingdon 1176w
Further education, Transport 251w
General certificate of secondary education 407w
General Teaching Council 993w
General Teaching Council, Codes of practice 766w
General Teaching Council, Registration 238w
Grammar schools, Ballots 993–4w
Grant maintained schools, Havering 1179w
Headteachers 754w
Headteachers, Training 994w
National childcare strategy, Disadvantaged 241–2w
Office for Standards in Education, Public appointments 765w
Pre-school education 244w, 410w, 1294w
Pre-school education, Bedfordshire 248w
Pre-school education, Chorley 244w
Pre-school education, Staffordshire 408w
Pre-school education, Warrington 408–9w
Primary education, Bedfordshire 406w
Primary education, Class sizes 987–8w
Primary education, Non-teaching staff 992–3w
Primary education, Standards 137w, 1186–7w
Private finance initiative 781–2w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Education and Skills 405–6w, 780–2w
Pupil exclusions 408w, 756–7w
Pupil exclusions, Appeals 27–8w

Timms, Mr Stephen*—*continued
Pupil exclusions, Drugs 759–60w, 1187w
Pupils, Contraceptives 1188w
Schools 30w, 991–2w
Schools, Administration 777–8w
Schools, Admissions 136w, 765w, 991w
Schools, Buildings 759w, 1295w
Schools, Cambridgeshire 1175–6w
Schools, Closures 1293–4w
Schools, Colchester 766w
Schools, Coventry 242–4w
Schools, Finance 27w, 136–7w, 404w, 989–91w, 994w, 1392w
Schools, Governing bodies 247w, 1177w
Schools, Intimidation 410w, 765w, 1189–90w
Schools, Music 1290–1w
Schools, Per capita costs 758w
Schools, Performing arts 764–5w
Schools, Playing fields 1291w
Schools, Private finance initiative 1182w
Schools, Repairs and maintenance 990w
Schools, Standards 409–10w, 769w
Schools, Surrey 401–2w
Schools, Transport 988w
Schools, Vandalism 405w
"Schools Building on Success" 753–4w
Secondary education, Curriculum 239w
Secondary education, Huntingdon 1176w
Secondary education, Wandsworth 249–50w
Sixth form education, Student numbers 769w
Special education 256w, 402–3w, 779w, 989–90w, 1292–3w
Special education, Closures 1386–9w, 1391w
Special education, Finance 779w
Special education, Qualifications 1386w
Special education, Standard assessment tasks 1185–6w
Special education, Vacancies 1389–91w
Special Educational Needs Tribunal 403w
Specialist schools 29w, 991–2w, 1231–2w, 1293w
Specialist schools, Essex 767–8w
Specialist schools, Oxfordshire 761w
Standards Fund 1392–3w
Supply teachers 778w
Teachers, Bedfordshire 249w
Teachers, Codes of practice 407–8w
Teachers, Early retirement 756w, 763–4w
Teachers, Essex 766–7w
Teachers, Harrow 29w
Teachers, Information technology 1178w
Teachers, Manpower 763–5w
Teachers, Oxfordshire 761w
Teachers, Pay 135w, 768w, 775–6w, 1178w
Teachers, Recruitment 766w, 1386w, 1391w
Teachers, Resignations 29w, 760w
Teachers, Training 28w, 30w, 410w, 760–1w, 988–9w, 1177–8w
Teachers, Vacancies 401w, 775w, 1190w
Truancy 407w
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 777w

Tipping, Mr Paddy
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 194wh, 202–3wh
Questions
Agriculture 1294
British Coal Corporation, Equal pay 985w
Business questions 1322
Criminal Courts Review 1027w
Education, Finance 1385w
Equitable Life Assurance Society 851w

Tipping, Mr Paddy—continued
Foot and mouth disease, Compensation 1249w
Foot and mouth disease, Public footpaths 618w
Industrial diseases, Compensation 33–4w, 268w, 592w, 1162–3w
Local government finance 1173w
Schools, Finance 994w

Tipping of waste
291w, 1089w, 1269w, 1283–5, 1288–90

Tobacco
Advertising 228w

Tobacco Disclosure Bill 2001/02
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.01) 308

Todd, Mr Mark
Questions
Computers within reach programme 762w
Dental services, Derbyshire 1350w
Dietary supplements 59w
Electronic signatures 610w
Food, Import controls 290–1w
Foot and Mouth Task Force 1271w
Maintenance, Children 1207–8w
Petrol, Exploration 609–10w
Supermarkets, Codes of practice 985w

Tolls
Roads 542w

Tomahawk missiles
Submarines 147–8w

Tonge, Dr Jenny
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 863–5, (16.10.01) 1069–70, 1092–5
Questions
Commonwealth Development Corporation, Overseas investment 308–10w
Developing countries, Debts 308w, 420
Drugs, Imports 283w
Drugs, Research 283–5w
Employment tribunals, Higher education 271w
Genetically modified organisms, Research 472–4w
Higher education, Finance 250–1w
Immigration rules, Nurses 125–6w
Local government finance 1166
Mental health services, Finance 221w
NHS, Working conditions 237w
Out-patients, Attendance 236–7w, 1047–8
Seeboard, Energy supply 271w
Teachers, Vacancies 404w

Tornado aircraft
Exercise Saif Sareea 2 1371w

Touhig, Mr Don, Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Education, Wales 1157–8
Higher education, Wales 1253w
NHS, Wales 1152–4, 1160, 1251–2w
Railways, Wales 1156–7
Transport, Wales 1252w
Young offenders, Wales 1253w

Tourism
75–6w, 1289w
Academic year 811–2w
Antarctic 490w
Departmental responsibilities 820w
Finance 75–6w, 1280w, 1288w
Foot and mouth disease 6–8, 51w, 151w, 189w, 750–1w, 810–1w, 1290w
Oxfordshire 750–1w
Rural areas 1289w

Tourism—continued
Scotland 151w
Wales 1002w

Tourism incentive group
816w

Tourist boards
1289w

Towers Perrin
1377w

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Questions
533w

Trade agreements
477w, 589–90w, 596w
Agriculture 595w
Textiles 595w

Trade and Industry Select Committee
(16.07.01) 81

Trade competitiveness
372w
Tax burden 371–2w

Trafalgar class submarines
709–10w

Traffic areas
Computer networks 11w

Traffic Commissioners
Rural areas 1319w

Trafford
Refugees 923w

Train operating companies
Prosecutions 508w
Standards 504–5w

Training
Defence 334–5w
Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1096–7w
Doctors 758–9w
Fire services 511–2w
Further education 1292w
Harrier aircraft 148w
Headteachers 994w
Institutional care 1342w
Metropolitan Police 285
Nurses 114–6w
Sports 4–5
Teachers 28w, 30w, 410w, 760–1w, 988–9w, 1177–8w
Terrorism 1237w
Young people 762w

Trains
Overcrowding 505–8w

Transco
Price controls 263w

Transplant surgery
1126–7w
Heart diseases 1242w

Transport
87–8w, 1172w
Cambridgeshire 1174w
Disadvantaged 465w
Environmental impact assessment 869w
Further education 251w
Greater London Authority 1229–30w
Hospitals 110w, 436w
Infrastructure 518–22w, 896–8w
Investment 359w
Livestock 1085w, 1092w, 1219–20w, 1267w
Milton Keynes 892w
Northern Ireland 542w
Nuclear fuels 191w
Planning 521–4w, 883w
Pollution 17w

Transport—continued
Public inquiries 521–4w
Regional planning and development 531w
Safety 1364w
Schools 409w, 513w, 988w
Sixth form colleges (20.07.01) 578–80
Wales 1252w

Transport Local Government and the Regions Select Committee
(19.07.01) 520

Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 (Conditions Attached To PSV Operators Licence and Competition Test for Exercise of Bus Functions) Order 2001
Debates etc.
(17.07.01) 261–2

Travel
Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1311w
Ministers 467w

Travel information
Railways 517–8w

Travelling people
926–7w, 1398–9w
Caravan sites 1309–10w
Trespass 926w

Treason Felony Act 1848
Questions
1202w

Treasury
Aviation 866w
Buildings 854w, 864–6w
Correspondence 858–9w
Cost effectiveness 24w
Early retirement 562–3w
Electronic publishing 572w
Green Ministers Committee 182w, 213w
London Underground 558w
Manpower 868w
Parliamentary questions 858–9w
Pay 846w, 1259w
Planning 559–60w
Private finance initiative 560w
Public expenditure 854–6w
Public relations 563–4w, 1259w
Retirement 848w
Select committees 865w
Sick leave 562–3w
Written questions 561w

Treasury Select Committee
(16.07.01) 88, 1264w

Treaty of Rome
423–4w

Tredinnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 759–61, (16.10.01) 1088–91
Questions
General Medical Council, Alternative medicine 1036–7
Osteopathy 1125w

Tree planting
1273w

Trend, Mr Michael
Questions
Azerbaijan 498w
General service medal, Suez Canal 942w
Heathrow Airport, Night flying 876w
Sri Lanka, Referendums 498–9w

Trespass
Travelling people 926w

Trials
1020w

Tribunals
Reviews 788w

Trickett, Jon
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1245–7
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1377–81

Trident
335w

Trimble, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (18.07.01) 276
Terrorism (04.10.01) 683–4
Terrorism, USA (14.09.01) 611–2
Questions
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 273

Trinidad and Tobago
Work permits 304w, 789w

Truancy
407w, 461–2w

Truswell, Mr Paul
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Credit unions (18.07.01) 75–7wh

TT Smith (Mink)
618w

Tufnell Park
Railways 882w

Turkey
Human rights 8w

Turkmenistan
Prisoners 122w

Turner, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1362, 1364, 1376, 1398–400
Terrorism (04.10.01) 751, 793–4, (08.10.01) 832
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 313–5wh, 326wh
Questions
Afghanistan, Recognition of states 1382w
Africa, Non-governmental organisations 804w
Animal feed, Isle of Wight 1086–7w
BBC External Services 426w
Business questions 434–5
Category C prisoners, Prison accommodation 931–2w
Children in care 1128–32w
Community work, Finance 357–8w
Construction, Equal opportunities 325w
Diplomatic relations 1383w
Dredging 19–20w, 74w
EC grants and loans, Manchester 325w
Education, Fees and charges 1294w
European Communities, Constitutions 976w
Exports, North West region 325w
Ferries 361–2w
Ferries, Isle of Wight 610w
Fishing catches 1094–5w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1055w
Foot and mouth disease, Import controls 1112–3w
Foot and mouth disease, Waste disposal 1085–6w
Foreign investment in UK, North West region 325w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 43w
Harbour authorities 538–42w, 893–4w
Health services, Fees and charges 1133w

Turner, Mr Andrew—continued
Hedges and ditches 884w
House sellers pack 894w
Housing, Sales 893–4w
Invalid vehicles, Applications 833w
Isle of Wight 537w
Livestock, Transport 1085w
Local government 360w
Local government, Cornwall 361w
Local government, Cumbria 361w
Local government, Hampshire 361w
Local government, Lincolnshire 361w
Local government, Yorkshire and Humberside 360w
Local government finance, Isle of Wight 1174–5w, 1313–4w
Mentally disturbed offenders 796w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Drugs 932w
National Lottery 1144w
Official visits 1300w
Official visits, Isle of Wight 1301w
Official visits, New Zealand 1300–1w
Osborne House 186w
Peers 469w
Police, Early retirement 132w
Police, Manpower 1402w
Police authorities, Public appointments 669w
Ports, Isle of Wight 20w
Pre-school education 410w
Prison governors 914–5w
Prison governors, Manpower 912–4w
Prison Service, Manpower 915w
Prison Service, Sick leave 909–10w
Prisoners, Rehabilitation 931–2w
Prisons, Crimes of violence 914w
Prisons, Education 930w
Prisons, Finance 909–12w
Railway network 538w
Refugees, Deportation 1192–3w
Roads, Isle of Wight 537w
Roads, Tolls 542w
Rural development plans, Wales 422w
Schools, Standards 409–10w
Small businesses, EC grants and loans 592w
Special constables, Conditions of employment 639–40w
Teachers, Early retirement 763–4w
Teachers, Manpower 763–4w
Transport, Northern Ireland 542w
UK membership of EC, Publications 421w
Vehicle number plates 894w, 1366–7w
Welsh language 1253–4w
Wessex 360w, 538w
"Your Britain Your Europe Your Wales" 45–6w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries (19.07.01) 522

Turner, Dr Desmond
Debates etc.
Home Energy Conservation Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 306
Questions
Commission for Racial Equality, Annual reports 46w
Criminal Records Bureau, Annual reports 342w
Family Law Advisory Board, Annual reports 788w
Railways, Public sector 1166

Twigg, Derek
Questions
Hospitals, Consultants 729w
Independent Football Commission, Public appointments 751w

Twigg, Derek—continued
Police, Cheshire 638–40w

Twigg, Mr Stephen, Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Council and Leader of the House
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 24–34, (19.07.01) 506
Ministerial and Other Salaries Order (18.10.01) 1349, 1351–2
Recess motions (20.07.01) 589–95
Select committees (16.07.01) 75–7
Questions
Early day motions 154w
House of Commons, Information technology 149–50
Members, Conditions of employment 155w
Members, Information technology 150
Parliamentary scrutiny 152–4
Private bills 154w

Tyler, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Business questions (16.07.01) 91
Economic policy (16.07.01) 122
Ministerial statements, Points of order (18.10.01) 1324
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 203–4wh
Questions
Business questions 431–2, 1309–10
Cleave Camp, Disclosure of information 469w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1101–2w
Parliamentary scrutiny 151–2
Police, Radio 675w

Tynan, Mr Bill
Questions
Drugs, Safety 440w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 918–9
Social security benefits, Students 694w

Type 42 destroyers
938w

Type 45 destroyers
1–2w, 1136–7w

Tyres
Waste disposal 635–6w, 1073w

UK Debt Management Office
Annual reports 212w

UK membership of EC
Publications 421w

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
777w
Immigration 174w

UN Register of Conventional Arms
426w

UN resolutions
Terrorism 1150w

UN Security Council
Voting behaviour 492w

Unemployment
566–7w, 683w, 694w, 914–5
Blaenau Gwent 1254w
Borders region 565–6w
Southend 830w

United Kingdom NIREX
40w

United Kingdom Passport Agency
355w
Annual reports 273w
Databases 354w, 357w
Finance 355–6w
Fraud 354–5w

United Kingdom Passport Agency*—*continued
Telephone services 354w

United Nations
1270w
USA 1149–50w
Voting behaviour 45w

United Nations Security Council
see UN Security Council

Unparliamentary expressions
Rulings and statements (19.10.01) 1395

Unsolicited goods and services
Email 320w

Upholder class submarines
Canada 717–8w

Upminster
Schools 1295w

Uranium
141–2w, 602w
Dundrennan 1139–40w
Kosovo 141w
Serbia 141w

Urban areas
536w
Community relations (17.07.01) 1–21wh
Public transport 12–4w
Royal charters 687–8w, 933–4w, 1025w

Urban Bus Challenge
13w

Urban regeneration companies
Tax allowances 856w

USA
Arms trade 4w
Ballistic missile defence 715w
Climate Change Convention 284
Economic situation 377w
Foreign trade 317w, 422w
Military exercises 7w, 956w
RAF Menwith Hill 955w
Terrorism (14.09.01) 604–16, (04.10.01) 671–88, (08.10.01) 811–29
United Nations 1149–50w

Utilities
Direct selling 583–4w, 1278–9w
Road works 1227–8w

Vaccination
Children 1126w
Compensation 705w, 739w
Influenza 233–4w

Vale of York
Flood control 630–1w, 1297–8

Vandalism
Schools 405w

VAT
Climate change levy 849w
Food 852w
Health insurance 855w
Health services 855w
Home care services 213w
Housing 558w
Institutional care 559w
Millennium Exhibition 56–7w
Ophthalmic services 576w
Religious buildings 215w
Sheltered housing wardens 181w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 711–3

Vehicle number plates
894w, 1366–7w

Vehicles
Police 649–50w

Veterinary Laboratories Agency
Annual reports 400w

Veterinary medicine
Student numbers 1179–80w

Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Annual reports 400w

Veterinary services
Foot and mouth disease 394–5w, 1109w

Victim support schemes
Northern Ireland 274–5

Victims
Crime 1198–200w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Questions
Armed forces, Health services 5w
Hedges and ditches, Environment protection 1268w
Museums and galleries 50w
Railways, Accidents 91–2w
Stakeholder pensions 829w

Vis, Dr Rudi
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.01) 582–3
Questions
Bloody Sunday Tribunal of Inquiry 139–40w
Contracts, Ministry of Defence 211w

Vocational education
770w
GCE A level 768w

Voluntary organisations
Finance 341–2w

Voluntary work
1257w

Voting behaviour
(20.07.01) 536–8, 870w
UN Security Council 492w
United Nations 45w

Voucher schemes
Refugees 226w, 339w, 658w, 924w, 1235w

Wales
Alternative energy 600–1w
Education 1157–8
Employment 1158–9
Environment protection 1253w
Floods 124w
Foot and mouth disease 614–5w, 1251w, 1254–5w, 1265w
Foreign investment in UK 43w, 1254w
Higher education 778w, 1253w
Housing 1152
Industrial diseases 32–3w, 104–5w
Iron and steel 1255w
Manufacturing industries 1159–60, 1252–3w
NHS 1152–4, 1160, 1251–2w
Non-domestic rates 1147w
Prescriptions 722–3w
Railways 1156–7
Refugees 1394–5w
Rural development plans 422w
Tourism 1002w
Transport 1252w
Young offenders 1253w

Wales Office
see Office of the Secretary of State for Wales

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Terrorism (15.10.01) 930–1

Walley, Ms Joan*—*continued
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Community relations, Urban areas (17.07.01) 10–2wh
Questions
Aerials, Planning permission 204w
Alternative energy 1153w
Birmingham Relief Road 1173w
Construction, Cabinet Office 462w, 1003–4w
Construction, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 809w
Construction, Dept for Education and Skills 783w
Construction, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1090w, 1093w
Construction, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 553w, 894–5w
Construction, Dept for Work and Pensions 703–4w
Construction, Dept of Trade and Industry 610–1w, 979w
Construction, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 499w, 976–8w
Construction, Home Office 1202w
Construction, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1021–3w
Construction, Ministry of Defence 718w, 942w
Construction, Northern Ireland Office 998–1000w
Construction, Scotland Office 1255–6w
Construction, Solicitor-General 996w
Dental services, Fees and charges 723–4w
Drugs, Misuse 1397–8w
Hospitals, Transport 436w
Maternity services 1039
Neighbourhood Support Fund 1187–8w
NHS, Nurseries 1121–2w
Pupil exclusions, Drugs 1187w
Television, Licensing 812–3w
VAT, Religious buildings 215w

Walter, Mr Robert
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 452–3

Walton Group
189–90w

Wandsworth
Police 667–8w, 673–4w
Roads 527w
Secondary education 249–50w
Severe disablement allowance 698w

Wandsworth Prison
(20.07.01) 548–51, 665–6w

War crimes
Burundi 120–1w
Rwanda 120–1w

War graves
Wrecks 1309w

War pensions
Porton Down 936–7w

Ward, Ms Claire
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 450–1

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 777–9, (08.10.01) 825–6

Warrington
Day care 409w
Pre-school education 408–9w

Warships
964–5w
Early warning systems 1142w

Warwick
Emergency services 1048

Waste and Resources Action programme
Finance 295–6w

Waste disposal
1075–6w
Abandoned vehicles 292w
Chemicals 708–9w
Electronic equipment 31–2w, 295w
Food 1268w
Foot and mouth disease 220w, 389w, 392w, 613w, 617w, 1085–6w, 1099w, 1102w, 1104w, 1109–10w, 1267w
House of Commons 155w
Pitsea 292–3w, 624–6w
Tyres 635–6w, 1073w

Waste management
58w, 1051w, 1068w, 1246w
Greater London 1070–3w
Standards 619w

Wastes
Alternative energy 1068w, 1152w
Fish farming 1271w

Water companies
Liability 1062w

Water Industry Act 1991
Questions
1061–2w

Waterloo Station
503w

Waterson, Mr Nigel
Questions
Capital allowances 858w
Departmental reorganisation, Costs 612w
Hospital beds, East Sussex 1350w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 500w
Planning, Inquiries 204w
Planning, Treasury 559–60w
Post offices, Closures 986w
Small businesses 986w
Tourism 76w

Watkinson, Angela
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1256–7
Terrorism (08.10.01) 822
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 249wh
Pre-school education (18.10.01) 327–8wh
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Havering 1179w
Primary education, Class sizes 987–8w
Schools, Buildings 1295w
Schools, Transport 988w
Teachers, Training 988–9w

Watson, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Rochester, Christopher (18.10.01) 1356–7
Questions
Arts, Finance 185–6w
Disadvantaged 66w
National Lottery 185w, 1224w
Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority, Publications 66w
United Kingdom NIREX 40w

Watts, Mr Dave
Questions
Defence Diversification Agency, Standards 329–30w
Diplomatic immunity 425w
Magistrates 452–3w

Watts, Mr Dave—continued
Magistrates, Merseyside 452w
Magistrates, Political activities 452w
Magistrates, St Helens 453–4w
National Lottery, Rugby 53w

Weapons
Northern Ireland 217w

Weather
Death 843w

Webb, Mr Steve
Questions
Cancer, Avon 719w
Child Support Agency, Complaints 690–1w
Child Support Agency, Information technology 302w
Child Support Agency, Standards 691w
Death, Weather 843w
Employment, Disabled 909–10
Incapacity benefit 1301w
Independent Case Examiner for the Child Support Agency 61w
Information technology, Dept for Work and Pensions 689–90w
Manpower, Dept for Work and Pensions 62w
Pension credit 65–6w
Pensioners, Income support 65w, 1209w
Population, Females 866–7w
Press releases, Dept for Work and Pensions 698w
SEMA Group 419w
Social security benefits, Abuse 418w
Social Security Contributions Agency, Computers 684–5w
Stakeholder pensions 1383w
State earnings related pension scheme, Eligibility 685w
State retirement pensions 180w, 301w
Winter fuel payments 826–7w

Weir, Mr Michael
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Carers (16.10.01) 175–7wh
Energy, Scotland (16.10.01) 219wh
Equitable Life Assurance Society (17.10.01) 245–6wh
Questions
Alternative energy 1373–4w
Assisted areas 1280w
Assisted areas, Arbroath 152w
Assisted areas, Scotland 325–6w
Aviation, Dept of Health 1350–1w
Aviation, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1146w
Buildings, Dept of Trade and Industry 978–9w
Chapelcross power station, Accidents 582w
Climate Change Convention 1163w, 1275–6w
Electricity generation 265–6w, 586w
Energy 265w
Fuels, Scotland 141
Manpower, Dept of Health 1352–3w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Health 1034–5w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 1163–4w
Nuclear power stations 1153–4w
Organic food 1090w
Pay, Dept of Health 1035w, 1351–2w
Pay, Dept of Trade and Industry 977w
Public relations, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1145–6w
Select committees, Dept of Trade and Industry 986w
Visits abroad, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1002–4w

Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999
Questions
176w

Welsh Affairs Select Committee
(16.07.01) 88

Welsh Assembly
see National Assembly for Wales

Welsh language
1253–4w
Broadcasting programmes 188–9w

Welsh National Assembly
see National Assembly for Wales

Wembley Stadium
2–4, 815–6w, 1380–1w

Wessex
360w, 538w

West coast railway line
502w, 1364w

West Midlands
Fire services 132w
Regional arts boards 188w

West Midlands Police
Special constables 903–4w

West Sussex
General practitioners 1125–6w

West Yorkshire
Employment 827w

West-East pipeline
979–80w

Western Sahara
43–4w
Self-determination of states 969–70w

Westminster Foundation for Democracy
Annual reports 423–4w

Wetlands
1089–90w

Wheat
1056w

Whisky
Excise duties 576w

White, Brian
Questions
Civil servants, Recruitment 1220w
Electronic government, Home Office 670w
Employment, Disadvantaged 920
Government departments, Information technology 305–6w, 790w
National Weights and Measures Laboratory, Standards 270w
Project Aquatrine 1w
Victim support schemes, Northern Ireland 274–5

Whitehead, Dr Alan, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept for Transport and the Regions
Questions
Absent voting 11w
Asbestos 512w
Bellwin scheme, North Yorkshire 289–90w
Buildings, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 897w
Construction, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 553w, 894–5w
Contracts, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 81–5w
Correspondence, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1312w
Council tax 1319w
Council tax, Second homes 95–6w, 502w, 899w

Whitehead, Dr Alan—continued
Education, Finance 1309w
Electoral Commission 869–70w
Electoral register 273–4w
European Parliament elections 503w
Fire services, Training 511–2w
Fire services, West Midlands 132w
General Election 2001, Ballot papers 1172w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 16w, 204w
Housing benefit, Complaints 1173w
India 549w
Isle of Wight 537w
Islington Borough Council, Assets 543–4w
Local government 360w
Local government, Cornwall 361w
Local government, Cumbria 361w
Local government, Hampshire 361w
Local government, Lincolnshire 361w
Local government, Reform 1319w
Local government, Swale 97–8w
Local government, Yorkshire and Humberside 360w
Local Government Act 1974, Human rights 503–4w
Local government finance 362w, 504w, 611–2w, 1173w
Local government finance, Havering 551–2w
Local government finance, Oxfordshire 546–7w
Local government finance, Wiltshire 525–8w
Manpower, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1310–1w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 500w, 1312–3w
Non-domestic rates 1316–8w
Pay, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 897–8w
Polling stations, Disabled 1173–4w
Private finance initiative 19w
Private finance initiative, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 96w, 547–9w
Private finance initiative, Leisure facilities 96w
Public expenditure, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1171–2w, 1312w
Public relations, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1311–2w
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre 890–1w
Regional assemblies 1314w
Regional assemblies, Buildings 890w
Regional assemblies, South East region 547w
Retirement, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 871–3w
Select committees, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1310w
Standard spending assessments, Elderly 547w
Visits abroad, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1311w
Voting behaviour 870w
Wessex 360w, 538w

Whittingdale, Mr John
Questions
Radio, Illegal broadcasting 40–3w

Whittington Hospital
Private finance initiative 1029w

Wicks, Malcolm, Parliamentary Secretary, Dept for Work and Pensions
Questions
Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, Manpower 418–9w
Child Support Agency, Complaints 690–1w
Child Support Agency, Information technology 302w
Child Support Agency, Standards 691–2w
Children, Poverty 694w
Disability working allowance 698–9w
Elderly, Slums 415w
Employment, Disabled 175w
Employment schemes 823w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept for Work and Pensions 301w
Housing benefit 697w, 1303w, 1384w
Housing benefit, Abuse 705w
Housing benefit, Greater London 696w
Housing benefit, Islington 696–7w
Incapacity benefit 62–3w, 175–8w, 298–300w, 417w, 684w, 831w, 1210–1w, 1301w, 1384–5w
Incapacity benefit, Applications 177w
Incapacity benefit, Females 683–4w
Incapacity benefit, Medical examinations 416–7w
Income support 287–8w
Independent Case Examiner for the Child Support Agency 61w
Industrial diseases, Compensation 327–8w
Jobseeker's allowance 178w, 699w
Local exchange and trading schemes, Social security benefits 1302w
Maintenance, Children 1207–8w, 1302–3w
New deal for young people, Drugs 915–6
Poverty 415–6w
Poverty, Children 827–8w
SEMA Group 419w
Severe disablement allowance, Wandsworth 698w
Social Fund, Annual reports 705–6w
Social security benefits 697–8w, 1208–10w
Social security benefits, Abuse 298w, 413w, 418w, 823–4w, 1384w
Social security benefits, Basic education 685–6w
Social security benefits, Disabled 417–8w, 689w
Social security benefits, Overseas residence 413w
Social security benefits, Proof of identity 1383w
Social security benefits, Refugees 302–3w
Social security benefits, Scotland 1209w
Social security benefits, Students 694w
Social security benefits, Take-up 831w
Unemployment 683w, 694w
Widowed parents' allowance 683w

Widdecombe, Rt Hon Ann
Questions
Crime, Firearms 1322–3w
Feltham Young Offender Institution and Remand Centre 918–9w
Firearms 796–7w
Hallucinogens 794w
HM Inspectorate of Prisons 675w, 920w
Home detention curfews 919w
Metropolitan Police, Firearms 915–6w
Police, Civilians 916w
Police, Conditions of employment 1323–4w
Police, Manpower 282–4w, 642w
Police, Pensions 659w
Police, Sick leave 915w
Public relations, Home Office 1323w
Refugees, Appeals 338–9w

Widdecombe, Rt Hon Ann—continued
Refugees, Housing 655w
Stop and search 919–20w
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 911w

Widowed parents' allowance
683w

Widowed people
Pension rights 699w

Wiggin, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Petrol alternatives (19.10.01) 1364
Terrorism (08.10.01) 843
Questions
Farmers, Bureaucracy 1078w
Field sports 1098w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1104w, 1114w
Foot and mouth disease, Government assistance 1117w
Foot and mouth disease, Slaughterhouses 1114w
Livestock, Prices 1088w
Milk 1090w
River Wye, Bridges 553w
Supermarkets, Farmers 1046w

Wild animals
Foot and mouth disease 390w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Hospitals, Greater London (20.07.01) 558–60
Oral question time intervention (16.10.01) 1035
Terrorism (14.09.01) 643–5, (04.10.01) 685–6
Sittings in Westminster Hall
London Underground (17.10.01) 267–70wh, 277wh
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 457
Business questions 441
Health services, Greater London 1033–4
London Underground, Public private partnerships 279
Northern Ireland government 215–6w

Willetts, Mr David
Debates etc.
Commonwealth Bill, 1R (18.07.01) 308
Questions
Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, Manpower 418–9w
Employment, Disabled 910–1
Housing benefit, Complaints 1173w
Incapacity benefit 176w
New deal for disabled people 64w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 919–20
Stakeholder pensions 63–4w, 867–8w
State earnings related pension scheme 685w
Widowed parents' allowance 683w
Winter fuel payments 1301w
Working families tax credit 1296w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 53–6

Williams, Mrs Betty
Questions
Debts, Developing countries 373w
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 1251w
Jobcentres 825–6w

Williams, Hywel
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 196–8wh

Williams, Hywel*—*continued
Private finance initiative (17.07.01) 27–8wh
Questions
Business questions 1321–2
Industrial diseases, Compensation 327–8w

Williams, Mr Roger
Questions
Foot and mouth disease, Wales 1265w
Railways, Wales 1156–7

Willis, Mr Phil
Questions
Aerials 326w
Basic education, Social security benefits 685–6w, 784w
Driving offences, Fines 1399–402w
Education, Assessments 251–2w
Education, Bureaucracy 1392w
General Teaching Council, Registration 238w
Private finance initiative 781–2w
Secondary education, Curriculum 239w
Specialist schools 1231–2w, 1293w
Supply teachers 778w
Teachers, Training 28w
Telecommunications, Licensing 326w

Wills, Mr Michael*, *Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Questions
Acquittals 1019–20w
Act of Settlement 1700 787w, 1024w
Bailiffs 451w
Buildings, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1012–4w
Committal proceedings, Young offenders 157w
Construction, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1021–3w
Courts, Restraint equipment 157w
Courts, Witnesses 157w
Criminal Courts Review 156w, 1027w
Criminal proceedings, Administrative delays 1019w
Damages 785–6w
Electronic conveyancing 73w
Freedom of Information Act 2000 288w, 449–50w
Information technology, Lord Chancellor's Dept 160–2w
Judges, Housing 1024w
Judiciary, Ethnic groups 157–8w
Juries, Ethnic groups 787w
Legal profession, Self-regulation 156w
Magistrates 147, 1024–5w
Magistrates, Complaints 158w
Magistrates, Essex 1012w
Magistrates, Greater London 784w
Magistrates, Public appointments 159–60w
Magistrates' courts 146–7
Magistrates' courts, Closures 147–8
Magistrates' courts, Computers 161w
Magistrates' courts, Wiltshire 1025w
Ministerial policy advisors, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1021w
Parental responsibility, EC law 451w
Parliament, Reform 288–9w
Personal injury, Damages 784–5w
Public expenditure, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1019w
Public relations, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1020w
Trials 1020w

Wilson, Mr Brian*, *Minister of State for Industry and Energy, Dept of Trade and Industry
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Alternative energy (17.10.01) 301–6wh

Wilson, Mr Brian*—*continued
Questions
Alternative energy 36–7w, 264–5w, 326–7w, 584–5w, 600–1w, 1152–3w, 1271w, 1373–4w
Alternative energy, Standards 264w
Alternative energy, Wales 600–1w
Alternative energy, Wastes 1152w
Business 269–70w
Chapelcross power station, Accidents 580–2w
Chemicals 268–9w
Climate Change Convention 1163w
Climate change levy, Manufacturing industries 606–7w
Coal, Pollution control 595–6w
Combined heat and power 592–3w
Commonwealth of Independent States, Radioactive materials 270w
Dounreay, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 271–2w
Electric cables 1220w
Electric cables, Health hazards 594–5w
Electric cables, North Yorkshire 593–4w
Electricity, Licensing 264w, 583w
Electricity generation 265–6w, 586w, 1156w
Electricity generation, Carbon dioxide 40w, 264w
Electricity generation, Markets 263–4w, 322w, 585–6w, 1157w
Electronic equipment, Waste disposal 31–2w
Energy 265w, 586–7w
Energy Policy Review 604w
Fuels, Shortages 1161w
Green Ministers Committee 587w
Green Ministers Committee, Dept of Trade and Industry 272w
Industrial diseases, Compensation 33–4w, 268w, 591–2w, 1162–3w
Industrial diseases, Wales 32–3w, 104–5w
Manufacturing industries, Regulation 32w
Marconi, Redundancy 262–3w
Mixed oxide fuel, Research 327w
Motor vehicles, EC action 267–8w
Natural gas 1159–60w
Natural gas, Imports 1158–9w
Natural gas, Prices 39w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 1163–4w
Nuclear power 107–8w, 611w
Nuclear power stations 1153–4w
Nuclear reactors 605w
Nuclear submarines, Russia 587–8w
Oil, Irish Sea 38w
Oldbury power station 34–5w
Petrol 1161w
Petrol, Exploration 609–10w
Petrol, Retail trade 557w
Radioactive materials, Japan 605w
Radioactive wastes, Germany 637w
Science, Females 262w
Seeboard, Energy supply 271w
Sellafield 605w
Sellafield, Security 1152w
Transco, Price controls 263w
Tyres, Waste disposal 635–6w
United Kingdom NIREX 40w
Utilities, Direct selling 583–4w, 1278–9w
Wind power 1155–6w, 1276–7w
Wind power, Low flying 40w

Wilton Park
Standards 489–90w

Wiltshire
Antisocial behaviour orders 1206w
Crime and disorder partnerships 1206w
Dolphin Telecommunications 984w
Local government finance 525–8w
Magistrates' courts 1025w

Wind power
1155–6w, 1276–7w
Cleveleys 716w, 1059w
Low flying 40w, 331w
Planning permission 1320–1w

Wind tunnels
Finance 706w

Winnick, David
Debates etc.
Business motions (16.07.01) 28
Select committees (16.07.01) 65–6, (19.07.01) 508–9, 511
Terrorism (04.10.01) 681, (08.10.01) 845–6, (16.10.01) 1056
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 104w
Business questions 437
Incapacity benefit 63w, 74w
Incapacity benefit, Applications 177w
Jubilee line, Standards 99–100w
Karadzic, Radovan 123–4w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 1160–1
Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards 155w

Winter fuel payments
419–20w, 826–7w, 1301w
Scotland 150w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
Computers, Dept for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 1248w
Farmers, Tenants 1220w
Farms, Diversification 1097w
Foot and mouth disease 1249w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1296–7

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 3R (17.10.01) 1199, 1201
Select committees (16.07.01) 48
Questions
Business questions 1320–1
Foot and mouth disease, Cumbria 1305
Infant foods 720w
Institutional care, Finance 700w
Invalid care allowances 301w, 420w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 1253w
Maternity services 1039–40
Public expenditure, Scotland 153w
Tax burden, Business 418–9

Winterton, Ms Rosie*, *Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Questions
Advisory services, Finance 786w
Alternative dispute resolution 1023w
Arbitration 1023–4w
Arbitration, Finance 786w
Buildings, Lord Chancellor's Dept 790–2w, 1014–6w
Census, Disclosure of information 288w, 452w
Conditional fee agreements, Personal injury 158w
Contact orders 158–9w
Correspondence, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1026–7w
Entry clearances, Appeals 348–9w
Family Law Advisory Board, Annual reports 788w
Kidnapping, Children 637–8w
Legal profession, Clothing 156–7w
London Underground, Lord Chancellor's Dept 159w
Manpower, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1018w
Members, Correspondence 451w
Pay, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1015–7w

Winterton, Ms Rosie—continued
Property rights, Cohabitation 788w
Public relations, Lord Chancellor's Dept 787w
Public Trust Office, Annual reports 161w
Recess, Lord Chancellor's Dept 786–7w
Refugees, Appeals 145–6
Refugees, Legal representation 144–5
Retirement, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1025–6w
Tribunals, Reviews 788w
Urban areas, Royal charters 687–8w, 933–4w, 1025w

Wired up communities initiative
Liverpool 255w

Wirral
Young offenders 1204–5w

Wishart, Pete
Debates etc.
Railtrack (15.10.01) 968
Select committees (16.07.01) 52
Questions
Arts, Finance 749w
Aviation, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 1144w
Buildings, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 814w
Buildings, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 897w
Buildings, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1012–4w
Business questions 438–9, 1318
Correspondence, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 813w
Correspondence, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1312w
East coast railway line, Electrification 553–4w
Electricity generation, Scotland 152w
Manpower, Cabinet Office 1007–12w
Manpower, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1310–1w
Manpower, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1018w
Manpower, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1146w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1312–3w
Music 749–50w
Nuclear power 611w
Pay, Cabinet Office 1006w, 1359w
Pay, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 813w
Pay, Dept for International Development 1287–8w
Pay, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 897–8w
Pay, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1015–7w
Pay, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1146w
Public expenditure, Dept for Culture Media and Sport 1224w
Public expenditure, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1312w
Public expenditure, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1019w
Public expenditure, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales 1145w
Public relations, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1311–2w
Public relations, Dept of Trade and Industry 1225w
Scottish Parliament, Committees 156w
Scottish Transport Group, Pension funds 845–6w
Select committees, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1310w

Wishart, Pete—continued
Social security benefits, Take-up 831w
Sports, Finance 750w
Telecommunications 599–600w
Telecommunications, Rural areas 600w
Transport, Infrastructure 896–8w
Visits abroad, Dept for Transport Local Government and the Regions 1311w

Witnesses
Courts 157w
Protection 643–4w

Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries (19.07.01) 521–8

Women
see Females

Wood, Mr Mike
Questions
Business questions 1311

Woodward, Mr Shaun
Questions
Afghanistan, EC aid 1284w
Afghanistan, Refugees 799–801w
Income support 287–8w
Industrial diseases, Compensation 34w, 591w
Inland waterways 627w
Inland waterways, Freight 20w
Passports, Applications 49w
Refugees, Children 126–7w
Sixth form education, Bedfordshire 248w
Social security benefits, Refugees 302–3w
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Immigration 174w

Worcestershire
Business Recovery Fund 397–8w
Digital broadcasting 745–6w
Education 1232w
Foot and mouth disease 1054w, 1115w
Hospital beds 732w, 1349w
Social services 731–2w

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
229w

Worcestershire Health Authority
Pay 733w

Work and Pensions Select Committee (16.07.01) 88

Work permits
Seasonal workers 628w
Shipping 509w
Trinidad and Tobago 304w, 789w

Working Age Agency
see Jobcentre Plus

Working conditions
NHS 237w

Working families tax credit
374w, 563w, 1296w
Administrative delays 214w
Greater London 374w
Leigh 214w

Working Group on Forced Marriage
see Forced Marriages Working Group

Working hours
Driving 891w

Working mothers
Social security benefits 824–5w

Working tax credit
571w, 1258–9w

Working Time Regulations 1998
Questions
891w
Driving 891w

World Bank
379w

World Organisation for Animal Health
Foot and mouth disease 1099w

World War I
Capital punishment 146w

World War II
Prisoners of war 332w

Worthington, Tony
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 757–9
Questions
BOWMAN combat radio system 453–4
Financial services 582w
Foot and mouth disease, Scotland 136–7
Industrial diseases, Compensation 181–2w

Wray, Mr James
Questions
Euthanasia, Scotland 143–4

Wrecks
War graves 1309w

Wright, Mr Anthony D
Questions
Armed forces, Health services 1223–4w
Billing, Government departments 322–3w

Wright, David
Debates etc.
Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (15.10.01) 999
Questions
Urban areas, Royal charters 687–8w

Wright, Lauren
(16.10.01) 221–8wh

Wright, Tony
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 35
Questions
Education, Finance 1309w
Education, Staffordshire 250w
Freedom of Information Act 2000 449–50w
Local government finance 362w

Written questions
Treasury 561w

Wyatt, Derek
Debates etc.
Terrorism (04.10.01) 759, 764–5
Questions
Electoral register 273–4w
Local government, Swale 97–8w
Moles, Pest control 1056w
National Lottery 13

Yeo, Mr Tim
Questions
Athletics 814–5w, 1144w
Athletics, Picketts Lock 815w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Japan 1047w
Departmental reorganisation, Costs 1047w
Foot and mouth disease, Disease control 1105w
Foot and mouth disease, Settle 1098w
Greenhouse effect, Departmental responsibilities 1046–7w
Members, Correspondence 1087w
Office of Communications 814w
Rural areas, Departmental responsibilities 1047w
Sportsgrounds 816w
Tourism, Finance 1280w
Tourism incentive group 816w
Wembley Stadium 815–6w

Ynys Mon
1256w

Yorkshire and Humberside
Flood control 630w
Foot and mouth disease 1110–1w
Local government 360w

Young, Sir George
Debates etc.
Select committees (16.07.01) 56–7
Questions
Business questions 1311

Young offenders
(19.07.01) 135–70wh, 347w
Committal proceedings 157w
Custodial treatment 911w
Probation orders 49w

Young offenders*—*continued
Redcar 668w
Wales 1253w
Wirral 1204–5w

Young people
Alcoholic drinks 1201–2w
Consent to medical treatment 227–8w
Driving (19.10.01) 1406–16
Drugs 349w
Firearms 921w
Gambling 748w
Social security benefits 302–3w
Sports 315–6w
Training 762w

Younger-Ross, Richard
Debates etc.
Terrorism (08.10.01) 844, 880–1

Younger-Ross, Richard*—*continued
Sittings in Westminster Hall
Institutional care (16.10.01) 211wh

"Your Britain Your Europe Your Wales"
45–6w

Youth Hostels Association
1267w
Finance 1288w

"Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Review, 2000/01"
46w, 927w

Youth offender referral orders
668w

Yugoslavia
Sanctions 425w

Zimbabwe
495w
Politics and government 257w, 1296–7w

CAMBRIDGESHIRE